

Barthesian Semiologies on Selected YouTube Video Clips of Petra Mahalimuyak

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Ashley Rivera, a.k.a. Petra Mahalimuyak, is a Filipino-American model and performer who produced and uploaded a number of video clips in YouTube that became viral in the Philippines. Her video clips are mostly about her commentaries on the behavior of Filipinos during specific social situations. The humor in her creations is premised on some unconscious and semi-conscious ideological discourses common among the dominant social classes in the Philippines. Using the semiology of Roland Barthes, this paper exposes these ideological discourses in Rivera's 15 most popular video clips, and in the process opens a window to understanding the mentality of Filipino elites.

This paper has two substantive sections: the first one locates the place of Rivera in the Philippine social hierarchy, while the second one presents the actual semiological analyses on seven cultural icons that this paper isolated from the selected video clips, namely (a) the persona of Petra Mahalimuyak; (b) the exaggerated Filipino accent and the *conyo* idiolect; (c) the "amalayer" girl; (d) the Filipino melodrama; (e) Filipino addiction to Facebook; (f) the *jologs*; and (g) skin whitening products.

Keywords: *Petra Mahalimuyak, Ashley Rivera, ideology and popular culture, Roland Barthes, semiology, dominant Philippine social classes*

Introduction

Ashley Rivera was born in 1992 in Los Angeles, California to Filipino parents but grew up in the Philippines (Lapena, 2012). At the age of 11, she ventured into the world of commercial modelling and got contracts with such companies as Barbie and Boardwalk (Uy, 2011). As a teenager, she already exhibited a knack for impersonation, performances, and production of video clips. In 2010, she became one of the winners of the "Circle of Ten Model Search" because of her looks, and pleasing and energetic personality (Dela Cruz, 2011). After finishing a certificate course at the Center for Asian Culinary Studies, she left Manila for Las Vegas, Nevada to join her mother and sister (Dela Cruz, 2011).

Her life in Las Vegas as an eighteen year old clerk of an electronics store turned out to be boring, as the laws of Nevada prohibited those below twenty-one to enter the city's famed clubs and casinos (Dela Cruz, 2011). To fight boredom, Rivera started to make funny video clips using a cellphone as her camera and her bathroom as her set (Uy, 2011). She created

the characters Petra Mahalimuyak, an English-speaking Filipina; Tiffany Madison, a Londoner; and Jora Echusera, a rich and loquacious Filipina. Soon, her video clips became viral on YouTube.

They are mostly commentaries on the behavior of Filipinos in specific social situations, as well as tips on how to perform certain tasks such as acting, singing, and putting on make-up. Using as its primary text 15 of the most popular video clips of Rivera, this paper hypothesizes that the humor in her productions is premised on some unconscious and semi-conscious ideological discourses common among the dominant social groups in the Philippines. Using the semiology of the French critic, linguist, and philosopher Roland Barthes (1915-1980), this paper exposes these ideological discourses and in the process opens a window to understanding the mentality of the Filipino elite.

The Video Productions of Rivera

Rivera has already created dozens and dozens of video clips. Her efforts in creating her video clips started to pay off financially around 2012. Samsung tapped her first for its experimental campaign (Ignacio, 2012). Zalora, Minute Maid, Dolfenal, and Shoemart soon followed. She also began to have minor roles in such movies as *A Secret Affair*, *My Lady Boss*, and *The Gifted*. In April of 2014, she became the cover girl of the men’s magazine *FHM Philippines*. Viva Films Production Company is currently planning to package Rivera as a sexy comedienne (Lapena, 2012).

Rivera’s 40 most popular ones are listed in the following table, arranged in order of their upload date:

Table 1. Rivera’s Forty Most Popular Video Clips (As of 30 October 2015).

	Title	Date Uploaded	Total Number of Views	Number of Months in YouTube	Average Number of Views Per Month	Rank
1	Make-up Tutorial by Petra Mahalimuyak	12-Apr-11	437,414	56	7,811	12th
2	Beauty Queen Tutorial	16-Apr-11	252,902	56	4,516	19th
3	How to Get Abs in One Minute	28-Apr-11	2,030,369	56	36,257	2nd
4	My British Accent	1-May-11	1,185,686	55	21,558	4th
5	How to be a Soap Opera Actress	11-May-11	214,357	55	3,897	25th
6	How to Act in a Horror Movie	19-May-11	337,702	55	6,140	15th

7	How to Avoid People Hitting on You	10-Jun-11	213,246	54	3,949	23rd
8	How to Act on Your First Date	24-Jun-11	292,724	54	5,421	18th
9	<i>Mga Pasimple</i> (Conyo versus Jologs)	8-Jul-11	416,822	53	7,865	11th
10	How to Dougie	14-Jul-11	1,245,370	53	23,498	3rd
11	Orange Juice (Oreynds Juz)	30-Jul-11	142,598	53	2,691	29th
12	How to be a Kontrabida	28-Sep-11	156,449	51	3,068	27th
13	No Other Woman (Parody)	25-Oct-11	530,905	50	10,618	9th
14	Jar of Hearts	11-Nov-11	290,719	49	5,933	16th
15	How to Dance in a Club	16-Nov-11	4,139,349	49	84,477	1st
16	How to Survive a Break-Up	7-Dec-11	209,212	48	4,359	21st
17	How to be a Conyo	6-Mar-12	256,470	45	5,699	17th
18	How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer!	28-Mar-12	356,230	45	7,916	10th
19	Zalora presents Petra Mahalimuyak!	16-Apr-12	102,307	44	2,325	31st
20	How to Create Your Signature Smile	3-Jun-12	321,263	42	7,649	13th
21	How to Survive a Zombie Apocalypse	8-Jul-12	95,779	41	2,336	30th
22	How to Eat a Burger	10-Jul-12	159,802	41	3,898	24th
23	The Mistress (Parody)	26-Sep-12	57,371	39	1,471	33rd
24	How to Have Fun in the Office	17-Oct-12	37,000	38	974	34th
25	A Secret Affair (Parody/Spoof)	29-Oct-12	26,404	38	695	36th
26	How to Survive Rush Hour	31-Oct-12	86,557	38	2,278	32nd
27	"Amalayer" (Petra Mahalimuyak Version)	15-Nov-12	522,004	37	14,108	6th
28	How to Brighten Up Rainy Days	6-Dec-12	2,131	36	59	39th

29	How to Rave	26-Jan-13	120,175	35	3,434	26th
30	What Singles Do on Valentines	8-Feb-13	25,872	34	761	35th
31	How to Wear a Scarf	29-Apr-13	2,100	32	66	38th
32	Petra's Future Boyfriends	7-May-13	132,821	31	4,285	22nd
33	Girls in the Club	5-Sep-13	335,142	27	12,413	7th
34	Annoying Selfies on Instagram	22-Sep-13	177,432	27	6,572	14th
35	Types of Girlfriends	23-Sep-13	388,278	27	14,381	5th
36	Guys in the Club	6-Oct-13	71,116	26	2,735	28th
37	Girls after a Breakup	13-Oct-13	291,083	26	11,196	8th
38	Types of Gay Guys	6-Nov-13	111,981	25	4,479	20th
39	How to Dance while You're in Pain	19-Jul-14	7,355	17	433	37th
40	How to Take a Selfie while in Pain	12-Sep-14	636	27	24	40th

This paper, though focuses only on the 15 productions with the highest average monthly views, and these are (a) *How to Dance in a Club*; (b) *How to Get Abs in One Minute*; (c) *How to Dougie*; (d) *My British Accent*; (e) *Types of Girlfriends*; (f) 'Amalayer' (*Petra Mahalimuyak Version*); (g) *Girls in The Club*; (h) *Girls after a Breakup*; (i) *No Other Woman (Parody)*; (j) *How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer!*; (k) *Mga Pasimple (Conyo versus Jologs)*; (l) *Make-up Tutorial by Petra Mahalimuyak*; (m) *How to Create Your Signature Smile*; (n) *Annoying Selfies on Instagram*; and (o) *How to Act in a Horror Movie*.

How to Dance in A Club (2011). Rivera uploaded this 5.28-minute video clip in November of 2011, and it has an average monthly view of 84,477. As Petra Mahalimuyak, who has an exaggerated Filipino accent, Rivera offers a quick tutorial on how to dance in a club. She demonstrates five basic dance moves that can be followed by any beginner on the dance floor.

How to Get Abs in One Minute (2011). Rivera uploaded this 5.15-minute video clip in April of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 36,257. She recalls that the movie *300* (2006) that portrayed muscular Spartans was what inspired her to create this video clip (Lapena, 2012). The producers of the said movie revealed to the public how the washboard

abdomens of the Greek warriors were primarily achieved through spray painting. Thus, again as Petra Mahalimuyak, Rivera demonstrates how to simulate abdominal muscles and sculpted biceps using cosmetic eyeshadow.

How to Dougie (2011). Rivera uploaded this 6.18 minute video clip in July of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 23,498. Here, it is Petra Mahalimuyak again that demonstrates in simple steps how to dance the Black American Dougie that became a craze around 2010.

My British Accent (2011). Rivera uploaded this 4.27 minute video clip in May of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 21,558. The production starts with Petra Mahalimuyak trying to justify her use of an exaggerated Filipino accent, apparently in reaction to some bashers in social media who criticized her representation of the Filipinos and Filipino culture. Then, Petra Mahalimuyak introduces her Londoner friend, Tiffany Madison who, with her British English, defends Petra.

Types of Girlfriends (2013). Rivera uploaded this 4.39 minute video clip in September of 2013, and is currently having an average monthly view of 14,381. The video clip presents nine types of girlfriends: the cheater, the stage-five clinger, the sweetheart, the high maintenance bitch, the emotional wreck, the two-faced bitch, the party girl, the gold digger, and the psycho bitch. Rivera speaks using her American English throughout the first eight types but speaks in Filipino for the last type.

'Amalayer' (Petra Mahalimuyak Version) (2012). Rivera uploaded this 1.19 minute video clip in November of 2012, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 14,108. This video clip is a parody of another video clip that became viral in the Philippines about an actual incident earlier that same year involving a female commuter of Metro Manila's light rail who became hysterical after an altercation with a female security guard stationed at the passenger and baggage check point. "Amalayer" is short for "Am I a liar?" which were the words that the passenger repeatedly hurled at the security guard. What amused many Filipinos about the original video was the seeming incongruence between the elitist English verbal assaults of the female commuter and the predominantly lower-middle to low-class context of Metro Manila's light rail system. Rivera's clip this time is no longer set in her bathroom—she has a cameraman and a male security guard plays the role of the harassed female security guard.

Girls in the Club (2013). Rivera uploaded this 2.20 minute video clip in September of 2013, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 12,413. Here, she classifies partying ladies into nine types: the virgins, the Instagrammers, the anti-socials, the thirsty bitches, the ugly hotties, the mean girls, the ratchets, the high-per people, and the hot mess. Rivera

does not talk but only dances in this video clip; thus, it is not certain which persona she is playing., The subtitles are both in English and Filipino.

Girls after a Breakup (2013). Rivera uploaded this 4.51 minute video clip in October of 2013, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 11,196. The video clip presents seven girls with seven different reactions to a breakup: the desperate, the slut, the emo, the bitter hater, the changed woman, the stalker, and the killer. In most of these types, Rivera uses American English, except for the bitter hater and the killer who both speak in Filipino.

No Other Woman (Parody) (2011). Rivera uploaded this 6.14 minute video clip in October of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 10,618. In this video clip, Petra Mahalimuyak introduces Rivera, who parodies the melodramatic acting of the two lead female characters played by Christine Reyes and Anne Curtis in the 2011 movie *No Other Woman* (Bayani, 2011). The movie is about how a wife deals with her discovery of her husband's affair with the daughter of a business associate. In the video clip, Rivera uses a wig stand to represent the wayward husband played by Derek Ramsay in the movie.

How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer! (2012). Rivera uploaded this 4.29 minute video clip in March of 2012, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 7,916. This video clip is an experimental marketing venture done by Samsung to promote some camera and cellphone products. In this video clip, Petra Mahalimuyak gives a tutorial on how to stage and capture beautiful pictures at the beach during summer. It was taken on location, instead of in Rivera's bathroom. She had a hired sidekick this time, instead of just a wig stand, and the shots looked like they were done by a professional crew.

Mga Pasimple (Conyo versus Jologs) (2011). Rivera uploaded this 5.55 minute video clip in July of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 7,865. *Mga Pasimple* is a Filipino phrase that, roughly translated, means "manners of acting that are not too obvious." This video clip has Petra Mahalimuyak discussing the difference between how the *conyos* i.e., rich kids acting cool, and the *jologs* i.e., poor kids trying to be cool, behave in certain situations like in answering the phone, singing the lyrics of a popular song, checking out an attractive person, posing in front of a camera, and dancing in a club. *Conyo* is a metropolitan Filipino derivative of the Spanish curse word "vagina" that became associated with the Spanish colonizers, then with the Spanish-speaking mestizos, and finally with the English-speaking metropolitan elites (Garvida, 2012). *Jologs* is a slang of uncertain origin that has replaced older categories such as *bakya*, a term derived from the wooden clogs worn by the masses; *baduy* that refers to the

deficient sense of fashion of the lower classes; and *promdi*, the contraction of “from the province.” *Jologs* is currently being replaced by another slang—*jejemon*. In this video clip, Rivera parodies both the *conyos* and the *jologs*.

Make-up Tutorial by Petra Mahalimuyak (2011). Rivera uploaded this 7.36 minute video clip in April of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 7,811. In this video clip, Petra Mahalimuyak parodies the make-up tutorial video clips of the famous American Michelle Phan. Rivera’s video clip hints at it being shot in America but for a Filipino audience as Petra Mahalimuyak mentions cosmetic prices in dollars, and deems it necessary to explain how some makeup items are called in the Philippines and how Filipinas are fond of using skin whiteners.

How to Create Your Signature Smile (2012). Rivera uploaded this 6.04 minute video clip in June of 2012, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 7,649. This video clip is again an experimental marketing venture of Samsung. In this video clip, Petra Mahalimuyak gives a tutorial on how to stage and capture distinctive smiles that can readily be uploaded to Facebook or YouTube. The same sidekick in “How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer!” reappears here with some more sidekicks. The video clip was taken in some upscale apartment or condominium unit and again looked like it was shot by professionals.

Annoying Selfies on Instagram (2013). Rivera uploaded this 4.35 minute video clip in September of 2013, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 6,572. Rivera parodies how eight types of ladies—the Asians, the depressed, the fashionistas, the fit chicks, the models, the bad girls, the Barbie dolls, and the girls with annoying smiles—take selfies. Rivera does not talk in this video clip, but the whole production is peppered with both English and Filipino subtitles.

How to Act in a Horror Movie (2011).” Rivera uploaded this 3.53 minute video clip in May of 2011, and it is currently having an average monthly view of 6,140. In this video clip, Petra Mahalimuyak parodies five cliché scenes in horror movies: the run, the hide and seek, the suspense, the scream, and the exorcism. The shots alternate from Rivera’s bathroom to other places in her house in Las Vegas. She definitely had a cameraman for her moving shots, and she acknowledges that her cousin Jeremy helped her in the editing.

The Semiology of Barthes

The hermeneutic approach that was used in the analysis of Rivera’s top fifteen video clips is the semiology of Barthes. Because his semiology had evolved in his lifetime, it is important to note that the Barthesian semiology used in this paper is the one found in his book *Mythologies* (1972). The said book is composed of essays that Barthes wrote monthly from 1954 to 1956

for the periodicals *Esprit* and *Les Lettres Nouvelles*. He later on compiled these essays, gave them a theoretical discussion through another essay entitled “Myth Today,” and published the collection in 1957.

Barthes’ monthly essays analyzed some icons of popular culture such as wrestling, a detergent commercial, wine, milk, the brain of Albert Einstein, striptease, and Citroen. His analyses were intended to unveil the hidden discourses behind these icons that he believed were tainted by the ideology of the ruling class. His strategy was founded on the thoughts of three great figures of modern western philosophy: Karl Marx (1818-1883), Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) (Barthes, 1972).

The German philosopher Carl Marx believed that the elements of culture, especially those that mesmerize and tame the masses such as art, literature, and religion are there in order to conceal the deep-seated contradictions created by the then-emerging capitalism (Wolff, 2015). This Marxist insight inspired Barthes to unearth the hidden discourses behind some icons of popular culture (Barthes, 1975). Meanwhile, the Swiss linguist Saussure was convinced about the necessity of establishing a science that would deal with the sign which he named “semiology” (Barthes, 1972). Saussure, furthermore, was the one who conceptualized the structure of the sign as constituted by the “signifier” or the visual or acoustic image, and the “signified” or the concept or the mental image (Barthes, 1972). *Mythologies* is Barthes (1972) attempt to construct his own semiology based on the Saussurian conception of the sign.

The Austrian physician, neurologist, and founder of psychoanalysis Freud thought that some distinctive dreams are in effect signs of mental elements that are based on a given individual’s experiences and desires (Barthes, 1972). He endowed what formerly was merely an occult practice of interpretation of dreams with a scientific and rational form. He used his own version of interpretation of dreams as one method for his bigger project of psychoanalysis that was geared towards the organization and narrativization of some of the conscious and unconscious experiences and desires of individuals (Barthes, 1972). From Freud, Barthes (1972) gleaned the insight that semiology is not different from the interpretation of dreams in the sense that semiology is also the process of narrativizing the unconscious discourses that are concealed beneath some icons of popular culture.

As already mentioned, Barthes appropriated the Saussurian sign for constructing his own semiology. Saussure’s conceptualization of the sign as constituted by the signifier and the signified is seen in Figure 1.

(1) Signifier	(2) Signified
(3) Sign	

Figure 1. The Sign according to Saussure (Barthes, 1972).

This Saussurian construct was specifically used by Barthes to build his first level of conceptualization, which he referred to as “level of language.” His semiology was supposed to go deeper than Saussure’s, though the latter’s construct served as a stepping stone for his conceptualization of the myth (Barthes, 1972):

(1) Signifier	(2) Signified	
(3) Sign (4) SIGNIFIER		(5) SIGNIFIED
(6) SIGN		

Figure 2. The Myth as a Deeper Sign according to Barthes (1972).

Figure 2 shows how Barthes built on Saussure’s construct in order to conceptualize the Barthesian myth. The Saussurian sign (number 3) at the level of language stands as the Barthesian signifier (number 4) at the level of the Barthesian myth or at the level of signification.

For the reason that the term “signifier,” “signified,” and “sign” were used twice each in the Barthesian construct of the myth, Barthes decided to give some of them more technical terms (See Figure 3). Hence, the signified (numbers 2 and 5) was renamed “concept”; one of the signifiers (number 4) was renamed “meaning” as it was the end element of the Saussurian construct, and at the same time “form,” as it was the starting element of the deeper construct of the myth; and the sign (number 6) was renamed “signification” (Barthes, 1972).

(1) Signifier	(2) Signified (Concept)	
(3) Sign (4) SIGNIFIER (Meaning/Form)		(5) SIGNIFIED (Concept)
(6) SIGN (Signification)		

Figure 3. The More Articulated Construct of the Myth according to Barthes (1972).

Through this more articulated construct of the myth, Barthes was able to show clearly the complex characteristics of the signifier (number 4) that behaves as meaning in as far as the Saussurian construct of the sign is concerned, and as form in as far as the Barthesian construct of the myth is concerned. According to Barthes (1972), the oscillation of this signifier between meaning and form or between being filled and being empty, is what opens the possibility for it to be filled with a deeper signified (number 5), so as to create in the process a new sign (number 6) or signification or myth.

Myth, for Barthes (1972), has nothing to do with ancient legends or folklores. Rather, his usage of the word is closer to “contemporary beliefs” or “knowledges that are devoid of solid bases or foundations” (p. 107). In addition, myths are discourses that are both visible and hidden beneath some icons of a given society, especially icons of popular culture. Mythology, therefore, pertains to his proposed system of how to deal with these contemporary myths.

Because of the fact that the signifier (number 4) is meaning (or it is filled), it follows that it has the capacity to call people’s attention to itself. But because this same signifier is also form (or it is empty), it can also pretend that it does not call their attention in the first place (Barthes, 1972). This is one of the effects of the signifier’s oscillation between meaning and form. In effect, the myth could conceal not only its being a myth but more so the vast discourse that it nestles in by presenting its totality as one natural and innocuous phenomenon.

For Saussure (as cited by Storey, 1997), the connection of the signifier (number 1) and the signified (number 2), or in other words the formation of the linguistic sign (number 3), is more often than not an arbitrary process. For example, the name “dog” (as a signifier) and the concept “dog” (as a signified) have no natural and logical connection to each other. If it so happens that “cat” or “pig” becomes the signifier of the concept dog, this will not result in any conceptual or logical problem. Thus, it does not make much sense to raise the question of who connected together the two elements, except when we are dealing with technical terms and neologism that have clear historical origins.

But at the level of the myth or signification, Barthes (1972) believed that the connection of the signifier (number 4) and the signified (number 5), which leads to the formation of the mythical sign (number 6) or signification, could no longer be arbitrary. Because the oscillating signifier (number 4) has already been endowed with meaning at the level of language, it would already have a conceptual and logical relation with its prospective signified (number 5). In the absence of arbitrariness, it makes sense to raise the question of who connected the two elements together. When Barthes raised

such question, he had two suspects in mind: the left or the radicals, and the right or the conservatives.

Following the spirit of Marx, Barthes (1972) was convinced that the process of creating a myth could not be done by the left. He reasoned that if the left were unorganized, it would not have the time and energy to generate myths as its individuals would be preoccupied with their livelihoods amidst the grinding difficulties. Yet if the left were organized, it would still not have the time and energy to generate myths as it would be too preoccupied with the pressing tasks of activism and revolutionary struggles. Barthes, however, conceded that if a given myth were indeed generated by a sector from the left, such a leftist sector would just be a former leftist sector that had already turned away from leftist tasks of activism and revolutionary struggle and was instead mired in the sinister tasks of propaganda and dictatorship.

If the real left cannot generate myths, then Barthes (1972) was without a choice but to blame the right as the source of myths. He reasoned that, first and foremost, this wing has the motive to generate myths because in a modern society the ruling classes do not want to be identified as the ruling classes and as the ones who spawned social contradictions. Secondly, this wing has enough capacity and time to indulge in myth-making as it controls all the aspects of law, morality, religion, education, aesthetics, and entertainment. Barthes took it as his mission to de-conceal the myths generated by the right, so that everyone could see them more clearly, grasp their hidden contradictions, and hopefully empower everyone to react more appropriately.

As he studied the myths nestled in some icons of popular culture, Barthes (1972) was able to catalogue at least seven rhetorical strategies used by the right in propagating these same myths. First among these is the process of inoculation or vaccination, which for him is about the discussion or admission of some small evils so as to distract the attention of the people from the bigger and more ingrained evils. Second among these is the erasure of history which is intended to turn the people's attention on the present and prevent them from taking a deeper and wider historical look at a given issue. A critical retrospect would usually reveal suspicious details.

Third among these rhetorical strategies is the process of identification, and this has something to do with the manipulation of the representation of the non-elite and non-elitist practices and ways of life in accordance with the image and terminologies of the elite. In the strategy of identification, individuals, practices, and ways of life that cannot really be represented as elite are simply packaged as exotic spectacles or things that may be different but are actually devoid of significance in the world of the elite. The fourth strategy is the use of tautology or the way of reasoning and explaining that

states the very same thing that needs to be justified or explained in the first place. Thus, in traditional logic, tautology is also called “circular reasoning.” The fifth style is known as “neither-norism” or the reduction of a situation as merely consisting of two alternatives: good or evil. This reduction is followed by insinuations that the reader/audience/receiver should follow the good alternative (Barthes, 1972).

Sixth among these rhetorical strategies is the quantification of quality, and this has something to do with the modern-day bias of measuring all things in terms of money and numbers. The seventh strategy is the statement of the fact, similar to tautology but made more elegant through the use of traditional sayings. Barthes (1972) did not close the possibility of the existence of other rhetorical strategies that he may have failed to catalogue.

Locating the Place of Rivera in the Philippine Social Hierarchy

Barthes (1972) made it clear that the ideological discourses or myths concealed behind icons of popular culture are the creations of the elite. But Barthes did not say that only the elite can propagate such myths. Hence, whatever is the social class of Rivera would actually be irrelevant because anyone can consciously or unconsciously spread the ideology of the ruling classes. But being able to establish that Rivera is part of, or connected with, the ruling classes would actually strengthen this paper’s hypothesis that the humor of her productions is premised on some unconscious or semi-conscious ideological discourses common among the dominant Philippine social classes.

Pinpointing Rivera’s social class is easier said than done due to the fact that she moved from Los Angeles to Manila, then to Las Vegas, and back to Manila. The Rivera in Las Vegas who worked in an electronics store then in one of the restaurants of the Austrian-American celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck may belong to the working class in the American social hierarchy, but the same Rivera who connects to her Filipino viewers and followers in the cyber world is another story as far as Philippine social hierarchy is concerned (Dela Cruz, 2011). Her family was able to send her to the fairly expensive Center for Asian Culinary Studies. In addition, it must not be forgotten that this same Rivera was once a *balikbayan* (a Filipino returning to the Philippines after spending a long period of time abroad) in Manila from Los Angeles, and would again become a *balikbayan* in the same city of Manila from Las Vegas. *Balikbayans* are generally reputed to have some dollar savings that can take their social standing a few notches higher.

By reading her video clips side by side with her cryptic biography, it can be ascertained that Rivera does not belong to the lower rungs of the

Philippine social hierarchy. She makes too many unsympathetic remarks against the *jologs* or poor kids trying to be cool; she looks down on the Filipino commoners' taste for sweet spaghetti and food that is heavily seasoned with Magic Sarap; she herself in her video clip *How to be a Conyo* (2012a) identifies culinary training centers such as the one she studied in as *conyo*-infested schools; and she is too familiar with cosmetics, clubbing, and fashion dos and don'ts (Rivera 2011e, Rivera 2012a, & Rivera 2011g).

But will these proofs put her in the upper crust of Philippine society? Reading again her video clips side by side her cryptic biography, it would not look like she belongs to that upper crust either. She mocks the *conyos* or rich kids acting cool; her family enrolled her in a certificate course instead of a degree program; she aspires to have a career in show business; and she did not object to having to take a job as a store clerk and restaurant staff (Rivera 2011e & Rivera, 2012a).

It is more logical to think that Rivera belongs to the Philippine middle class. Her family might have ample resources after coming home from Los Angeles. But such might not be enough to invest in the longer but high-yielding degree programs such as business management, law, or medicine. Her family's choice for her to get a certificate from a culinary school reveals a desire for her to hurry back to the United States and work in the robust food service industry of Las Vegas. Rivera's family therefore could be that kind of family that both aspires and have the actual means to aspire to move higher in the Philippine social hierarchy even at the expense of sending some of its members abroad. Families such as this are more often than not receptive to the tastes and ways of life not only of the blessed members of the Philippine upper crust, but also of the more blessed North Americans. Hence, Rivera could be a very effective vector of Barthesian myths.

Semiological Analyses

This paper has been able to identify at least seven icons of Philippine popular culture that occur and recur in Rivera's top 15 video clips: (a) the persona of Petra Mahalimuyak; (b) the exaggerated Filipino accent and the *conyo* idiolect; (c) the "amalayer" girl; (d) the Filipino melodrama; (e) Filipino addiction to Facebook; (f) the *jologs*; and (g) skin whitening products.

The Persona of Petra Mahalimuyak

The name "Petra" was a nickname given to Rivera back in high school for being a funny girl, and "Mahalimuyak" is an old Tagalog word for "fragrant" that she picked for its odd sound (Dela Cruz, 2011).

The persona of Petra Mahalimuyak recurred in 10 of the 15 fifteen video clips of Rivera, and it has become the persona Rivera is identified with the most. Petra is a Spanish name and could have been given to a number of

Filipinas in the past. But even with the resurgence of Spanish-sounding names, Petra did not become popular again. In Philippine popular culture, the name Petra is associated with the feminized name of the gay character Peter in the movie *Petrang Kabayo* (*Petra the Horse*) which was originally released in 1988 and remade in 2010, the same year Rivera went to Las Vegas (Dela Cruz, 2011). Hence, the persona of Petra Mahalimuyak has a distinct intertext with the persona of *Petrang Kabayo*.

The persona of *Petrang Kabayo* (Daramas, 2010), first played by the straight Roderick Paulate and then by the extremely popular gay host and comedian Vice Ganda or Jose Marie Borja Vical in real life, propagates the stereotype of the screaming drag queen that in effect reinforces the homophobia of Filipinos and marginalized the Filipino gays. The persona of Petra Mahalimuyak deploys a subtle intertextual rhetorical strategy to convey its hidden myth, something that was not catalogued by Barthes. As an intertext of *Petrang Kabayo*, she surreptitiously propagates the homophobic ideology earlier propagated and re-propagated by *Petrang Kabayo*. It is not a coincidence that in Rivera's video clip *Types of Gay Guys* that she uploaded in November of 2013, homophobia and its accompanying symbolic violence against the gays occur and recur (Rivera, 2013e). But this clip deploys the rhetorical strategy of statement of the fact to convey the same myth.

The Exaggerated Filipino Accent and the Conyo Idiolect.

The exaggerated Filipino accent is the main identifier/marker of Petra Mahalimuyak, recurring in at least 10 of Rivera's top 15 video clips. Rivera laments how she has been called a copycat of Filipino-Canadian video clip performer Mikey Bustos who also uses this same accent that is supposed to be noticeable among first-generation Filipinos living and working in Anglophone North America. She argues that she had perfected the fake accent way back in her high school days in Manila prior to Bustos's video clip productions (Dela Cruz, 2011). But for Filipinos who remain in the Philippines, the humor in Rivera and Bustos's exaggerated Filipino accent is hinged on a false assumption/expectation that Filipinos should speak the English language correctly, i.e., the way a native of North America would. Without this false assumption/expectation, a neutral foreign audience would even be amazed how such Pacific islanders can speak fairly understandable English.

This false assumption/expectation is precisely the myth concealed behind the funny-sounding Filipino accent. Rivera, Bustos, and all other Filipinos who exploit this same humor propagate this mythical assumption/expectation through the rhetorical strategy of inoculation. By laughing at their own trivially accented English, Filipinos are distracted from asking

the bigger question on the validity or necessity of the said assumption/expectation. The rhetorical strategy of erasure of history is also being deployed here because by preventing Filipinos from taking a historical look on how they end up with such a well-ingrained assumption/expectation; instead, they are led to focus on the superficiality of correcting their accent, just as Petra Mahalimuyak needed to morph into Tiffany Madison to prove that her Filipino accent is just a performance (Rivera, 2011c). Rivera and Bustos are actually reinforcing the resistance among many Filipinos to transition into a mother language education and to a higher education based on the national language. For more than a hundred years, Philippine education has been wasting so much time and learning opportunities on just trying to master the English language (Cruz, 2014).

Rivera poking fun on the *conyo* idiolect in the video clip *Mga Pasimple (Conyo versus Jologs)* (Rivera, 2011e) is intimately connected with her exaggerated Filipino accent. If the latter is aimed towards the lower classes, who have difficulties using English, the former is aimed towards the upper classes, who turn out to have difficulties as well with the same foreign language. The *conyo* idiolect is the way metropolitan Filipinos from the upper class cope with English by mixing English and Filipino vocabularies and sentence structures (Garvida, 2012). In the video clip *How to be a Conyo* (Rivera, 2012a), which is not part of productions analyzed in this paper, Rivera labeled Tag-lish (Tagalog and English) the official language of the *conyos*. *Conyo* idiolect is in many ways pidgin English. But because it is used by the elite, many Filipinos find it cute and acceptable (Garvida, 2012). But not the American-born Rivera. Carrying the same mythical assumption/expectation that Filipinos should speak the English language “correctly,” she makes fun of the *conyo* idiolect in order to pull the metropolitan upper classes closer to the American English. If this paper would condone Rivera’s poking fun on the *conyo* idiolect, it will be for the sake of pulling the Philippine upper classes closer to the Filipino language, as well as for the sake of showing to the rest of the Philippine social classes that if the Filipino metropolitan upper classes are finding it difficult to master the English language the rest of the classes will find it even more difficult to do so. To propagate the same myth against the *conyo* idiolect, Rivera deploys the same rhetorical strategies of inoculation and erasure of history.

The “Amalayer” Girl.

Rivera’s parody of the “amalayer” girl reinforces some of the tacit assumptions of metropolitan Filipinos: that English is the language of the elite, that the Metro Manila light rail system is a transportation system for the masses, that the members of the upper classes should be using their own private vehicles, and that Filipino is the language of the masses. It is

these assumptions that produce the incongruence between the English-speaking hysterical girl and the setting, as well as the incongruence between the language she used and her addressee, the female security guard. These discordant scenes are what made the original amalayer video amusing to Filipinos and consequently viral. This paper has already discussed rather lengthily Rivera's linguistic ideology as concealed in the preceding icons. Thus, under this third icon, this paper's semiological analysis will focus on the myths pertaining to the Metro Manila light rail system and the general transportation problem of Metro Manila.

Rivera's parody of the amalayer girl takes away the attention of her viewers from the facts that the railway system is clearly a mismanaged system and that the government has neglected for so long the urban planning of Metro Manila, and veers it towards the unfortunate commuter who might have been simply frustrated with the railway system's substandard service, coupled with its employees' lack of professionalism. The Metro Manila light rail system has difficulties managing itself, primarily because politicians do not want it to charge realistic fares—they want to pander to the masses but are afraid of any backlash if they do otherwise (Okada, et al., 2003). It is only in Metro Manila where the fare of the railway system is unbelievably cheaper than the fare of the buses and jeeps plying the same routes. To cut labor costs, aspects of operation are farmed out to private agencies. Thus, we see the proliferation of unprofessional and transient security guards, cleaners, and maintenance crew. Corruption is another reason why this railway system is mismanaged. Just very recently, a general manager of one of the three lines of this railway system was dismissed from office due to allegation of corruption. The Catholic Church contributes something to this mess, too. Its looming threat against politicians who advocate population management has resulted in a fast growing metropolis that translates into coaches filled to overcapacity, generating stress among passengers and accelerating the deterioration of the coaches and tracks.

The parody of the amalayer girl also conceals the mythical assumptions that the Metro Manila light rail system is a transportation system for the masses and that the members of the elite classes should be using their own private vehicles (Fillone, Montalbo & Tiglao, 2007). For a megacity that is home to one-tenth of the Philippine population, it is not wise for the government to rely on private vehicles to solve the transportation problems. Metropolitan Filipinos should learn to demand more from their politicians to address the lack of an efficient mass transportation. The Metro Manila light rail system should be functional and comfortable enough to serve not only the masses but all social classes (2007). Otherwise the upper classes will continue to buy their own private vehicles, clogging

further the insufficient streets of Metro Manila. All of these foundational problems were momentarily shoved under the rug because Filipinos hurled their indignation on the hapless amalayer girl, to the point of driving her to depression and to contemplate suicide. Inoculation and the erasure of history are the rhetorical strategies deployed by Rivera to propagate her myths on the Filipino and English languages, as well as on Metro Manila's mass transportation that were neatly tucked beneath the iconic amalayer girl.

The Filipino Melodrama

Rivera's video clip *No Other Woman (Parody)* (2011g) is not only a parody of the 2011 movie of the same title but of the Philippine movie industry as a whole that has not only drastically declined in terms of production rate but has also been pushed to a narrow corner of specializing in small-budget and easy-to-create melodramas, horror stories, and slapstick comedies (Flores, 2012). The main factor that drove the Philippine movie industry to its current pathetic state is a combination of the Filipino elite's colonial taste for English movies and the dramatic surge in the Hollywood production budget. Unable to compete with their American counterparts, Philippine movie outfits marketed their low budget productions to the unsophisticated lower classes that in the long run pulled down the standards of their films and in the process further alienated the elite Filipino moviegoers (Flores, 2012).

Rivera zeroes in, though, on the Filipino melodrama that has become a tired and repetitious genre that is too dependent on superstars and some generous peppering of quotable quotes (Flores, 2012). Her poking fun on the Filipino melodrama, which is one of the three drying streams in the Philippine movie industry, could be read as her critique on the deplorable status of Philippine cinema. But her take should not be read in isolation from the other intention of her video clip, which is to show movie outfits that she is a perfect fit in the same industry she is panning. Inoculation and the erasure of history are again the rhetorical strategies deployed by Rivera to propagate her ideology of acceptance of surrender, concealed beneath the iconic Filipino melodrama. The irony in Rivera's clip impels Filipinos to just accept the misfortune that has befallen their movie industry and allow Hollywood to dominate Philippine cinemas, thereby further reinforcing the deeply-rooted colonial aesthetics and taste of the Filipinos and bidding goodbye the vast potential that a stronger Philippine movie industry can offer for the socio-cultural development of the country.

Filipino Addiction to Facebook

Rivera's video clip *How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer!* (2012b) is not just a tutorial on how to take memorable pictures from the beach. It is neither just an experimental campaign of the Korean electronic manufacturing giant Samsung. It is more about egging on Filipinos to take pictures that are worth posting on Facebook, for towards the end of the video clip, Rivera endorses the Samsung camera's capability to connect directly to the internet and upload whatever picture it has captured. This same campaign strategy is repeated in Rivera's video clip *How to Create your Signature Smile* (2012c), and the video clip *Annoying Selfies on Instagram* (2012b) is an intertext of these two earlier video clips.

How to Have a Picture Perfect Summer! came out summer of 2012. It should be noted that by the summer, the Philippines was already a world record holder when it comes to the sheer number of Filipino Facebook users. It is currently estimated that more than one fourth of the Philippine population is connected to Facebook (Greene & Pagulayan, 2014). But do these numbers translate to the development of the intellectual capital of the Filipinos? The 2014 master's thesis of Filipino-American Genevieve Molina at Harvard University says otherwise: Filipinos are among the most unintelligent and irresponsible Facebook users (as cited in Greene & Pagulayan, 2014). This trait could already be gleamed from how the amalayer girl was bashed based only on a fragmentary video clip that was irresponsibly uploaded on YouTube. Molina's finding has been corroborated by the research done by the Asian Institute for Understanding Humor and Silly Walks that establishes that Filipino Facebook users are prone to comment on topics and information that they have not even thoroughly read (as cited in Robles, 2015).

It appears that Facebook has been appropriated by millions of Filipino users as just another venue for socialization and showing off their affluence and social standing. The traditional Filipino practices of family/group bonding, fiesta, *tsismisan* (gossiping), and *usisahan* (i.e., intrusive curiosity on the private lives of others) have invaded the cyber world. It is in this context that Rivera's tutorials on how to take orchestrated Facebook-quality pictures became appealing to Filipino viewers. It is in this same context that her tutorials would also turn out to be a reinforcement of the Filipinos' excessive attachment to this social medium. The rhetorical strategy of statement of the fact is what Rivera deploys here reinforcing discourse to the Filipino Facebook users.

Addiction to Facebook, just like addiction to alcohol or drugs, is not a harmless condition. As a recent phenomenon of the culture industry, this addiction can be readily analyzed using the framework developed

by Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903-1969). For Horkheimer and Adorno, the more immediate effect of the culture industry on the people is the sequestering of their time that could have been used to reflect about themselves, their conditions, and the possibilities of further improving such conditions (Horkheimer & Weber, 2002). Filipino social media users spend an average of four hours and fifteen minutes a day on Facebook and the other social media—a lot of wasted hours daily (Igna, 2015). But the more subtle effect of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno further explained, is the intensification of people's desire to consume the products of capitalism (Horkheimer & Weber, 2002).

Theorizing on traditional mass media, these two social critics have noted how the culture industry can mesmerize its audience into consumption (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002), but they did not have the slightest idea on how more powerful Facebook can intensify consumption. With traditional mass media, the audience remains the audience of culture industry. With social media, the audience/user also becomes the producers of the culture industry. Hence, when a Filipino Facebook user represents him/herself through Facebook, he/she must intensify his/her consumption first before taking that impressive photograph. In traditional mass media, the audience merely imitates the contents of the culture industry sooner or later through consumption; in the social media, the audience/user must consume first in order for him/her to become part of the producers of this more participative culture industry.

The Jologs.

In the video clip *Mga Pasimple (Conyo versus Jologs)* (2011e), Rivera derides the socially awkward behavior of the *jologs*. The myth underlying this ridicule can be grasped more clearly if the *jologs* behavior/culture is compared and contrasted not only with its apparent opposite, the *conyo* behavior/culture, but with these related categories: the *sosyal* (pertaining to the upper social classes), the *elegante* (elegant), and the *simple* (simple, modest, unpretentious). These five behavioral/cultural categories are highly class-based and can be studied more effectively if they are contextualized in a well-articulated framework such as the one developed by the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002).

Bourdieu's (1989) conceptual framework is based on his distinction between economic and cultural capitals. The traditional Marxist social classification of low, middle, and upper social classes is merely based on economic capital. Bourdieu's revised social classification is based on both economic and cultural capitals. By using the economic capital as his x axis and the cultural capital as his y axis, he was able to present an alternative social classification consisting of four quadrants: 1) people with high cultural

and high economic capitals (quadrant 1); 2) people with high cultural but low economic capitals (quadrant 2); 3) people with low cultural but high economic capitals (quadrant 3); and 4) people with low cultural and low economic capitals (quadrant 4).

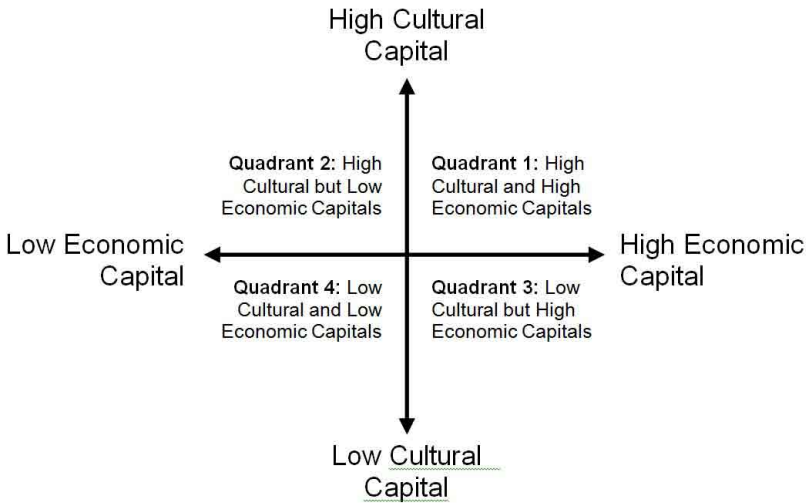


Figure 4: Bourdieu’s Alternative Conceptualization of the Social Classes Based on Economic (X Axis) and Cultural (Y Axis) Capitals (Bourdieu, 1986).

People in quadrant 1 belong to the old rich families and are definitely part of the ruling classes. Those in quadrant 2 are the professionals, teachers, and artists who may not be rich but are still part of the ruling classes because they are the ones who create and recreate the dominant culture. Those in quadrant 3 are the new rich and businessmen with lower educational qualifications but who are also part of the ruling classes. Those in quadrant 4 are the impoverished and uneducated masses that constitute the lower classes.

Figure 5 superimposes the behavioral/cultural categories *jologs*, *conyo*, *sosyal*, *elegante*, and *simple* on Bourdieu’s classification. The category *simple* can run through all of the four quadrants as all social classes can opt to be simple, modest, and unpretentious in their behavioral/cultural expressions and tastes. The category *elegante* is proper to quadrants 1 and 2, as elegance presupposes good breeding and culture which people from quadrant 3 and 4 do not possess. The category *jologs* is proper to quadrants 3 and 4, as this category presupposes a failed grasp of the form and content of the supposedly “appropriate” culture and behavior. The categories *sosyal* and *conyo* are proper to quadrants 1 and 3, as these categories presuppose a certain level of economic means.

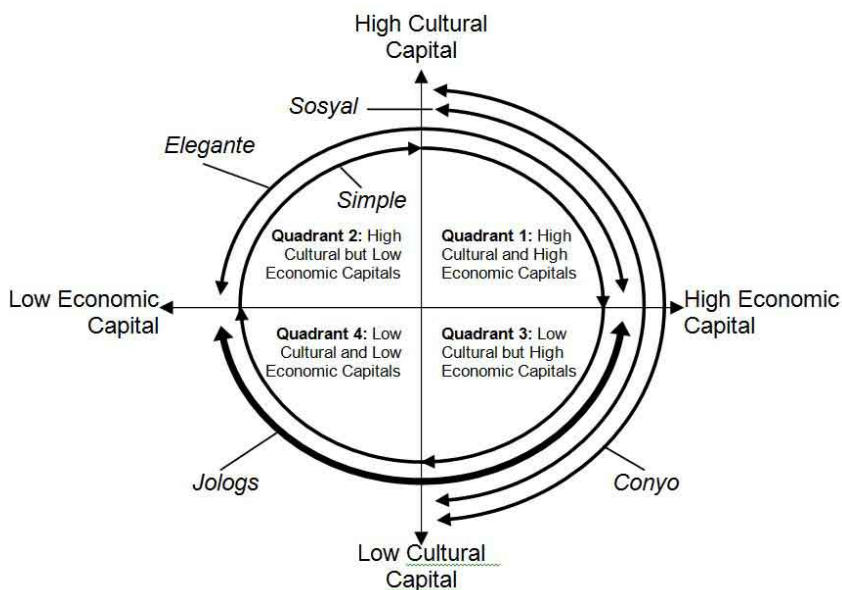


Figure 5: Superimposition of the Categories of *Jologs*, *Conyo*, *Sosyal*, *Elegante* and *Simple* on the Four Quadrants of Bourdieu.

Figure 5, therefore, suggests that the opposite of *jologs* is not necessarily *conyo*, but *elegante* and that there is very little distinction between *sosyal* and *conyo*. Ridiculing the *jologs* is a classist symbolic violence that is based on the hidden assumption that the *jologs* have failed in their attempt to become the *elegante*, or the *sosyal*, or the *conyo*, and that the *elegante*, the *sosyal*, and the *conyo* display the more appropriate behavior/culture. The myth underlying Rivera’s portrayal of the *jologs*, therefore, consists of her reinforcement of the hidden assumptions that make the *jologs* appear ridiculous to some Philippine social classes. Rivera uses the rhetorical strategies of identification/exotization and statement of the fact to propagate her mythical treatment of the *jologs*.

Skin Whitening Products.

In the video clip *Make-up Tutorial by Petra Mahalimuyak* (2011a), Rivera applies some cosmetic concealer on her face and states, “Usually people would put foundation after, but for me, I don’t need that. Because, first of all, we under restriction and I don’t need to spend money on something that I don’t even need. You know. And I am already white. And take note, this is a hundred percent natural. There is no glutathione, no Likas Papaya, no whitening soap, no bleach, no nothing like that. This is a

hundred percent God-given gift. I just want to tell you that” (2011a). There is a hint of superiority and pride in Rivera’s statement that she is fair-skinned, unlike most Filipinas of Malayan descent who she thinks should be using skin whiteners. But when Rivera became a celebrity in Manila, she either found herself not fair skinned enough to need skin whiteners or secretly signed a contract to be an endorser of Luxxe, an online distributor of skin whitening and slimming products.

The Filipinos’ relationship with skin whiteners had already been exhaustively analyzed by cultural critic Rolando Tolentino, in his book *Disaster, Droga, at Skin Whitener* (2004). Notable among his findings are:

- 1) the brown Malayan skin is construed by most Filipinos as a lack;
- 2) although the use of skin whiteners is widespread among Filipinos, there is shame involved in such use as it would emphasize that by nature, one lacks the desired fairness;
- 3) the use of skin whiteners is embedded in wider and deeper colonial and patriarchal discourses, as to be white means to be closer to the Caucasian colonizers, and to be white means to be desirable to the male gaze; and
- 4) the skin is the Filipinos’ first line of protection and whoever can inscribe markings of power on such skin will have the opportunity to penetrate and control their being.

These findings are truly insightful. The fourth finding, while valid, however, can still be reformulated to become even more valid. At the level of everyday life, it is not the Caucasian colonizer nor the male who inscribes whiteness on the Filipino skin. Instead, it is the Filipino himself/herself who purchases the skin whitener and applies it on his/her skin. Thus, instead of looking at the Filipino skin as a protection that covers a pure and unspoiled being, it is more of a layer that hides an already colonized and patriarchally-engendered being who is ready to grab that skin whitener.

Rivera’s mention of skin whiteners is mythical in the sense that it helps in triggering that already colonized and patriarchally-engendered being. For those who are already inscribing fairness/colonization/patriarchy on their own skins, Rivera’s mythical remarks help in cancelling the feeling of shame that is usually experienced by Filipino users of skin whiteners. In other words, the icon of skin whitening products indeed conceals the vast discourses of colonization and patriarchy. Rivera propagates these myths through the rhetorical strategies of inoculation, statement of the fact, and erasure of history.

Conclusion

This paper shows that as far as the seven identified cultural icons contained in Rivera’s top 15 video clips are concerned, there are indeed some

unconscious and semi-unconscious ideological discourses that machinate to the great advantage of some dominant classes or groups in Philippine society. Table 2 summarizes this paper’s findings, specifying each cultural icon’s hidden myth, rhetorical strategy/ies, advantaged class/group, and disadvantaged class/group:

Table 2: The Concealed Myths, Rhetorical Strategies, Advantaged Classes/Groups, and Disadvantaged Classes/Groups of the Seven Cultural Icons Studied by this Paper.

Cultural Icon	Myth	Rhetorical Strategy	Advantaged Class/Group	Disadvantaged Class/Group
Persona of Petra	The certain stereotype of the homosexual Filipino that reinforces homophobia and marginalizes the homosexual Filipinos	Intertextuality and statement of the fact	Heterosexual males primarily and heterosexual females secondarily	Homosexual males
Filipino Accent and <i>Conyo</i> Idiolect	The idea that Filipinos should speak the English language perfectly	Inoculation and the erasure of history	Upper classes	Lower classes
“Amalayer” Girl	The ideas that the English language is the language of the elite; that the Filipino language is a commoners’ language; that the Metro Manila light rail system is a commoners’ transportation system; and that the members of the upper classes should be using their own private vehicles	Inoculation and the erasure of history	Political and bureaucratic elites	Metropolitan Filipinos in particular and the Filipino people in general
Filipino Melodrama	The colonial aesthetics of the Filipino moviegoers and the hegemony of the Hollywood film industry	Inoculation and the erasure of history	American film industry	Filipino film industry and the Filipino people in general
Filipino Addiction to Facebook	Reinforcement of the Filipino addiction to Facebook; and stoking Filipino consumerism	Statement of the fact	Multinational and local economic elites	Filipinos in general
<i>Jologs</i>	The idea that the <i>jologs</i> culture is a failed attempt to pursue the <i>elegante</i> , <i>sosyal</i> , and <i>conyo</i> cultures	Identification/exotization and statement of the fact	Upper classes	Lower classes

Cultural Icon	Myth	Rhetorical Strategy	Advantaged Class/Group	Disadvantaged Class/Group
Skin Whitener	The idea that the Malayan brown skin is inferior to the Caucasian fair skin	Inoculation, statement of the fact, and erasure of history	Multinational/ local economic elites and heterosexual males	Filipinas of Malayan extract and the Filipino people in general

Rivera’s most recurrent rhetorical strategies are statement of the fact, inoculation, and erasure of history. Aside from seven strategies catalogued by Barthes, Rivera uses another strategy in propagating a myth or ideology—the strategy of intertextuality. Rivera does not use the Barthesian strategies of tautology, neither-norism, and quantification of quality in as far as the seven cultural icons that were gleaned from her selected video clips are concerned.

Table 2 also shows that the classes or groups that gained something from the myths propagated by Rivera are not necessarily defined by economic power alone, but instead by some other sources of power such as gender, race, nationality, and political position. However, economic power remains the most recurrent foundation among the advantaged classes or groups. Although Rivera is not part of each and every dominant class or group, she turns out to be a suitable vector of their myths and ideologies because of her specific position in the Philippine’s social hierarchy.

Corollary to these findings, Table 2 also shows that the classes or groups that lost something from the myths and ideologies propagated by Rivera are also not necessarily defined by economic deficiencies alone, but instead by some other modes of deficiencies such as those emanating from gender, race, nationality, and political marginalization. Surprisingly, nationality turns out to be the most recurrent among the classes or groups that are disadvantaged by the myths and ideologies propagated by Rivera. It is the Filipino people in general that is placed in a disadvantageous position by the myths and ideologies that are tucked underneath Rivera’s video clips. Indeed, this paper shows that the seemingly harmless, engaging, and participative cultural practice of video clip production, the publication of which is facilitated by YouTube, is not exempt from the hegemony of the powerful classes or groups and could even reinforce the power and hegemony of such classes/groups.

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