

“Yes, you belong to me!”: Reflections on the JaDine Love Team Fandom in the Age of Twitter and in the Context of Filipino Fan Culture

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The concept of love teams—a pair of good-looking stars launched by a mainstream studio to appear in a succession of films, TV series, adverts, mall shows, etc.—is unique to Philippine entertainment not just because of their intense popularity among mass audiences but also because of their rich cultural history spanning decades since the beginning of Philippine cinema. This paper looks into one of today's biggest Filipino love teams, JaDine, the portmanteau of James Reid and Nadine Lustre. It situates them contextually in the past (how love teams are packaged and sold, how the audiences express their fanaticism, etc.) and present (in the age of Twitter and “block” screenings, the fan behaviour developed in social media, etc.). As equally important for analysis as these stars are their fans, and in light of JaDine's most recent film, *Never Not Love You*, this paper also looks into an incident on Twitter that reveals a lot about fan culture enabled by technology that further complicates the often overlooked position of love teams in cultural studies.

Keywords: love teams, Philippine cinema, media audiences, Twitter, fan studies

ONLINE: The Dominance of Internet Culture

On 11 July 2013, Oh No They Didn't (ONTD), the largest community of LiveJournal users across the world dedicated to pop culture and celebrity gossip, ran an entry entitled “Is the Philippines ready for a gay love team?” (Jaucian, 2011) Like most ONTD posts, it aggregated online articles, this time two commentaries written by Filipino columnists regarding the Philippine TV show *My Husband's Lover*, which centered on an affair between a married man and his gay lover. The first comment on the entry was from the user glamoramacastle (2013) saying: “Wtf is a love team? Sounds mormon” (para. 1). In five minutes, a response was given by the original poster, presumably a Filipino: “it would be like if leighton meester and ed westwick did every tv show and movie together for like, five straight years and always ended up together in all of them, and give out the illusion

that they may or may not be dating” (papillon, 2013. para. 2). Picking up on the reference to the American television series *Gossip Girl*, glamoramacastle (2013b) replied: “Thanks for educating me!” (para. 3).

What followed was a thread of comments incorporating GIFs, witty quips, and reactions talking about the romantic portrayal, let alone the existence, of gay lead characters on Philippine TV, as well as inquiries about what a “love team” is and how it works. As for the latter, the user anconeous (2013) summed it up:

A love team is basically how young stars here in the Philippines build their careers. Their home network (kinda like the studio days of old Hollywood) would pair one guy and one girl together and make them star in movies, TV shows, do mall tours, commercials, etc. Everything. A lot of them actually do end up dating each other in real life simply because they're with each other all the time. When they break up, most of the love team ends and the home network tries to pair them up again with other people to see if they'll click with the audiences. (para. 12)

It was a fairly standard and straightforward definition. But contained and articulated in this online interaction are the nuances of Filipino culture that has conformed to the standards and practices of its colonizer, demonstrated in how the analogy with Hollywood has made the term “love team” more understandable. Eventually, however, this culture has sought to find its own identity and allow its entertainment industry, particularly the commercial component of its national cinema, to be distinct and hence to some extent perplexing to outsiders. The existence of a gay love team (which essentially, based on the definition above, is not a love team) is merely the tip of the iceberg: To understand it better, one has to explain how love teams are grounded on heterosexuality and thus promote heteronormativity, and why this kind of transgression, displayed in the short-lived but groundbreaking TV shows such as *My Husband's Lover* and *The Rich Man's Daughter*, has come about only recently. It is also important to illuminate on the function of the media, in all its forms exhausted to the maximum, in the creation and proliferation of love teams, and how it plays a crucial role in analyzing fan behavior.

This paper aims to contribute to the literature on Filipino love teams, a phenomenon that has not been substantially documented, historically and sociologically, in academic writing. Considering it has existed and persisted in the three golden ages of Philippine cinema, one could only speculate on the lack of scholarly attention to it. The significance of examining love teams

cannot be overstated: They are a singular, most consistent component of the mainstream film industry that depends heavily on audience reception, on how fans can be mobilized for the financial success of the movie. The intricate and specific aspects of love team fandom (comparable to the large-scale studies on foreign texts attracting extreme fanaticism such as the *Star Wars* franchise and Marvel Cinematic Universe) lend itself to multitudes of intersectional analyses of fan behavior and activity. Going beyond the film text and toward a scrutiny of the audience can yield fresher insights into Filipino history and culture, allowing for a more expansive and plural understanding of the changing and unchanging preferences of the masses.

Using as a case study one of the biggest love teams working at present, whose rise to fame and influence are strongly rooted in the online discourse, this paper asserts the large role of social media in various displays of fandom and in the persistent iterations of fan culture over the decades. Instead of providing definitive answers, it situates the love team in the shifting, fluctuating landscape of film consumption and dwells on these queries: In the age of Twitter, what are the opportunities for fan expression? What are the struggles and conflicts, as well as the pleasures and liberties, enabled on



Fig. 1. The cover of the NCCA booklet on Filipino love teams (NCCA, 2004).

this platform that shape local fan culture? How does new media affect the performance of fandom?

OFFLINE: Before Online Happened

In 2004, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) organized a month-long event titled “*Mga Kuwento ng Pag-ibig: A Celebration of Love Theme and Love Teams in Philippine Cinema*,” which included film screenings, an extensive exhibit, and a forum on the role of romance movies in shaping popular culture. The volume of history it gathered, not to mention the busy periods ensconced in the eras it covered, was enough to make the Filipino cinephile’s heart flutter. In the collectible, picture-heavy booklet, it listed eight of the industry’s biggest love teams: Rogelio dela Rosa and Carmen Rosales, Pancho Magalona and Tita Duran, Nida Blanca and Nestor de Villa, Gloria Romero and Luis Gonzales, Amalia Fuentes and Juancho Gutierrez, Susan Roces and Eddie Gutierrez, Nora Aunor and Tirso Cruz III, and Vilma Santos and Christopher de Leon. Among the eight, Blanca and de Villa starred in the most number of films: more than 50, made between 1952 and 1987 (NCCA, 2004, p. 10). Additional curiosities included a list of celebrities who ended up as real-life couples (53 pairs!) as well as a catalog of pre-war love teams, studio love teams, and the award-winning love team (Rosa Rosal and Tony Santos).

There is no comprehensive study yet on the subject, but the concept of love teams appears to be very specific to Philippine entertainment. If one makes a simple Google search, a Wikipedia page is available, and all its content, from the overview to notable examples, is centered on the Filipino phenomenon (“Love team,” 2018). Wikipedia may not be authoritative and is obviously under-researched, but even on Google Scholar and Academia.edu, both websites considered broad and sound platforms for scholarly articles, the literature on this subject is unfortunately close to nil.

This may not be encouraging as a starting point. However, in addition to the NCCA exhibit, there are several articles online that, when put together, paint a comprehensible picture, one that may lack sufficient details and discourse but reminds the reader that there is a long and exciting history to Filipino love teams to be discovered, complemented by personal recollections by audiences who have grown watching them and being fans themselves (“17 popular love teams through the years,” 2015; “Love teams through the ages,” 2009; Belleza, 2017a; Belleza, 2017b). Although many of these movies are hard to find, and in most cases impossible to be seen because they are lost or have been neglected (Chua, 2017), the impact of love teams on local culture is undeniable due to their place in the collective consciousness: The audience’s familiarity with the tropes and

characterizations has helped established a genre in itself (Philtre, 2017). The consistency with which these movies are produced from one decade to another proves that show business is a machinery that entails constant improvement and fulfilment, with its workers merely working around the formula and replacing the bodies involved.

It becomes even more intriguing to learn that the first known Filipino love team — Mary Walter and Gregorio Fernandez — dates back to the silent era, paired in at least six films in the late 1920s to the mid 1930s (“Love teams through the ages,” 2009; Guerrero, 1978; Sotto, 2018). Their popularity coincided with the beginnings of the star system, as the local film industry gained wider viewership and hence more and more films were eventually made (Guerrero, 1978; Sotto, 2018). This link between stars and audiences, and the close relationship arising from it made permanent by patterns and traditions, had encouraged the establishment of big production studios (i.e., Sampaguita Pictures, LVN, Premiere Productions) which took advantage of introducing pairs of actors as love teams to draw more viewers to the cinemas. These studios had long closed down (LVN was eventually acquired), but this practice is still observed at present, almost a hundred years later, by the biggest media conglomerate in the country, ABS-CBN, with its steady stream of love teams who appear in its films, TV shows, magazines, advertisements, merchandise, and music recordings.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1972) talked about how in the confines of a capitalist society popular culture functions like a factory that creates standardized cultural goods—films, songs, books, magazines, radio and TV programs, etc.—and in the process produces receivers or audiences that are standardized as well, with these commodities, distributed via mass media, being used to make people passive and submissive. They called it “culture industry,” whose strong ties with capitalism show that all forms of culture have mechanisms that allow them to produce and reproduce consumers that adapt to the requirements of the system, resulting in “the circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger” (p. 121).

This is how love teams in Philippine entertainment have prospered and endured. Production studios manufacture them for profit, making them appear in all sorts of media and accessible for public consumption. The public in turn receive them, whether voluntarily or not, since love teams must be present everywhere for them to be valuable. These celebrities do (or are forced to do) all they can to stay relevant, and hence are expected to know not just one trade: They should know how to act, sing, dance, perform, host, all at the same time (Briones, 2016). Being a successful member of a love team does not stop at looking attractive: He or she must also be a

vessel of capabilities, his or her body a site of profitable long-term talent. When a love team does not work or no longer serves its purpose, studios simply move on, pair them with another, or manufacture another one. The comparison with the apparatuses and parallel conditions of a factory, in this case motivated by the creation of culture and maximization of revenue opportunities, could not have been more apt.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to suppose that the consumer-audiences, who are drawn deeply to the allure of celebrities, are unthinking and uncritical. Their attitudes toward film personalities, at times bordering on the obsessive, are defined by a range of factors. In his landmark work on stars and star-images, Richard Dyer (1979) persuasively argued about the significations of stars—what and how they mean to their followers, the meanings and values they carry in their representations in media texts, and how these significations intersect with the fan’s real-life interactions—and analyzed their sociological and semiotic functions. He emphasized the power of ideology in the reading of stars, how “textual analysis is properly ideological analysis” (p. 3), highlighting not just connection but more importantly identification.

Love teams are constructed and commodified for a specific audience—a palimpsest of meanings that cut across issues of gender, race, and class — and it is only reasonable to study the response to them (as manifested in their fans) with seriousness. Owing to the medium’s broad appeal, it is through cinema that they make an indelible mark on the public. Moviegoers are aware of the escape the silver screen offers and it is likely the main reason they are drawn to it—“the triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them” (Adorno & Horkheimer, p. 167)—with the romance projected on-screen and off-screen leveraged as an attraction, as a selling point. In another essay, I expounded further:

The creation and eventual proliferation of love teams are largely driven by a trajectory of commercial fare in which the end goal is to persuade people to *buy* them—they are merchandise offered in the most attractive packages promising the most delightful of rewards. They are brands whose first sign of success is to be recognized at first glance, manufactured with the clearest intention: to take the money and make more money—the best ones being those that do not make such aim obvious. The magic comes from making it all look wholesome, striking a balance between on-screen and off-screen intimacies that conform to accepted

standards of decency. Everything is done in exchange for *kilig*, for that priceless romantic pleasure felt upon seeing them, for the good feeling obtainable only from being part of their journey as a couple. (Bolisay, 2016)

UP Diksiyaryong Filipino (Almario, 2010) defines *kilig* as “*pagpanginig ng katawan na tila nalalamigan o para itaktak ang tubig pagkatapos maligo*” (p. 607), which refers to the shivering response of the body as though feeling cold or to shake off water after taking a bath. In this definition, *kilig* manifests physically and is a physical response. On the other hand, the definitions from the *Tagalog–English Dictionary* (English, 1986) go beyond this simple explanation and offer significant nuances. One is “to tremble; to shudder; to shiver,” and the example given is upon seeing a snake. Another is “to feel a thrill; to be thrilled; to have a shivering, exciting feeling,” like upon hearing the news. This latter definition extends to a description of feeling while reading adventure stories, and the shudder and tingling experienced by someone with a high fever. The final definition from the *Tagalog–English Dictionary* (1986) fully captures *kilig* in the context of love teams: “a thrill of emotion or excitement; a shivering, exciting feeling” (p. 331).

Foreign audiences might find the concept of *kilig* difficult to understand because of its uniquely cultural ties to the Filipino experience. *Kilig* is one facet of the Filipino identity performed diligently in commercial cinema. And most love teams produced in the Philippines, from the 1920s to the present, unequivocally made use of *kilig* and mastered its delivery—the



Fig. 2. JaDine over the years. Top left (“Till I Met You & On the Wings of Love - Jadine,” 2016); Top right (“Meet Nadine Lustre: Philippines’ multimedia princess,” 2019); Bottom left (“James, Nadine are the new faces of *Folded & Hung*,” 2017); Bottom right (Suleik, 2018).

secret ingredient in the formula—in order to lure droves of people to the theaters and establish some of the most iconic film stars of each generation.

JADINE: The Phenomenal Love Team in the Age of Social Media

It is in this admittedly brief but textural context that this paper is placing JaDine (pronounced “Jay-dean”)—the portmanteau of James Reid and Nadine Lustre—and in doing so makes a case for their role in continuing a tradition that accentuates the audience as a strong element of cultural production and discourse. Since their launch in the 2014 movie *Diary ng Panget* [Diary of an Ugly Person], Reid and Lustre had quickly become household names, helped by the ubiquity given by their work in film, TV, music, and advertising, as well as their huge following on social media. In the three feature articles written by Irish Christianne Dizon for the broadsheet *Philippine Star*, one can see the mutable facets of their popularity—from being “just platonic friends who happen to have onscreen chemistry that makes fans go crazy” (Dizon, 2015, para. 1) to “the fans’ fervent wish for the two to just fall in love already” (Dizon, 2016, para. 5) to eventually “[breaking] the cardinal rule of the love team game” (Dizon, 2018, para. 8)—the last of which referring to their dramatic coming out as a real-life couple at the end of their concert in February 2016.

Reid first gained fame as the winner of *Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash 2010*, one of the editions of the international reality TV franchise *Big Brother*, shown on ABS-CBN. With his win, he followed the footsteps of Kim Chiu and Ejay Falcon who, after winning the show in their respective seasons, went on to have active careers in the entertainment industry (“Kim Chiu recalls ‘PBB’ days,” 2017; “Ejay Falcon looks back at his Pinoy Big Brother days on his 10th year in showbiz,” 2018). Lustre, on the other hand, has taken a more traditional path toward fame, working as a host and actor in youth programs and films as a teen, before becoming part of the female group Pop Girls. Reid and Lustre first met in 2013 on the set of the music video for his song, “Alam Niya Ba?,” where she was paired with him as his love interest, a collaboration that not only became the impetus for their first movie together but also foresaw the big things to come. (Bien, 2018)

The current fame of JaDine, unlike in the days of Walter and Fernandez, or even in the peak of Nora Aunor and Tirso Cruz III or Vilma Santos and Bobot Mortiz in the 1970s, is no longer measurable strictly in terms of ticket and album sales or appearances in print and on radio charts (with fans flocking to cinemas and TV studios and concert venues to express support, or cutting out pictures and articles of their favorite stars from newspapers and magazines and songbooks). This fan activity still happens today [“old media never die,” as Henry Jenkins (2006, p. 13) said], but more so now

with convergence culture—“where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (p. 2)—as fans are fueled by many other ways to exercise their agency and exhibit their dedication to their idols, along the way also demonstrating the power, thanks to their socioeconomic status, to be “better” fans than others. Nowadays, whenever a new film of their idols is released, some of them reserve cinemas and arrange “block screenings”—one of the many displays of the fandom’s position in the culture industry—so they can enjoy the film in the company of fellow fans, a singular experience that reinforces their relationship with one another. If they are lucky and have connections, the love team would sometimes attend these screenings and make them feel more special.

With the collision of old and new media, there is no denying that the endgame is now on cyberspace. Aside from connecting fans with celebrities and granting them a sense of intimacy, social media also serves as a rostrum on which fans, in a seemingly elevated position, are enabled to show their strength in numbers. At the time of writing, Reid (@justjamesreid) has 2.8 million followers on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/justjamesreid>), while Lustre (@JustNadineLustre) has 2.1 million (<https://www.facebook.com/JustNadineLustre>). Reid (@tellemjaye) has 2.48 million followers on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/tellemjaye>), while Lustre (@heloobangsie), before deactivating her account in August 2017, had 1.6 million (“Nadine Lustre deactivates Twitter account,” 2017). Connoting privilege with their one-name handles, they have a much bigger following on Instagram: Reid (@james) has 4.3 million followers (<https://www.instagram.com/james>), while Lustre (@nadine) has 5 million (<https://www.instagram.com/nadine>). This is counting only the official verified accounts (with the blue check mark) and not the numerous others, also with a massive following, created by supporters. Furthermore, fan activity can also be seen in the number of “likes” or “favorites” as well as “shares” and “retweets,” with every post by Reid and Lustre garnering tens and hundreds of thousands of impressions and engagements (Reid, 2019; Lustre, 2019).

TWITTER: The New Battlefield

Among the popular social media platforms, Twitter, due to its nature, is the place where a showcase of strength can be distinctively displayed, where the performance of fandom finds its spacious stage. Ruth Deller (2011) explained in detail how Twitter works, particularly the attraction and importance of its “liveness,” and underlines its many potentials for the conduct of audience research. (It is worthy of note that in 2011 when Deller’s study was published, Twitter allowed only 140 characters; now it doubled to 280, increasing not only the space but also the complexity inherent to and entrenched on the

platform.) Although her use cases are chiefly British (the NHS, *X-Factor*, *Britain's Got Talent*, *Question Time*, the Channel 4 documentary series *Revelations*), her discussions are contiguous with the Philippine setting, with her broad takes on Twitter's role in news making, multi-platform broadcasting, and the shifting habits of TV audiences.

The nuances of Twitter activity demand being interpreted in context as they are specific to the culture of the users. For instance, Deller (2011) mentioned that “hashtags” and “trends” are markers of communality, distinguishing its users and their behavior from those on Facebook and Instagram. This is true, but the larger discourse in the Philippine perspective rests on the machinations involved in their construction and the gratifications derived from this function. For instance, how is the use of hashtags crucial to the fandom? How do the fans forge their identities in their Twitter use?

Hardcore JaDine supporters, like other love team fandoms in the Philippines, use their idols' names and photos as avatars for their accounts, quickly establishing their identity. They also pride themselves in being able to make their own hashtags trend on Twitter. These hashtags had become particularly useful when JaDine's TV shows, *On the Wings of Love* and *Till I Met You*, were airing, as every night there would be a designated hashtag and fans showed their solidarity by making concerted efforts to put it on the top Twitter trends in the country or worldwide. During the last episode of *On the Wings of Love*, the fandom was said to have accumulated 4 million tweets (“On the Wings of Love' finale achieves all-time high rating, 4 million tweets,” 2016). In some cases, due to the volume of tweets, fan accounts could get suspended, as many of them were reported for spam (“Jadine' supporters ask twitter to restore suspended fan accounts,” 2016). The use of hashtags spills over other events as well: film releases (a new hashtag is created every day in the duration of its commercial run), mall shows, endorsements, TV appearances, competitions, and special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Twitter affords fans with the pleasures of self-expression and belonging to a community—while at the same time making them aware that “the peculiarity of the self is a monopoly commodity determined by society” (Adorno & Horkheimer, p. 154)—but it is also largely a battlefield: an arena where fights have to be won, enemies must be slayed, and victories have to be celebrated. Jenkins (2006) affirmed the fans' active role:

Audiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture. Producers who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill

and diminished revenues. The resulting struggles and compromises will define the public culture of the future. (p. 24)

Illustrating the convergence contained (yet constantly shifting) in the JaDine fandom, as well as the struggles and compromises in which Twitter serves as the fulcrum, was an incident that happened more than a week before the release of *Never Not Love You*, the fifth on-screen team-up of Reid and Lustre, in March 2018. At the start, it involved only a JaDine fan and an “outsider”: the Star Cinema director Cathy Garcia-Molina, known for her work with KathNiel (Kathryn Bernardo and Daniel Padilla) and LizQuen (Liza Soberano and Enrique Gil), considered two of JaDine’s closest “rivals.” Then in one tweet, it implicated the film’s director Antoinette Jadaone and producer Dan Villegas (both of whom had worked with JaDine on *On the Wings of Love* and *Till I Met You*, and who also happened to be a couple in real life). Then in a few more tweets, the fandom arrived. Less than a minute later, it exploded (“Cathy Molina draws unwanted attention over comments about Jadine,” 2018).

SPARKS FLY: Accidentally Dropping a Bomb on Twitter

On 21 March 2018, a Twitter user (@Pumpkin021116), evidently a JaDine fan based on the profile photo and username, tweeted a well-intentioned request to Cathy Garcia-Molina: “*Sana po Direk @cgm1326 sa huling movie mo sana Jadine ang kunin nyo, magaling po @ napaka professional. Natapos mo ang KN, LQ, sana JD n naman*” [“Director @cgm1326, I hope in your final movie, [you will] get JaDine; they are good and very professional. You’ve already worked with KN [KathNiel] and LQ [LizQuen], I hope next time it’s JD [JaDine]” (“Tweet Scoop: Cathy Garcia Molina Gets in ‘Trouble’ for Being Honest in Her Reply for a JaDine Movie,” 2018, para. 1). To which Garcia-Molina replied: “*Iha talaga ba? Iba kasi Ang naririnig ko galing mismo k direkt Dan V at direkt Tonet. Sorry.*” [“Girl, really? I heard different things from directors Dan and Antoinette. Sorry.” (“Tweet Scoop: Cathy Garcia Molina...,” 2018, para. 1). The fan pressed further: “*May i know po kung ano ang narinig mo kay Direk T&D from JD? Mas maganda po yong makatrabaho mismo kesa sa maniwala sa sabi2x lng.*” [“May I know what you heard from Dan and Antoinette about JaDine? It would be better if you have actually worked with [JaDine] before listening to mere hearsay.”] (“Tweet Scoop: Cathy Garcia Molina...,” 2018, para. 2). Garcia-Molina responded: “*I think direkt tonet has been very vocal about it in social media.*” (“Tweet Scoop: Cathy Garcia Molina...,” 2018, para. 2).

Garcia-Molina was referring to Jadaone's tweet on 13 January 2018 about a shooting day that had been "packed up" all of a sudden (Tonette, Tonette, 2018). In a blog entry posted two days later, Jadaone wrote (again, without explicitly naming the project): "Filming for #foolishmovie is becoming erratic. Too bad, the momentum was already there. More and more shooting days cancelled—some reasons more heartbreaking than others, so heartbreaking they make me cry. Or maybe I am just being overly dramatic, or that's just really how I value making film." (Bernardino, 2018, para. 2)

The moment Garcia-Molina's tweets were posted, expectedly, all hell in the fandom broke loose. Her tweets were retweeted, quote-retweeted, and circulated immensely. JaDine fans took screenshots—a common practice of "taking receipts"—in case she decided to delete them. They started replying to her tweets and tagging her in their posts, mostly in defense of Reid and Lustre for the implied unprofessionalism. As expected, they also flooded Villegas's and Jadaone's Twitter accounts for confirmation, many of whom accusing them of backstabbing their idols. When Garcia-Molina realized the magnitude of the exchange and the trouble it would cause the people she mentioned, she continued engaging the Twitter user noticeably warmly, expressing her agreement, apologizing for offending the person, and being open to a private chat. In one tweet she said: "You seem to be a nice person, and you have my respect. I would love to talk to you and be honest with you" (Garcia-Molina, 2018c).

It would be difficult to examine qualitatively and quantitatively the replies to her tweet because the original post, as well as that of the JaDine fan, had been deleted. One can only speculate that the reasons might relate to the high volume of notifications and the degree of animosity Garcia-Molina was receiving. Another possibility was that she did not wish to aggravate the issue, which, based on the deluge of feedback, proved too late.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HIVE: The Colony of Fans on Twitter

On the same day, 21 March 2018, Villegas tweeted, presumably in response to the ruckus: "*Guys. Tapos na yung issue na to matagal na. Kalma, lapit na lumabas yung peliks. Sayang energy sa bv.*" ["Guys. This issue has long been settled. Calm down, the film is about to screen soon. So much energy wasted on bad vibes."] (Villegas, 2018). The replies (mostly made on March 21, 2018 but has since been deleted) to it ranged from brutal ["In this movie, love is not bullshit, but you two [Villegas and Jadaone]"; "FAKE!!!!"; "Don't preach if you can't walk the talk!!! Kudos to the demon club!"; "James and Nadine are your meal tickets, I hope you haven't forgotten that"] to vicious ["You two are shameless! Like a tabloid! So unprofessional! You're already old! Pests! You didn't even defend JaDine! What the fuck! What's worse, the bad vibes came

from you, so don't blame us! May you get your bad karma! *bless emoji*"; "It's damn infuriating! You two are fake and traitors and backstabbers! You are very unprofessional, talking about JaDine [who do nothing but work] behind their backs! I hope karma gets the three of you!"; "Be grateful [that] you're earning money because of them!"].

At the time of writing, Villegas's tweet is still up on Twitter, so it is possible to read and look into the replies to it. By clicking the tweet one can see that there have been 411 replies, but not all of them show up because some users have their accounts set in private (Villegas, 2018). Out of the 206 viewable tweets, 197 can be classified as negative responses (tweets that harbor sentiments of disappointment, sadness, regret, doubt, anger, hurt, rebuke, aggression, passive aggression, some of which resort to mockery and swearing), 4 as positive responses [tweets that are understanding and favor the filmmakers' side — e.g. "We don't even know the story yet" (All for the love of JaDine, let's focus on the movie); "All for the love of JaDine, let's focus on the movie" (All for the love of JaDine, let's focus on the movie)], and 5 as neutral responses [tweets whose sentiments are difficult to classify — e.g., "Let's watch *Never Not Love You* guys"; emojis that are hard to determine whether being sarcastic or not]. These tweets use words, photos, GIFs, screenshots, emojis, or combinations of each.

The 95.6 percent of negative responses (out of the viewable tweets) does not make for a definitive statement that the entire JaDine fandom is displeased with Jadaone and Villegas, since it is impossible to arrive at a concrete conclusion with internet interaction as basis. Nevertheless, it is a strong indication that many of the fandom members are unhappy and have taken the time to express it on Twitter and tell Jadaone and Villegas directly. Going through the tweets, these are the major sentiments that have emerged:

- Some fans made it clear that although they still plan to see the film, they are doing it in support of JaDine and not of Jadaone and Villegas.
- Some fans accused Jadaone and Villegas of backstabbing and badmouthing JaDine, decrying their so-called lack of professionalism. They are also disappointed that the two are not defending JaDine publicly.
- Some fans claimed that Jadaone and Villegas are famous only because of (being associated with) JaDine.
- Some fans thought that, after the Garcia-Molina incident, Jadaone and Villegas owe them an explanation. They particularly latched onto Garcia-Molina's mentioning of the two as her "good friends," implying their connivance. Sometimes they would attach screenshots of her tweets to prove and belabor their point.



Fig. 3. Jadaone and Reid (top), Villegas and Lustre (bottom) on the set of *On the Wings of Love*. Top photo (Villegas, 2016a). Bottom photo (Villegas, 2016b).



- Some fans considered boycotting Jadaone and Villegas’s projects (except those involving JaDine).
- Some fans believed in the existence of a “demolition team,” a group designed to destroy JaDine in favor of other love teams in ABS-CBN (like KathNiel and LizQuen), and they were certain that Jadaone and Villegas were part of it.
- Some fans, after professing their admiration for Jadaone and Villegas, expressed massive disappointment in them and had chosen to side with JaDine (“we are hurt for them”).

ON THE WINGS OF TWITTER: Facets of Filipino Fan Culture on Display

This is Twitter, in one very tiny space of it, laid open not just as a “virtual loungeroom” (Harrington, Highfield & Bruns, 2013) but also as a battlefield where online bashing (comparable with the physical action of violently and repeatedly hitting someone) has become a common collective and punitive measure in response to a person’s position (entailing beliefs, decisions, or sometimes just “being”) that does not align, or is thought to misalign, with the group’s. Bashing is usually triggered (another term rooted in violence), and the display of hostility can range from sharp insults and damning expletives to missives that require a thread of tweets to unpack and messages

that involve the basher's exhuming of the subject's past through a quick online search, oftentimes distorting or misrepresenting a piece of evidence, to reinforce the contempt (de Silva, 2018).

In many of the tweets directed to Garcia-Molina and Villegas, the intensity of emotions seems to come from the id, from the dark recesses of the fans' minds whose repressed thoughts are finally given free rein—"a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement," instincts with "no organization and no unified will" (Freud, 1995, p. 104)—defined by a characteristically impulsive animosity. The id tells them that JaDine are being treated unfairly, as JaDine, in their view, are helpless in the situation, and Reid and Lustre's silence makes them look even braver and nobler. The fans are there, always available and can act as warriors, not called upon but rushing voluntarily, to protect them at all costs. This is the id driven by its destructive instinct.

If one looks at Jadaone's Instagram posts at the time of the incident, whether on her photos of food or landscape or personal stuff, some JaDine fans have also left numerous nasty comments, hounding her in a space that is supposedly safe and has nothing to do with the issue, showing that what happens on Twitter does not just stay on Twitter. The entire social media, it turns out, is the battlefield. After her entry on 15 January 2018, she had stopped blogging about the movie, which she considered doing to document her process and thoughts while filming (Jadaone, 2017). As a result of the incident, she had also decided to use Twitter only for promotional purposes. Seeing the dynamics of the fandom, whose members have the tendency to watch her every move and action—a kind of surveillance that may remind one of the panopticon, although with an obviously different mechanism and mechanics—every aspect of her visibility had an effect on her use of social media.

The use of this incident is not meant to antagonize the JaDine fandom and highlight only its members who are inclined to be vicious on social media. It is a component of their identity that is crucial to understanding their mania. In Apa Agbayani's study of love team fans (2017), these bashers and warmongers are actually considered outliers, since according to the fans what should define the fandoms are those who encourage positivity in the group.

In the process of researching for this paper, I talked to several people who did not categorically identify themselves as part of the fandom but were, or had been, supporters of JaDine for a time. All of them were in agreement that JaDine fans generally tend to be different from those in other love team fandoms because of their class status and for being in the margins. Many of them are working class and hence not too young, many are married or have children, and many are overseas Filipino workers.

One of the people I spoke to was Cj de Silva (personal communication, May 7, 2018), a visual artist and creative director at an advertising agency. She had been a vocal JaDine fan during the airing of *On the Wings of Love* and made some fan art and even blogged about her viewing experience. Recently she experienced a considerable amount of bashing from JaDine fans for her tweets. It had become too toxic for her that she had to make her Twitter account private. Eventually she understood their vehemence. “Some fans think that I am in a better position to gain access to JaDine because of my line of work,” she said. De Silva added:

“Once you work with a love team or create work featuring them, the fans immediately treat you as part of the group. *Parang* you belong to the fandom as well. So, the moment you express an objective observation or constructive criticism of the love team, it starts a war on social media—they will stalk you and review all your online footprint and create a narrative against you. It is difficult to be the target of the mob. But this behavior is not new. It is fan culture.” (personal communication, May 7, 2018)

WE WILL NEVER NOT LOVE THEM: Fans Performing Fandom Online and Offline

On 26 January 2018, James Reid and Nadine Lustre were in London, facing the Thames and Houses of Parliament, waiting for final instructions from the director Antoinette Jadaone. It was only 5 pm but already very dark, and there were still several sequences to shoot afterward. Although wrapped in warmers and thick jackets, everyone in the Filipino crew was shivering from cold. Reid and Lustre continued rehearsing their lines. As Gio and Joanne, they were millennials in a troubled romantic relationship who also happened to be overseas workers in a powerful global city. It was JaDine’s fifth movie together.

A few meters away from the couple, just behind the camera, were the actual overseas Filipino workers of London, some of whom had been waiting for hours. Some had just arrived from their workplaces and gone straight to the location after their shifts. Some worked as nurses in the nearby hospital. They were huddled together, on their phones, chattering. Their eyes were fixed on Reid and Lustre, admiring them, recording them, committing to memory their every move from afar. One of them asked the producer Dan Villegas if they could bring them coffee. Jadaone then asked the cinematographer if they could do a take. The people in the area kept walking by, oblivious of the small film crew.

After a good take, the crew started packing up for the next location shoot. The fans, seeing the opportunity, moved closer. Reid and Lustre saw them, acknowledged them, and smiled. Access permitted. It was too dark for a decent photo, but nothing was going to stop them. Selfies were taken. Autographs were signed. Hugs were exchanged. Access complete. It was time to say good-bye. As they walked away, happily talking to each other, their hands were instantaneously on their phones: sharing the experience on social media, filling their messages with emojis.

This scenario, save for the use of mobile phones, could have happened in a movie set almost a century ago. In any generation in Philippine cinema, hardcore fans would take the priceless opportunity of seeing their idols in person at least once in their lives, as though a private door opened for them to realize their dream. Were they seeing Reid and Lustre as real persons, or as actors still? Where was the line between performance and reality? Or was the reality unfolding before them in the movie set a performance? Quoting Dyer, “are they just like you or me, or do consumption and success transform them into (or reflect) something different?” (1979, p. 49)

The rise of new media, like Twitter and Facebook, does not mean that the traditional ways of expressing fandom (i.e., visiting a film set, asking for autographs, taking of photos, etc.) are completely eliminated. The scenario above is a perfect illustration of Jenkins’s (2006) convergence culture, the merging of different types of media (made up of technological, economic, social, cultural, and global processes) whose intersection informs and defines the interactions between the stars and the fans. For instance, *Never Not Love You* is a co-production between the big mainstream producer Viva Films and Jadaone and Villegas’s independent outfit Project 8 cor. San Joaquin. The film is set in Manila and London, where its lovers navigate the complexities of long-distance relationship and human labor export. The story is a mix of drama and romance, punctuated equally by intense scenes and kilig moments. Fans of JaDine, connected by their social media accounts, are scattered across the world, in different countries where they can access JaDine’s films and music on online streaming sites. In London, in this particular moment of contact, thousands of miles away from their family, they see JaDine and are reminded of home. JaDine become images of home and family.

As a social network that has become one of the most used platforms of engagement over the past ten years, Twitter has also been utilized as a major tool for fan expression, a place where solidarity can be performed and fandom can be organized and mobilized. It is a weapon in a battlefield that necessitates offensive and defensive attacks, in clashes that characterize conflicts in any large-scale fandom. But it is also a thread that connects fans

together, in a poignant moment of camaraderie: for the pursuit of love, and for the love of pursuit.

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