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Postmodern Reading of Selected Contemporary Filipino Films

Erhwin Andres Clarin

Philippine Normal University

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POSTMODERN READING OF SELECTED CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO FILMS

A Seminar Paper

Presented to the

College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research

Philippine Normal University

The National Center for Teacher Education

Taft Avenue, Manila

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Teaching

With Specialization in Literature

By

ERHWIN ANDRES CLARIN

2013

APPROVAL SHEET

*This seminar paper entitled “**POSTMODERN READING OF SELECTED CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO FILMS**” prepared and submitted by **Erhwin Andres Clarin** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts in Teaching with specialization in Literature is hereby recommended for approval and acceptance.*

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DEDICATION

To MY PARENTS

Efren Mallari Clarin

(June 22, 1950 – November 19, 2010)

Rebecca Andres-Clarin

(December 18, 1944 – January 23, 2009)

To MY FAMILY

Kuya, Areng, and Unno

And

To

MY QUEEN

*For teaching the Mongoloid how to cook,
how to live happily,
how to become a good man,
and how to love forever!*

ABSTRACT

Researcher: ERHWIN ANDRES CLARIN

TITLE: **POSTMODERN READING OF SELECTED
CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO FILMS**

Key Concepts: Postmodernism, Filipino Films

Degree: MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

Specialization: Literature

Adviser: Dr. Jennie V. Jocson

The idea that films can be philosophical lies at the very core of this study. It has been observed that readers/ philosophers can utilize aspects of the story in a work of cinematic fiction, particularly popular movies to illustrate a philosophical problem or theory. Watching popular films can help students take certain arguments in the theory of knowledge more seriously. Such claims bring to fore what the postmodernist critic and philosopher Frederic Jameson (1998) refers to as the erosion of distinction between high culture (as represented by philosophy and the act of philosophizing) and mass or popular culture (embodied by popular films) as when these products of mass culture are used as texts for philosophical and literary studies.

The present study was designed to analyze popular Filipino films as text, in order to achieve the researcher's aims: one is to prove that movies can truly be philosophic and literary, and more importantly, to participate in the effacement of the line between high art and pop/ commercial art, demonstrating in the end that *le postmoderne* has finally reached the Philippines, through the postmodern reading of selected Filipino motion picture.

As an attempt to read Filipino film texts from the perspective of postmodernism, this study involved different phases in order to specifically shed light on the dominant features of postmodernist fiction discernible in the selected contemporary films, and how these dominant features were related to the over-all narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content of the film texts. To address the research questions that were raised for the present study, the researcher divided the analysis and interpretation of the selected contemporary Filipino films into three parts: one is providing a glimpse on what makes the films worth 'reading,' two is the scrutiny of the dominant features of Postmodernism in the films, which involved looking into the fictional elements of the film texts to bring to fore what exactly makes them postmodern, and three, the highlighting of the postmodern in the contemporary Filipino society, which called for the attempt to situate elements of the postmodern in the present Filipino way of life.

The postmodern reading of the selected contemporary Filipino films yielded that the postmodern Filipino films operate on the notions of disruption of narrative, transgression of genre boundaries, and uncertain or unreliable fragmentary recollections of events, and that the postmodernist features of temporal disorder, intertextuality/ pastiche, nostalgia, and fragmentation, among others are discernible in the films under study. More importantly, conclusions can be made on the presence of the historically western body of thought referred to as the Postmodern: that it has indeed reached and is now being felt in the country, as shown in the elements of mass media/ popular culture, particularly the motion picture.

Hence, as an offshoot of this study, a number of activities may be engaged in to curve the tide of *le postmoderne* in the Filipino classroom, including a postmodern reading of Filipino literature—fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, and dramatic works, and instructional materials, including lesson plans/ instructional guides and worksheets may be prepared. Moreover, further studies may be conducted to highlight other postmodernist features not included in this study to account for a more comprehensive postmodern reading of film and/ or literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Approval Sheet.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
 Chapter 1 The Problem and Its Background.....	 1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Study	7
The Postmodern Condition.....	8
Postmodernism and ‘Late Capitalism’.....	8
Theoretical Bases.....	11
Conceptual Framework.....	18
Statement of the Problem.....	21
Significance of the Study.....	21
Scope and Delimitation.....	23
 Definition of Terms.....	 24
 Chapter II Review of Related Literature and Studies.....	 27
Conceptual Literature.....	27
Postmodernism in Literature	27
Film Studies.....	35
Film, Literature, and Teaching.....	41
Studies on Filipino Film and Popular Culture.....	46
Related Studies.....	52
 On Pop Culture, TV and MTV.....	 52
On Films: Hollywood and Beyond.....	53
 Chapter III Methodology.....	 58
Research Procedure.....	58
 Chapter IV Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data.....	 63
<i>The Road: A Postmodernist Asian Horror Story.....</i>	<i>63</i>
Indie within an Indie: ‘Simulacra’ in <i>Babae sa Septic Tank...</i>	70
The Postmodern Nostalgia Mode in <i>I Do Bidoo Didoo.....</i>	78

	Page
Chapter V Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	84
References.....	87
List of Figures	
Figure 1 Theoretical Bases.....	12
Figure 2 Conceptual Framework.....	20
List of Appendices	
Appendix A Survey Form.....	98
Appendix B Synopses of Films.....	
99	
Curriculum Vitae.....	105

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

The human mind is innately wired for stories, and the world that human beings created teems with their numerous tales. Humans have been telling stories to one another for almost a hundred thousand years (Myers, 2013). Although oral storytelling (orature) naturally predates written language (i.e. literature), the human brain, as evolutionary biologists claim, is intrinsically designed to “embrace story structure” (Myers, 2013, p. 54). Consciously or not, every man and woman lives vicariously through characters in literature, and even constructs his/ her morals, memories, and myths based on them.

Since the human mind is believed to naturally embrace a “story structure,” this narrative structure is shared by many of the stories told and read. Folk stories expose a common “structural morphology,” as Bordwell (1988) declares, basing his studies on Proppian narratology, and this same set of “functions can [also] be revealed in other narrative genres and media, in particular, films” (p. 5). Bordwell (in Quart, 2000) also asserts that movies “work and work upon [the viewers] in the most literal ways,” and over time, these “workings” have already changed (p. 36). The mastery of narratives, either in the written/ literature or filmic/ motion picture form, has aided humankind to mingle and more effectively communicate in increasingly complex social worlds” (Myers, 2013, p. 56).

The motion picture, both as a modern art form and as a medium of effective mass communication, performs a number of various functions. Since it grew from the traditions of popular theater, a film's main purpose, as De Fleur and Dennis (1991) assert, has been, throughout its history, to entertain. The principal function of movies is "to take the viewers away from the pressing issues and mundane details of living" by providing enjoyment and escape from the tedious demands of everyday existence.

Criticizing this escapist function of films and other forms of the 'simulacra,' Baudrillard (1996) argues that "virtual reality" has been one of the crucial technological achievements of the late 20th century and has become a kind of "narcotic coping mechanism." The notorious French sociologist, cultural critic and *postmodernist* maintains that, in the face of innumerable urgent issues, including a skyrocketing domestic debt, Americans have begun to invent "parallel universes," wherein the mind can be freed from any concern and responsibility.

Reive (2011) shares Baudrillard's idea of "parallel universes," as mirrored on the different Hollywood motion pictures, in his claim that this paradigm shift has been brought about by the staggering technological advancements of digital (and even virtual) communication, the blossoming of a system of production, commerce and consumption, and the perpetual flow of capital and labor largely in the developed Western societies. This shift in the "structure of feeling" has caused many to "re-evaluate and to question their long-held assumptions regarding truth, knowledge and the very nature of reality" (Reive, 2011, p. 2).

Conversely, the motion picture also takes on a different function – that of a “new communicator role between the society and the audience” (Westley & McLean, in McQuail, 1994). It performs the role of a “mediator of [social] reality,” that is, like any art form, it also serves as a representation or reflection of the existing ‘truth’ in the society – a mirror that can, as Benjamin (1935) puts it, “extend our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives.” The film, through its uncanny portrayal of the hidden details of the commonplace, which is more vividly realistic than any other work of art has ever done, it can raise the viewers’ consciousness about the socio-political situation and ultimately, “it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action” (<http://www.artic.edu/~pcarroll/benjamin.html>).

In writing about how films raise the viewers’ social awareness, Schillaci (1968) confirms the abovementioned critics’ claims on the motion picture’s role as mediator of social reality. The Italian theologian and philosopher holds that films have not only played a “prophetic role” in revealing the absurdities in life, which are concealed in the social milieu, but have also helped humans face and understand them. Furthermore, he classifies these absurdities of the [postmodern] human condition that can be detected in the contemporary film into four categories: (1) *The Loss of Identity*, which is often in the guise of mental disorder, stems from the filmmakers’ exaggerated concern over “human fragmentation;” (2) *The Loss of Vocation* can be seen in the absurdity and meaninglessness of labor/ work in the [post]modern times, and is revealed

through the portrayal of the human being with a kind of crisis in his/ her career, “where s/he realizes that doing something of significance in his/her life will never materialize;” (3) *The Death of Community* is what triggers the prevalence of violence on film, and what explains the filmmakers’ preoccupation with the portrayal of the chaotic world that they are a witness of; and (4) *The Loss of Love* argues the substitution of the “guilty ritual of joyless sex for love,” which happens when all means of communication breaks down, and the characters are drawn together in a vain attempt to find satisfying human contact.

Interestingly, Schillaci’s (1968) work, published in his book *Movies and Morals*, brings to light another important function of films, which is the essence of the present study: films as suitable objects for philosophical and literary analysis.

Freeland and Wartenberg (1995) declare that the scholarly study of motion pictures is one of the “fastest growing areas of research in academia” (p. 1). Different disciplines have considered the use of films in their own distinctive fields of study. Literary critics, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and feminist scholars construct readings of film ‘texts’ in their respective exploration of socio-cultural issues and wide-ranging concerns with class, race, sexuality, and gender representation.

Characterizing films as “reflective, philosophical, and world-creating,” Freeland and Wartenberg maintain that what makes movies appropriate objects for critical reflection is “precisely their ability to create worlds, for we can attend to

various features of the worlds created by films” (1995, p. 4). These film worlds can interpret human relationships, and can portray everything as either rational and “run by God,” or illogical and free. “A film can represent ourselves to ourselves,” Freeland and Wartenberg add, “depicting a world in which people are beautiful or ugly, romantic or bland, evil or amusing.”

In his essay “The Thought of Movies,” Cavell (in Freeland & Wartenberg, 1995) defends his philosophical interests in film, which he describes as “mysterious objects . . . unlike anything else on earth.” He notes that what makes Hollywood films sufficiently worth studying are their “paradoxical qualities of being evanescent and yet recorded.” These qualities of films permit the interpretation of Hollywood movies as a specialized profession and a credible work for a group of people, participating in the making of “history of film as an art.”

Films also participate in the ongoing philosophical debate over the nature of life and identity. With questions like “What is human life?” and “Who controls that life?” dramatized by the films *Gattaca* (1997) and *The Truman Show* (1998), movies have become uniquely qualified to explore human beings’ personal journeys and anxiety. Writing about the recent trend of Hollywood ‘surprise-identity’ films like *The Sixth Sense*, *Fight Club*, *Memento*, and *Donnie Darko* in his controversial *Jump Cut* article “A Beautiful Mind (f**k): Hollywood Structures of Identity,” Eig (2003) raises these questions about human life and emphasizes his belief in film being the only medium today that can authenticate ‘truth’: “things

are no longer true if we see them in a book or hear them from a friend—they are true if we see them on film or tape.” Citing French psychologist Jacques Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’—a crucial step in an infant’s development, wherein the child experiences confusion between his/ her own identity and the image seen in the mirror—he claims that films provide a second generation for this stage by allowing the viewers to identify themselves with the fictional protagonists, and to endure any displeasure that the characters might experience on screen.

Similarly, the sub-genre of science fiction also poses intriguing questions about the notion of identity. Offering a philosophical reading of Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982) for the journal *Film and Philosophy*, Mulhall (1994) observes that, characteristically, this kind of films, while dealing with robots, ‘cyborgs,’ and other non-human technology, is “explicitly concerned with what it is to be a human being,” thus, making it “self-consciously philosophic” (p. 87). That science fiction films can play such a central role in debates on human life proves that films are worthy of philosophical attention.

The idea that films can be philosophical is also shared by Livingston (2009) in his book *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy*, wherein he observes that philosophers can utilize aspects of the story in a work of cinematic fiction, not only in the works of the famous Swedish ‘auteur’, but also in popular movies like *The Matrix*, *Total Recall*, and the like, to illustrate a philosophical problem or theory. He further claims that watching such popular science fiction films can help students of philosophy take certain arguments in

the theory of knowledge more seriously. Such claim brings to fore what the postmodernist critic Frederic Jameson (1998) refers as the erosion of distinction between high culture (as represented by philosophy and the act of philosophizing) and mass or popular culture (embodied by popular films as texts for philosophical studies).

Hence, the present study is designed to analyze popular films as text, in order to achieve some of the researcher's aims: one is to prove that movies can truly be both philosophic and literary; and more importantly, to participate in the effacement of the line between high art/ knowledge and pop/ commercial art through the postmodern/ philosophical reading of the mass or popular Filipino motion picture.

Background of the Study

The attempt to analyze motion picture using the tools of philosophy, particularly postmodernism, necessitates a survey of not only the historical background of the said theory, but also the features that characterize it. However, postmodernism resists a certain confinement to "a single monolithic body of ideas," as Whisnant (2012) emphasizes, "for it means something a little different for every area or field of knowledge" (p.2). Still, it can be said that specific themes and ideas appear to be common in many of these areas of knowledge; that identifying what postmodernism constitutes based on these "interlocking set of similarities" is ultimately possible (Whisnant, 2012, p.2).

The Postmodern Condition

A number of theorists and film/ literary critics agree that the years trailing the Second World War marked the “passing of an old world” and the advent of the postmodern age (Montealegre, 2007; Arriola, 2006; Hart, 2004; Harvey, 1990; McHale, 1987). Also dubbed as ‘anti-foundational,’ the theories which constitute what we call postmodernism are best summed up in the book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) by Jean-Francois Lyotard, probably the leading figure in this philosophy. Lyotard’s plea, his contempt of authority, as Stuart Sim (2001) asserts, is to reject the so-called ‘grand narratives’ of the Western tradition, its ‘universal theories’ as regards culture, for the grand theories have, at that point, lost all their credibility. This skepticism of authority, of received tradition, Sim (2001) furthers, seems to be the best way to describe postmodernism as a philosophical movement. The form of dissent that characterizes the postmodern condition or impulse, according to Lyotard (1984), is what gave birth to the ‘metanarratives’ in reaction to the ‘great recits’ to answer questions like “What is knowledge?” and “What is knowledge ultimately good for?” (p. 272).

Postmodernism and ‘Late Capitalism’

Knowledge is arguably now the most important ‘commodity,’ according to Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), and whoever controls knowledge, now exerts political control. It is within this atmosphere of political and socio-economic shift, when the first two stages of capitalism—‘market

capitalism' and 'imperialist/ monopolistic capitalism'—were already superseded by a 'post-industrial' or 'late capitalism,' where postmodernism began to thrive. In effect, late capitalism “sees the accumulative logic of capitalism extend into every possible area of society” (Nicol, 2009, p. 3). It means that capitalism was able to seep into areas of society, including the arts, media and education, which were previously untouched by the laws of capitalism. These areas have then begun to require growth, profits and business models, and started to advance the so-called 'globalization' of consumerism, resulting in what Nicol (2009) refers to as 'cultural eclecticism' – an idea best summarized by Lyotard (1984) himself in a much-quoted statement of the postmodern condition: **“one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and ‘retro’ clothes in Hong Kong”** (p. 76).

Focusing his work on how consumer capitalism restructures contemporary life, another postmodernism scholar, Frederic Jameson (1991) observes that the period of late capitalism is the third machine age, when the computer is the dominant technology. Thus, the computer has the utmost impact on the representation of reality and knowledge, as glimpsed in the arts:

Such machines are indeed machines of reproduction rather than production, and they make very different demands on our capacity for aesthetic representation...narratives which are about the processes of reproduction and include movie cameras, video, tape recorders, the

whole technology of the production and reproduction of the simulacrum (Jameson, 1991, p. 37).

For Jameson, postmodernism focuses on the birth of a new mass culture, as part of late capitalism and the decline of “bourgeois hegemony.” This dawn of a new cultural tradition results in the blurring of the distinction between high art and pop culture, and openness to the academic study of popular art, particularly the cinema. The dividing line between high culture and low art is now eroded. There is an obliteration of the older categories of genre and discourse; now, in the postmodern world, ideas like incorporation, collaboration, eclecticism exist.

The abovementioned postmodern approach to art, and by extension, to literature and motion picture, is characterized by its rejection of the distinction between high and low forms, and the tendency toward embracing diversity and contradiction amidst a consumer society filled with mass produced objects (Khosravishakib, 2012; Reive, 2011; Freeda-D’Cruz, 2009; Montealegre, 2007; Arriola, 2006). Thus, despite their wide variety of styles and thematic content, the postmodern “creators” (or more appropriately, “re-creators”), as Federman (1988) in his “Self-Reflexive Fiction” (in Lewis, 2001) observes, were able “to form a unified movement for which a coherent theory could be formulated.” Different ‘traits’ are encountered time and time again, in the seemingly incomprehensible landscape of postmodern fiction. As Aldridge (1983) puts it in his *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now* (in Lewis, 2001):

In the fiction of [postmodernist writers]..., virtually everything and everyone exists in such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be said to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified. Characters inhabit a dimension of structureless being in which their behavior becomes inexplicably arbitrary and unjudgeable because the fiction itself stands as a metaphor of a derangement that is seemingly without provocation and beyond measurement (p. 123).

Hence, the present study indeed ‘capitalizes’ on this blurring, by subjecting selected contemporary/ popular films to a scholarly reading, using the tools of postmodernism. This task of effacing the line between the elite and the mass by problematizing aspects of the motion picture in the perspective of the postmodern, as Arriola (2006) remarks, would have looked very odd several decades ago.

Theoretical Bases

The theories used in this descriptive analysis of the selected contemporary Filipino films were derived from the major philosophical concepts of the postmodern theory as espoused by Frederic Jameson (1991) and Jean Baudrillard (1994). Baudrillard’s notion of the “simulacra” and Jameson’s ideas

on “historicism” and its manifestation in fiction, including “temporal disorder,” “nostalgia,” “fragmentation,” and even paranoia and derangement, coupled with Umberto Eco’s (1986) concepts on “intertextual collage” explaining the idea of “pastiche,” and Brian McHale’s (1987) postmodernist principles in fiction, provide the seemingly irreconcilable framework of the present study in order to arrive at a postmodern reading of Filipino films.

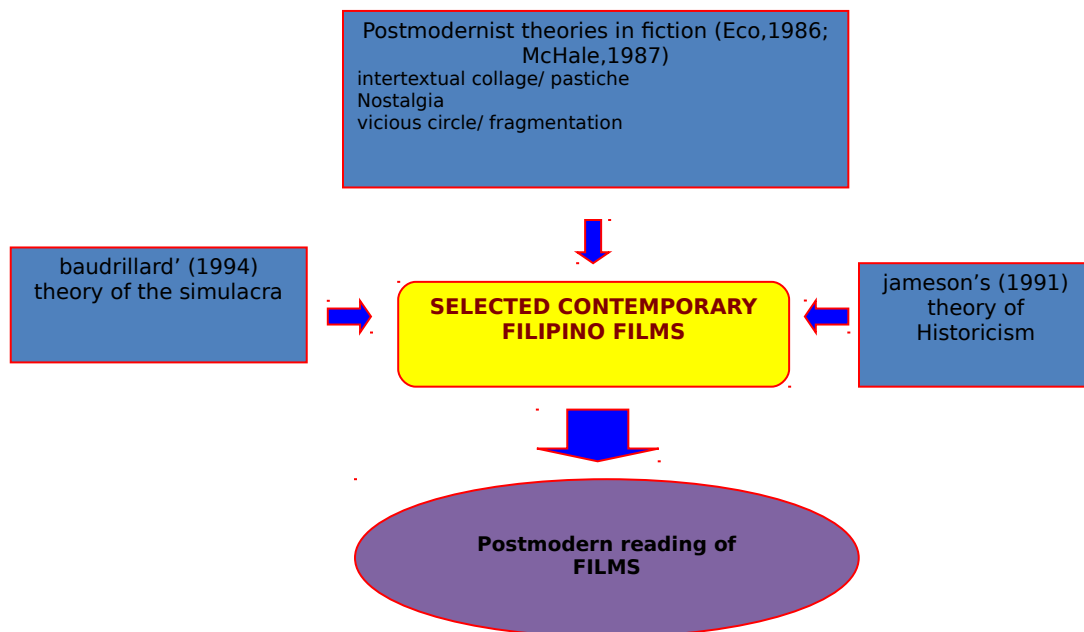


Figure 1 Theoretical Bases of the Study

The consequence of living in the postmodern, knowledge/information-driven, media/culture-saturated world is that human beings have become alienated from the aspects of life considered to be authentic or 'real'. In the 'high-tech' postmodern society, people now spend most of their time in front of a 'screen', processing 'information' of one kind or another, engaging in what Baudrillard (in Nicol, 2009) refers to as 'symbolic representation' rather than real, tangible objects. Existence has become more 'virtual' than real.

The notorious French postmodern philosopher and critic Jean Baudrillard (1994) in his *Simulacra and Simulation*, espouses the idea that the postmodern world is a world of 'simulacra', where humans could no longer differentiate between reality and simulation. In the contemporary, postmodern society, people have replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs; what is known as

reality is only a simulation of reality. The signs of culture and communication media that create what humans perceive today as reality constitute the simulacrum, infused with image, sound, advertising, and other aspects of 'virtual' reality.

Moreover, Baudrillard (1994) theorizes that in the postmodernity of late capitalism, the world of the simulacra surpasses the world of the 'real', thus becoming 'hyperreal' – a world that is said to be 'more real than what is real.' The line between representation and reality vanishes; the simulacrum alone exists, and originality is rendered meaningless. The postmodern world is now experienced through the "screen", with a barrage of projected images from TV news, film reels, internet chat rooms and social networking sites.

Another characteristic of the postmodernist world is what Jameson (2003) refers to as the *death of time*. The postmodern theorist argues that "time has become infinitely temporal, encapsulating the past, present and the future" (Jameson, 2003, p. 699). In the postmodern era, it seems that the world has started to live only in a state of 'perpetual present'.

Jameson (1991) also argues that "historicism" now effaces history, and this situation renders incomprehensible the concept of historical/ chronological time, as mirrored in fiction, and concretized by postmodernist concepts of *temporal disorder*, *nostalgia*, and even in the way the styles of the past are *pastiched*:

In the postmodern world, history is taken over by the stylistic representation of history in which the new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time. This process inevitably begins to wither the boundaries of chronological time and we begin to linger in a time notion in which we are surrounded by only the representations of history in stylistic forms (p. 66).

As a result, postmodern works of fiction tend to self-consciously distort time and history (Hutcheon, 1988; McHale, 1987). This 'contradictory enterprise' is said to be best represented in works referred to as 'historiographic metafiction' which accomplishes the distortion in several ways, including apocryphal history, anachronism, and blending of history and fantasy.

Apocryphal history involves the use of bogus or fake accounts of famous events. Similarly, anachronisms disrupt temporal order by providing/ flaunting glaring inconsistencies of historic details or setting, like the presence of electronic equipment (e.g .telephone, television) in a time setting when obviously they have not yet been invented or used. Lastly, the blurring of the line between history and fantasy is achieved in fiction (and exemplified in Latin American writings) through the combination of personal reminiscences that are 'real' and 'fake' unsubstantiated anecdotes.

Moreover, postmodernist fiction does not only disrupt the events in the past, but also corrupts the veracity of present time too. It disorders the linear coherence of the narrative by twisting the sense of significant time ('kairos') and

the seemingly dull passing of ordinary time ('chronos'). Postmodernist writings are said to be filled with these kinds of temporal disorder, for in postmodernism, as Coover (1977) remarks in *The Public Burning* (in Lewis, 2001): **"history does not repeat... there are no precognitions—and out in that flow all such assertions may be true, false, inconsequential, or all at the same time"** (p. 125).

Another significant effect of the "death of time" in the postmodern era is the use of *pastiche*. Derived from the Italian word *pasticcio*, meaning 'a medley of various ingredients: a hotchpotch, a farrago, jumble,' the term pastiche refers to the kind of permutation, to the intentional borrowing and transformation of another writer's unique style. It arises from the frustration that in the postmodern times, everything has been done before; nothing new can be written and created anymore (Montealegre, 2007). Jameson's (1983) essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (in Lewis, 2001) sums up this postmodernist frustration: **"the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds...only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already"** (pp. 125-126).

Umberto Eco (1986) shares Jameson's postmodernist belief in the inability of artists to create anything original or unique. He refers to this intentional borrowing and incorporation of old styles in contemporary works as *intertextual collage*. In his analysis of *Casablanca*, which Montealegre (2007) 'pasted' in her paper "Standing at intersections, traversing mazes, embracing spaces," Eco

(1986) looked into elements that fill what he referred to as “intertextual frames,” which are situations that point to preceding textual, if not filmic traditions. The result of such process, as Montealegre (2007) remarks, is something that appears new, but has nothing new in it. Fragments of different already existing textual/ cultural/ cinematic origin are incorporated to create a new whole—a postmodern whole, a postmodern totality.

Postmodernists distrust the wholeness and completion of traditional, modernist fiction. As a counterpoint to the epigraph in modernist E.M. Forster novel *Howards End*, which encourages the reader to “live in fragments no longer, only connect,” a postmodernist utterance in Barthelme’s “See the Moon?”: “fragments are the only forms I trust” points to the postmodern writers’ need to continuously find new forms of wholeness in the absence of old linear narratives (Lewis, 2001). The postmodernist writer prefers to deal with other ways of structuring and completing a narrative, through an offering of multiple endings and, more shockingly, literally breaking up a text into short fragments or sections, interspersed with spaces, symbols, illustrations, and other materials that are totally unrelated to the story. In so doing, the writer tears up the very fabric of the text, in order to come up with a postmodernist whole.

In addition, the membrane/ line between the text and real world of the writer is rendered porous/ permeable, to the extent that one cannot separate the two segments or sides. This segmentation/ fragmentation results in the arising of vicious circles in postmodernist fiction. When there is a merging of the literal and

the metaphorical, and an inability to distinguish the different levels of discourse, as spelled out by Lewis (2001), the following occur: short circuits or when the author steps into or appears in the text, and double binds or when real historical figures appear in fiction. There exists a kind of 'schizophrenia' in the melding of fact and fantasy, which is rampant in the manifestation of the derangement of postmodernist fiction.

The postmodernist derangement is made clear by Tony Tanner (1971) in his *City of Words* (in Lewis, 2001). He describes the keenly felt "deranged" threat known as paranoia that numerous postmodern characters suffer from: **"a dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous"** (pp. 129-130). Representative of the climate of fear and suspicion that prevailed during the Cold War, paranoia in postmodernist writing is reflected through various ways: the distrust of the character of fixity or a stationary space shown through imprisonment or being committed to a mental institution, the suspicion of the character that s/he is in the center of an intrigue or conspiracy, and the writer's tendency to proliferate and maximize the use of story plots/ plans, as if to prove that they are indeed free from the 'straitjackets' of uncontrollable outside forces.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher came up with this study as a continuation of a previous study done on the philosophical underpinnings of the motion picture, and an offshoot of the various seminars attended on postmodernism in literature and film. Embracing the spaces provided and rising to the challenge of “traversing postmodern” by the concluding statements from Montealegre’s (2007) paper on the postmodern in film, fiction and poetry, and Arriola’s (2006) monumental work on the *Postmodern Filming of Literature*, the present study is an attempt to prove that the primarily western concept of postmodernism has, at last, reached the developing, Eastern shores of the country, through her contemporary, independently-produced films.

This study embarked on a systematized endeavor to apply the precepts of postmodernist fiction, anchored on the groundbreaking theories of Frederic Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, with an eye toward identifying and highlighting points to prove that the selected contemporary Filipino films exhibit postmodernist strains. The study will also make use of critical and interpretive frames, as it studies the narrative technique, intertextual frames/ collages, and other symptoms of postmodernist ‘schizophrenia’ discernible in the film texts.

The conceptual paradigm below shows how the selected Filipino films are subjected to a postmodern reading. After thorough library research, both on film studies and postmodernist philosophy, and sessions of consultation with film and media educators, not only to help draft the criteria for the selection and the actual selection of the films to be used in the study, but also the postmodern theories

that would lend themselves well in a descriptive/ interpretive reading of the film texts. The reading of the selected texts is slanted on the notions of *le postmoderne*, that is, to bring to fore the elements of the films that highlight, if not theorize the postmodern condition. Both the film texts and the postmodern theories involved in the present study would form a lattice of seemingly complex interconnectedness between the theory and the text, wherein one would be used to explain the other and vice versa, in an attempt to render a postmodern reading of the motion picture, particularly the contemporary Filipino film.

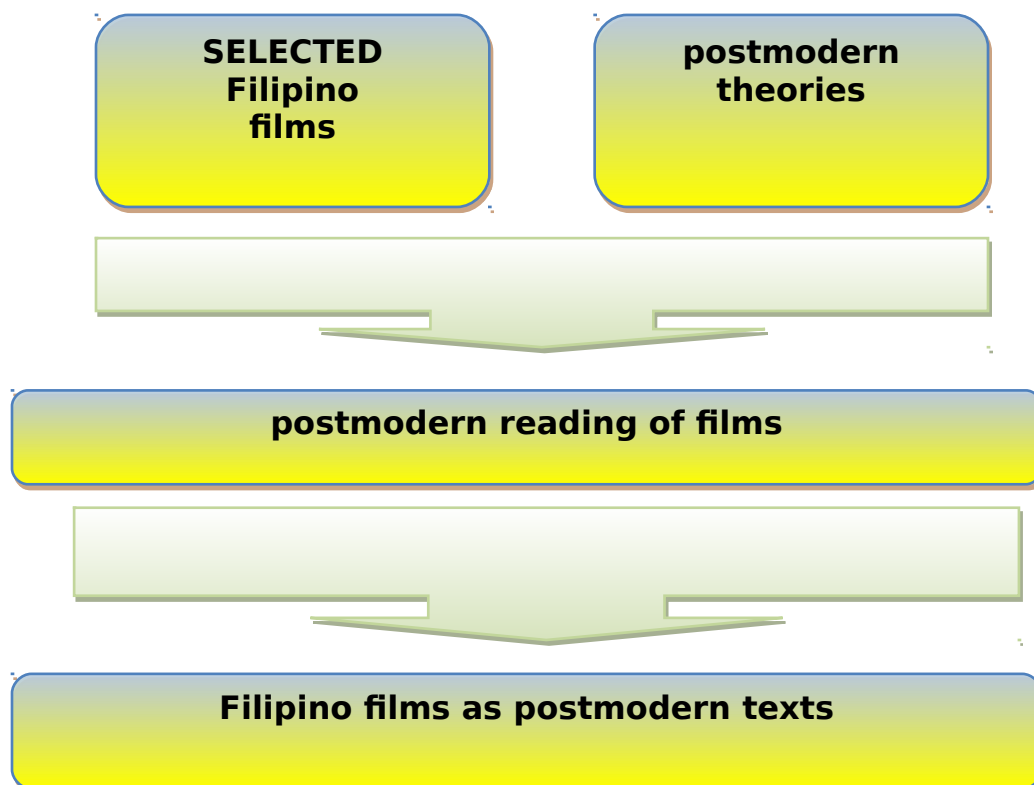


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

As an attempt to read Filipino film texts from the perspective of postmodernism, this study specifically endeavored to shed light on the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant features of postmodernist fiction discernible in the selected contemporary films?
2. How are these dominant postmodernist features related to the over-all narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content of the film texts?
3. How can postmodernism as a body of knowledge, attitudes and strategies be used to understand the contemporary Filipino world?

Significance of the Study

Through the use of the postmodernism in the interpretation of Filipino cinema, the present study would be a notable contribution to the “young sub-discipline” of Philosophy of Film. The motion picture could be treated as an important “text” to be probed and analyzed to bring to light its merits and to be used as a means of addressing complex philosophical, sociological, even political issues (Freeland & Wartenberg, 1995).

Moreover, by employing the ground-breaking yet often misunderstood theories/ tenets of postmodernism as a tool in the analysis of the popular culture/ mass medium of film, this study could serve as an attempt to use contemporary (dominantly Western) body of knowledge, attitude, and strategies to understand the Filipino ‘structure of feeling and thinking.’

Thus, this paper could be of considerable interest not only to serious students of film and philosophy, but also to the following groups of people:

1. Future researchers – Insights on the use of philosophy, particularly postmodernist theories on the reading of film texts can be gleaned from the results of this study;
2. Educators/ Teachers of film, literature and critical theory/ philosophy – Various curricular possibilities on different disciplines can be engaged in to account for the idea of postmodern observable in many fields of knowledge, which includes syllabus design, materials preparation, and media studies; and

3. Movie-going audience – The cinematic experience of an average Filipino viewer can be heightened and made more worthwhile if given the knowledge of the postmodern inherent in most, if not all contemporary films produced today.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The present study is limited to the analysis/ reading of three (3) contemporary Filipino films from the postmodernist perspective. The following provides a brief description of the scope and delimitation of the present study:

1. The selected Filipino films under study include the following: Yam Laranas' *The Road* (2011), Marlon Rivera's *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* (2011), and Chris Martinez' *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nApo Sila!* (2012).

2. It must be said that the filmmakers of the abovementioned films might have pursued the projects without intending to theorize on the postmodern. It is understood, though, that the postmodern reading of the films does not necessarily mean that they are intentionally postmodern (Arriola, 2006).

3. The postmodernist concepts applied to the reading of the film texts are only limited to features of fiction included in the theoretical framework of the

present study. These include: *temporal disorder, nostalgia, pastiche/ intertextuality, fragmentation, paranoia, and vicious circle*.

4. The study does not include other films written and/ or directed by the filmmakers for economy of time. Moreover, the study does not intend to analyze the film texts using other literary or philosophical approaches apart from postmodernism.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and concepts used in the present study are defined operationally to provide a better discussion of the film texts and to facilitate a more comprehensible postmodernist reading.

Hyperreality – Baudrillard (1994) coined the term to refer to a reality that is “more real than real” or excessively real. The term is used to point to a reality created by the media, characterized by an abundance of advertising activity and consumerism.

Intertextuality – Simplistically, this term refers to the way a text is shaped by elements of other texts, either preceding or following it. It means that film or literature can be related to or associated with other films/ literature that may have directly or indirectly influenced its conception. Umberto Eco (1986) puts forward

the notion of *intertextual collage*, which refers to the incorporation of situations derived from preceding textual traditions.

Late Capitalism – It is a phrase that refers to the dominant economic structure characterized by a highly computerized world economy, wherein people are treated as only important consumers. In the postmodern sense, the late capitalist era means that capitalism was able to seep into areas of society, including the arts, media and education, which were previously untouched by the laws of capitalism. These areas have then begun to require growth, profits and business models, and started to advance the so-called ‘globalization’ of consumerism, resulting in what Nicol (2009) refers to as ‘cultural eclecticism’.

Nostalgia – A postmodern ‘mode’ in fiction, both in literature and in motion picture, characterized by a feeling of sentimentality for things in the past. Although not uniquely postmodern, nostalgia sits well in postmodernist fiction because of the theory’s preoccupation with *intertextuality*, which blends recycled situations and elements that belong to a recognizable past, either actually remembered or merely imagined, through the *pastiching* of the said elements.

Pastiche – Simplistically, the term refers to the way a pre-existing style or text is copied, satirized, parodied, borrowed, or ‘spoofed’ by another text. Derived from the Italian word *pasticcio*, meaning ‘a medley of various ingredients: a hotchpotch, a farrago, jumble,’ the term pastiche refers to the kind of

permutation, to the intentional borrowing and transformation of another writer's unique style. It arises from the frustration that in the postmodern times, everything has been done before; nothing new can be written and created anymore (Montealegre, 2007).

Postmodernism – The term is basically used in any of the following ways, as spelled out by Whisnant (2012): First, as synonymous to Fredric Jameson's (1991) "the late capitalist age," dated from the end of World War II, but more frequently starting as late as the 1970s. It is characterized by a shift away from traditional factory production towards a more service-oriented economy, the increasing importance of information technology and media, and the explosion of consumerism and advertising strategies; Second, as a body of philosophical ideas and critical studies that started in the late 1960s with renowned thinkers such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard; finally, as a whole body of different artistic works that refers to or embodies the ideas promoted by abovementioned thinkers, and other theorists and critics that followed them.

Simulacra (and Simulations) – The postmodern theories of the notorious French philosopher and critic Jean Baudrillard (1994) in his *Simulacra and Simulation*, espouse the idea that the postmodern world is a world of 'simulacra', a world reality created, projected, and vicariously lived on a

“screen,” a world where humans could no longer differentiate between reality and ‘**simulations**,’ or the created (or unreal/ virtual) reality. In the contemporary, postmodern society, people have replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs; what is known as reality is only a **simulation of reality**. The signs of culture and communication media that create what humans perceive today as reality constitute the simulacrum, infused with image, sound, advertising, and other aspects of ‘virtual’ reality.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This chapter is devoted to the review of materials such as critical essays, theses/ dissertations, books, websites and periodicals on two areas pertinent to this study—one is on Postmodernism and its various features and themes: *temporality, intertextuality, pastiche, nostalgia, fragmentation, and even paranoia and derangement*; and second is on the Philippine/ Filipino Cinema, with focus on genre categories and their stereotypical characters and narrative structure—all of which contribute to the *postmodernist* reading of the selected contemporary Filipino films.

Conceptual Literature

The magnitude of the task includes examining both foreign and local conceptual literature and/or studies in order to capture the relevance and critical mass of the subject being dealt with in this undertaking. The following section

highlights aspects of the study relevant to the understanding of two (2) important concepts: first is *postmodern in literature* and second, *film studies*.

Postmodernism in Literature

Building on the foundations laid down by postmodernist thinkers since the 1960s and 1970s, numerable studies on the said theory were taken and given wide circulation both in the academia and in the portals of the media/ internet. Thus, undertaking a thorough survey of available materials on postmodernism and its basic theoretical assumptions, including its apposite application to literature and its genres is quite a daunting task. However, any reader/ researcher who aims to have a good grasp of the basic tenets of the theory could only hope of pursuing the understanding of the postmodernist literary movement to further account for an accurate reading of films, which is the ultimate aim of the present study.

Among the scores of postmodernist literary studies, primary is Nicol's (2009) introduction to postmodernist fiction. In his book, he chronicles the rise of postmodernism as originally coined in 1940s to refer to a reaction against the Modern movement in architecture. However, Nicol (2009) furthers that since the 1960s, it has been widely used by American cultural critics, including Susan Sontag and Leslie Fiedler, who sought to define a 'new sensibility' in literature which either rejected modernist ideas or adapted and extended them. In the following decades, the term began to find its way into other fields outside of

architecture and literary criticism, and reached the social and political landscape of social and cultural theory, media studies, visual arts, philosophy and history.

Since its rise in the 1960s, however, Sim (2001) remarks that the term has become a sort of a misunderstood cliché, with people using and misusing the term without actually knowing what it involves or means. Hence, the renowned critic sets out to clarify pertinent details about the theory by providing a critical dictionary of postmodern thought, and highlighting its relevance to the other disciplines, which include philosophy, politics, science and technology, and the arts, particularly architecture, music, literature and film.

In writing about the application of postmodernism to literature in his essay “Word Salad Days, 1960-90” included in the aforementioned work, Lewis (2001) sheds light on some historical events that aligned with the rise of postmodernist writing (“give or take a year or so either way”):

The assassination of John F. Kennedy and the *fatwa* decree against Salman Rushdie; The erection and demolition of the Berlin Wall; and Philip Roth’s essay ‘Writing American Fiction’ (1961) and Tom Wolfe’s ‘Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel’ (1989) (p. 121).

In providing the abovementioned benchmarks for the postmodern period, the critic highlights fitting ‘book-ends’ for a period of history prevalent with “terrorism, doubt [or paranoia], rapid technological change and ideological uncertainties,” which then gave novelists the courage to experiment on self-

consciousness and challenge every rule of decorum and unity in narrative structure, an experimentation that rendered the death of time in a work of fiction (p. 121).

In his essay, Lewis (2001) also surveys some of the dominant features of the so-called 'postmodern derangement' in literature, as primarily discerned in works of fiction, including the cinema. These discernible postmodernist features consist of: *temporal disorder, pastiche, fragmentation, paranoia, and vicious circles/ cycles*. The features spelled out by Lewis (2001) were also made manifest in the postmodernist reading of the selected Filipino films used in the present study.

In another introductory work on postmodernism, Hart (2004) affirms Lewis' (2001) 'book-ends' events that mark the advent of postmodernist era. Like Lewis (2001), he also claims that by the mid 1950s, "most American homes had at least one television set: the Cold War was characterized by domestic entrenchment of visual culture, and by 1989, when the Berlin Wall was dismantled, baby boomers had become at ease with personal computers" (Hart, 2004, p. 16).

However, he also echoes Lyotard's (1984) sentiments that argue that the postmodern is not a distinct period or age, it is an attitude—a "structure of feeling." He further claims that the seeds of the tendency towards self-consciousness and experimentation in postmodernist literature had already been sown decades before the rise of postmodernist period by Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-65) and Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704).

In an extensive work on the contributions of postmodernism as methodology on the practice of the Human Sciences, Mohammad Khosravishakib (2012) of Lorestan University, Iran, reverberates Baudrillard's (1994) idea of the *simulacra* by claiming that its creation brought about the blurring of distinctions between high and low forms of the arts, including music, dance, cinema and literature. He concedes, however, that postmodern literature, like postmodern as a whole, is "hard to define and there is little agreement on [its] exact characteristics, scope and importance" (Khosravishakib, 2012, p. 3). But as is often the case in artistic movements, he furthers that it could be defined in relation to its precursor—Modernism. The advocates of postmodernism argue that the present is fundamentally different from the modern and therefore necessitates a fresh literary sensibility, characterized by playfulness as opposed to the modernist quest for meaning, by the celebration of chance over craft and fragmentation over the fear of fragments, and by the role of self-reflexivity/ self-reference in literature.

How contemporary literature articulates the postmodernist sensibility is also the subject of numerous research studies and journal articles surveyed for the present study. Applying the multi-faceted aspects and ideas of postmodernism on the reading of works of fiction proves to be a testament to the following facts: (1) postmodernism as a "structure of feeling" or attitude permeates the events in the fictional worlds, and (2) the increasing number of studies done by Asian researchers/ critics (from Iran, India, and Hong Kong) also

proves that, indeed, postmodernism—the dominant, late capitalistic body of thought that thrived in the post-industrial western societies—has reached our eastern shores.

Chief among these recent studies done on the postmodernist realities of contemporary Eastern/ World Literature is Reive's (2011) work *Crossing Boundaries: Postmodern Realities in the Selected Works of Haruki Murakami and Rana Dasgupta*. By examining in depth two works of fiction by Japanese author Murakami and British-born Indian author Dasgupta, he argues that two diverging worldviews permeate the postmodernist realities of the renowned writers. One is the angst and confusion brought about by the loss of the 'grand narratives,' based on Lyotard's (1984) ideas, as reflected on Murakami's *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and *The Elephant Vanishes*, and second is the contradictory visions of postmodern fragmentation, as shown in Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled* and *Solo*, that reach back to Lyotard's loss and into the construction of a 'hybrid' reality. This dissertation's assumption that the postmodern condition entails the "irretrievable loss of the past" harks back to the notions of 'historicism' and 'temporal disorder'—ideas that ground the researcher's present study on the motion picture.

Another pertinent study is Freeda-D'Cruz's (2009) analysis of Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise*. The salient features of the consumer society in the light of Jean Baudrillard's theoretical ideas are clearly dealt with in the novel. Saturated by media elements and situations, DeLillo's work, as Freeda-D'Cruz

(2009) claims, is a critique of the postmodernist media/ virtual culture, trapped in the workings of 'technocapitalism'. The apt investigation on a work of postmodernist fiction done by the Indian Ph.D. candidate using the dynamics of 'simulation' by Baudrillard (1994) underscores the present researcher's assumptions on the simulacra's process of 'image reproduction' in the contemporary films under study.

The examination of Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* alongside Jean Baudrillard's (1994) theory of the simulacra and simulations done by Ma Oi-ming (2001) affirms Freeda-D'Cruz's (2009) study on DeLillo. Her work also suggests that novels can play upon a human being's representation of the self as only 'simulacra' and can manifest how the self is stolen or lost in the myriad of images in the simulated world. Moreover, like Freeda-D'Cruz's (2009) work, Ma Oi-ming's (2001) study demonstrates the entanglement of the real with the 'virtual' or the 'hyperreal' which Baudrillard claims to be the 'disappearance of the real'—a fate suffered by the same virtual human beings who live in contemporary films under study.

Similarly, analyzing the multiple appearances of passion in postmodern 'historical' novels, Hui (2005) provides the present researcher with model in the attributes of Jameson's (in Hutcheon, 1988) 'historiographic metafiction' as applied in a fictional work. A characteristic form of postmodern fiction, historiographic metafiction blends the self-reflexivity of metafiction with the ironic

sense of history, through temporal disorder, intertextuality, pastiche and fragmentation.

Another work that explores the relationship of history and fiction in the postmodernist 'historiographic metafiction' is Sin's (2001) study of the *Postmodern Strategies in Selected Works of Milan Kundera*. In her analysis of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Sin (2001) proves that history, like reality in the postmodernist age, is a mere construct that has various discursive functions. Moreover, she stresses the uses and abuses of the notion of a self-reflexive author in the process of creating realities in history and fiction.

As a further attempt to blur the distinction between history and fiction, Leung's (2005) work on *The Fictionalisation of Theory in Selected Works by Italo Calvino* examines the Italian writer's works in order to prove not only his ability to construct a fictional world in his works, but also his uncanny skill to 'fictionalize' the theories incorporated in the stories. Like the abovementioned works by Hui (2005) and Sin (2001), Leung (2005) tries to focus on how theories of metafiction, simulation, and the postmodern notions of history are dealt with in Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* and *Invisible Cities*. Moreover, by studying the fictionalization of these theories, his paper argues that fiction and theory can be combined together to create a 'hybrid'—a new kind of literary work different from the ones that came before it.

Interestingly and in a not so different vein, this hybrid creation characteristic of postmodernism can also be discerned from another literary genre—that of the theater and dramatic performance. In his study of *Postmodernism and Performance*, Philip Auslander (2004) brings into the spotlight the postmodernist development in theater, that is, the death of character, wherein a “deemphasis of the modern concept of psychologically consistent dramatic characters in favor of the fragmented, flowing, and uncertain identities whose exact locations and boundaries cannot be pinpointed” (p. 103). Also, the postmodernist character, whose fragmented identity is constructed from bits of cultural texts (cf. pastiche), is also rendered ‘paranoid’ or suspicious of all representations. This distrust or suspicion of wholeness and unity of representation stems from the late capitalist ‘schizophrenia’ or derangement that Jameson (1991) speaks about, which pervades in most, if not all forms of postmodernist works of art.

Film Studies

Tracing its roots both from the narrative tradition of fiction/ literature and the aesthetics of performance of popular theater, the motion picture proves to be a suitable text/ subject for a scholarly investigation. Films do not only exemplify the effacement of the dividing lines between the genres (as Jameson asserts), they also represent the disappearance of the real in the world of the simulacra (as Baudrillard claims). Contemporary films created within the present atmosphere of knowledge/ information-driven, media-crazed, and consumer-

focused structure of feeling or attitude lend themselves well in a postmodernist reading. Hence, it comes as no surprise that a number of studies have been increasingly made (Unfortunately, most of them are done abroad.) on films from the perspective of postmodernism. However, before undertaking the daunting task of surveying the wide collection of scholarly articles done on postmodernism in the motion picture, a brief review of studies made on films, both foreign and local, would account for a better appreciation and understanding of film as a scholarly text.

A seminal work to consult in undertaking a study on films is Susan Hayward's (2000) *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. The reference book provides both students and teachers of film studies in-depth historical overviews of key genres, film theories, and film movements. This work has been particularly useful for the present researcher in his study, for it sufficiently elucidates the vague concepts of postmodernism as applied in cinema studies.

Another critical dictionary consulted for the present undertaking is William Guynn's (2011) analytic work on film history. Not only does it provide a comprehensive chronological narrative history of film and film studies, it also involves the readers in an active investigation of the history of the medium and in an attempt to develop the critical and analytic skills in a creative cinema research through its accompanying essays penned by some of the most accomplished film critics of the time.

Also written by a number of different film theorists of the time are the essays which comprise the anthology edited by Miller and Stam (2004). Providing a set of thorough discussions on the various facets of film and the application of theory to the viewing (or reading) of film, *A Companion to Film Theory* seeks to “produce a verbal representation of the film complex” (Andre, 1984 in Miller & Stam, 2004, p.6), which in turn, as Kolker (1999, also in Miller and Stam, 2004) remarks, acknowledges the fact that “film is not only entertainment but part of industrial and political culture” (p.6). In achieving their aim to encourage film ‘readers’ to make an authoritative intervention into film culture based on theory and all the other “wealth of the human sciences,” the present study is an effort respond to the challenge of producing a postmodern ‘representation’ of the complex world of contemporary film.

Among the ‘wealth of human sciences’ that can be utilized in the credible investigation of the motion picture are the allied fields of psychology and philosophy. In his book *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Greg Smith (2003) surveys psychological research studies done on emotion, in an attempt to synthesize a theory of how emotion works in the filmic structure. The book delves into concepts of pleasure, displeasure, and desire as used in film studies, and provides convincing groundwork on the assumption that “emotions are so central to most people’s cinematic experiences” (Smith, 2003, p. 3). In so doing, he is able to lay out both a theory of emotion, in general, and an approach to filmic emotion, in particular.

Smith's (2003) work on a neurological basis of psychoanalytic film theory is, in effect, echoes Grainge's (2003) own study on the clear entanglements of memory, film and history. In his book *Memory and Popular Film*, Grainge (2003) uses memory as a specific framework for the scholarly study of popular film, mediating between the growing debates of on the function of memory in cultural life. Different methodologies of memory criticism are also addressed in the book, such as the "use of memory as a means of investigating narrative techniques like flashback" (Grainge, 2003, p. 12), and the mapping of specific 'audience' memory of films, stars, and cinema-related experiences. The present study's use of the postmodern modality towards 'nostalgia' has been thoroughly enriched by Grainge's (2003) work on film memory.

The place of the 'audience' in the discussions of film as 'subject' of memory seems to reverberate in Christie's (2012) and Clemens & Pettman's (2004) respective work on the motion picture. Rendering a psychological, anthropological, and sociological reading of the contemporary (if not postmodern) movie-going 'audience,' Christie (2012) attempts to define the ambiguous concept of "the audience," specifically in the postmodernist/ late capitalistic notion of the audience as only 'consumers' of film. Not only are they "understood as individual spectators in terms of psychology, anthropology or sociology" (Christie, 2012, p. 11), they are also treated as "economic or statistical audience, recorded in terms of box-office receipts." Although the study of reception per se is

not covered by this undertaking, the abovementioned work affirms the dominant postmodernist tendency that permeates in the film industry.

Similarly, in its attempt to assemble a framework for addressing postmodernist issues of representation, identity, and the role of the media in contemporary films, the work of Clemens and Pettman (2004) on the status of 'objects' in the 'virtual world' maps out the mutation that occurred in these inherently lifeless entities. By problematizing the seemingly solid objects like tables in the "virtual-media environment of today" as reflected in the movie *The Matrix*, or the "roles of rabbits in texts such as *Alice in Wonderland*,... *Donnie Darko* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*," the book initiates a basic philosophical question "Why is there something and not nothing?" (Clemens & Pettman, 2004, p.20). This act of philosophizing the nature of 'film objects' and its 'affect' on the 'subject' is yet another testament to the ability of films to *do* and *be* philosophical—an assertion that grounds the present study on films using postmodern philosophy.

The idea that films can be philosophical is also shared by Livingston (2009) in his book *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy*, wherein he observes that philosophers can utilize aspects of the story in a work of cinematic fiction, not only in the works of the famous Swedish 'auteur', but also in popular movies like *The Matrix*, *Total Recall*, and the like, to illustrate a philosophical problem or theory. He further claims that watching such popular science fiction films can help students of philosophy take certain arguments in

the theory of knowledge more seriously. Such claim brings to fore what the postmodernist critic Frederic Jameson (1998) refers as the erosion of distinction between high culture (as represented by philosophy and the act of philosophizing) and mass or popular culture (embodied by popular films as texts for philosophical studies).

Moving on to the aesthetics of cinema and the attention that film critics designated to the study of *film as a work of art*, Younger's (2011) essay on "Film as Art" sheds light on the value of film that makes it 'good':

...we call something "art" when we attribute a high cultural value to it.

Thus, in principle, and from a historical perspective, no film has an intrinsic, universally valid, artistic value. Its value depends on it (and us) being embedded in cultural discourse that gives it value, and tells why it is good (p. 27).

The critic goes on to spell out the five (5) major historical shifts in the way film has been defined as an art form. What is pertinent in the present study is Stage Five (After 1975): After Postmodernism. In this fifth stage, the critic generalizes two main types of critical values that dominated: "traditions of populist aesthetics, which would run, in the American context, from *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) to the latest successful blockbuster, and the more diverse and fragmented traditions of *cinephile* aesthetics or the art house legacy, that thrived most especially in Europe" (Younger, 2011, p.36). These types further illustrate the present study's claims,

echoing Jameson (1998), on the effacement of distinction between high art (European art house) and low art (Hollywood blockbusters?).

Expounding on the art of motion picture, the books of Lo Brutto (2005) and Bordwell & Thompson (2008) aim to educate filmgoers about the art, craft, and lexicon of films. Lo Brutto (2005) accomplishes this task, in his work *Becoming Film Literate*, by providing them with the rules and aesthetics of the medium as well as the wide variety of “gourmet delicacies of filmmaking” (p. xv), which include a (‘best’) list of films that embody and demonstrate the principles of cinema, arranged to explore different cinematic lessons and serve as introductions to motion pictures. It is unfortunate however that among the fifty essays in the volume, not one focuses on the postmodern tendency per se that is prevalent in contemporary cinema. Although sections on nonlinear storytelling (temporal disorder) exemplified in *Amorres Perros* (2000), and the poetics of violence as illustrated in *The Wild Bunch* (1969) prove to be helpful in the present undertaking as modes of reading contemporary Filipino films.

Also helpful in the present undertaking is the book of renowned film critics Bordwell and Thompson (2008). Considered a monumental text(book) on film, *Film Art: An Introduction* provides readers with a set of analytical skills essential in an in-depth understanding of films. With its myriad of examples from different countries and periods, the book transforms an ordinary filmgoer to a skilled and analytical film critic. However, its skills-based approach in the analysis of films provides very little on the development of the motion picture as a postmodernist

phenomenon. The book's value lies not in its contribution to postmodernist thought but in the scholarly study of film as text.

Film, Literature, and Teaching

The scholarly study of film as text using the tools of literary theory stems from the medium's close relationship with literature. This close relationship between literature and film has been the subject of numerous analyses. One of these many studies is Casetti's (2004) "Adaptation and Mis-adaptations: Film, Literature, and Social Discourses," wherein the critic cites the common starting point of researcher made on the two disciplines:

Both literature and cinema have been regarded essentially as *modes of expression*, sites and ways of manifestation of an ability to give shape to ideas, feelings, and personal orientations; in other words, as sites in which an individual's perceptions are combined with the person's will/necessity to offer an image of him or herself and of his or her own world (p. 81).

Thus, the desire to "valorize" cinema as a work of art and as subject of scholarly inquiry has become dominant in the recent years, an opportunity which has been given to literature for the longest time. Casetti (2004) also raises issues that have been neglected in traditional comparison of literature and film in the past—that of adaptation/ mis-adaptation. The ideas of "faithfulness" and "unfaithfulness" between the source text (literature) and derivative text (film) in the process of adaptation have been problematized in postmodern discourses.

The abovementioned critic argues that the idea of ‘closeness’ in adaptation also has to transform radically, in light of the “discursive space of postmodern culture” to which both cinema and literature belong (Casetti, 2004, p. 87).

The issue of adaptation raised by Casetti (2004) harks back to perennial “word/image wars” that Elliott (2004) refers to in the essay “Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars,” wherein the critic reveals a kind of ‘paradox’ that exists between the two disciplines:

The interdisciplinary study of novels and films has tended to run along two sides of a paradox. On one side, novels and films are opposed as “words” and “images,” agreed to be irreducible, untranslatable, a priori entities by most postmodern as well as prior scholars. On the other side, critics propound film’s integral formal, generic, stylistic, narrative, cultural, and historical connections to the novel. Somewhat perplexingly, [hence, postmodern!] the two sides of the paradox tend to coexist within single critical works: they do not, by and large, represent differing views of opposed critics (p.1).

In her study of Victorian novels, particularly Charles Dickens’ works and their film adaptations, and the earlier silent films of the era, Elliott (2004) observes that the partition of literature and film into two opposing camps of “word/ image wars” may have falsified both film and literary theory. She argues, instead, for a more aesthetic practice that involves a kind of postmodernist entanglement or engagement between and within the two media.

The practical application of the inherent connection between literature and film has also been utilized by a number of educators, particularly language teachers. In the present undertaking, the researcher will also briefly explore the studies made on the function of film as tool in the teaching of literature and language. It is important, however, to emphasize at this juncture, that the present study only involves the 'reading' of film text, not the 'teaching' of it, although pedagogic function of films has already been part of the growing number of research areas in the academia.

In "The Use of Media in Language Teaching," Brinton (2006) highlights the use of media, which she categorizes as nontechnical and technical media, as a tool for language teaching/ learning. She provides a five-part framework for structuring media-based lessons, composed of the following stages: *information and motivation stage, input stage, focus stage, transfer stage, and feedback stage*. By outlining activities that can be done in the classroom, Brinton (2006) encourages teachers to employ media in order to "involve students more integrally in the learning process" (p.473).

Zoreda and Vivaldo-Lima (2008) also attempts to involve students in the learning process through the use of film adaptations of novels in their language classrooms. In "Scaffolding Linguistic and Intercultural Goals in EFL with Simplified Novels and their Film Adaptations," the Mexican educators provided different stages in the use of films: *Building background knowledge about the author, Reading, Viewing Film Version, and Public Performance*. By creating and

implementing two simplified novel modules on John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and George Orwell's 1984, they contribute a pedagogical proposal on how students can approach and interact critically with other cultures, and the utilization of film versions of texts/ literature, the essential acquisition of cultural and linguistic skills has been strengthened (p. 28).

The use of films in the classroom is also taken advantage of by Masson (2012) in the study *Watch and Learn: Rhetorical Devices in Classroom Films*. In this work, the characteristics of a 'classroom film' has been clearly spelled out: "(1) they provide a piece of reality, whereby subjects are addressed that fit into the curricula, (2) life should be represented in such a way that...[students] experience the events in the reality, (3) a minimum of viscosity needs to be provided, and (4) the events should be recorded and arranged in such a way that the connection between them does not give insurmountable problems" (Masson, 2012, p.12). The purpose of the films, as Masson (2012) asserts, is to suggest an alternative to the traditional approaches employed in the classroom. Unfortunately, the characteristics of a traditional 'classroom film' put forward by the study reject the 'anti-foundational' principles of postmodernism, with the lack of discursive space for the problematizing of the kind of reality that a 'classroom film' must depict or even the insurmountable problems that a postmodernist film, observing temporal disorder/ nonlinear narrative structure, may cause to the students.

The use of films as only a 'back-up' activity and the relegation of film viewing as something "peripheral" in the language classroom are few of the facts that Yu (2009) mourns in her language classroom. In her study *Learning English through Films: A Case Study of a Hong Kong Class*, she contemplates on how films could be better utilized in an English classroom. She finds out that, through the reflective journals and interviews, the teaching of a foreign language has been strengthened through the use of films. Yu (2009) furthers by enumerating the reasons for using films in the teaching and learning of English: "Films are an authentic context for language acquisition; they motivate potential; and they promote critical thinking skills (p. 8).

Interestingly, Pearson (2010) validates Yu's (2009) work on the use of films in language teaching. In response to the shift in the Hong Kong secondary school English curriculum, which would necessitate the inclusion of literary texts in a nation-wide standardized testing, Pearson (2010) explores the need for reading books and watching films in English to stem the tide of change. In her study, she examines the amount/ level of student receptivity to the use of films as teaching tools. Based on her study, Pearson (2010) claims that the visual nature of film was "efficacious in aiding the students' understanding of the film components, and over-all enhanced their learning of English" (p. ii).

As revealed in the above cited survey of relevant literature/ studies on aspects involved in the present study, namely, *postmodernism*, *film*, *literature*, and even their implication to *teaching*, there is a sufficient body of research

studies done on the said areas. It is high time to throw some light on local studies made on the intersection of literature, film and other forms of popular culture in the country.

Studies on Filipino Film and Popular Culture/ Literature

One of the first (and very few) scholarly articles written on Filipino films is Isagani Cruz's (in Cruz & Reyes, 1984) "Si Lam-ang, Si Fernando Poe Jr., at Si Aquino: Ilang Kuro-kuro tungkol sa Epikong Filipino." The renowned Filipino critic and educator adapts the Proppian morphology and applied some of its functions not only on the existing folk epics of the country, but also on the *Ang Panday* trilogy, a film series which transformed Fernando Poe Jr. into a larger than life Filipino super/ epic hero.

Cruz's musings on Filipino epics and *Ang Panday* seem to permeate on Reyes' (2009) exploration of the Filipino films termed *bakya* [cheap, tasteless]. With her examination of the world of the *komiks*, and its numerous sojourns into the motion picture in the essay "From Darna to ZsaZsa Zaturannah: Desire and Fantasy," she questions the way these popular artifacts are dismissed as "mindless, frothy materials because first, they offer no moral certitude, and second, because they are not 'serious' representations of life" (Reyes, 2009, p.30). In the end, she argues that popular culture and film in particular, have always appealed to the majority of Filipinos, and the study of popular films should focus on the relationship between the texts themselves and the audience that supports them.

Zafra's (2003) *Twisted Flicks* lies somewhere in the confusing (if not postmodernist) critical tradition that Cruz and Reyes established in the country. Her angst-filled ramblings about some Filipino films (For this volume, she mostly examines Hollywood films.), including *Tatarin*, *Videoke King*, *Batang West Side* and *La Vida Rosa* are written in the typical language of her bestselling *Twisted* series. This book embarks on a seemingly unending tirade of praises and mockery in order to bring out the aesthetics of popular films often dismissed as tasteless and mindless.

In the context of pedagogy and research production, Dayag (2009) presents a profile of the English-language media in the Philippines, encompassing both print and broadcast. He also discusses the role that the media performs in the development of the English vocabulary of Filipino learners. What makes Filipino media interesting, Dayag (2009) quips, is the way other languages in the country are incorporated in the lexicon, which serves as a fascinating area for future research studies.

Similarly, Tolentino (2010) argues in his "Ang Kulturang Popular at Ang Makabayan" for the inclusion of the teaching of popular culture (i.e. media, film) in the curriculum. He claims that this phenomenon, since it is created by capital, business, and a service-oriented industry (cf. Jameson), must be taught, paying critical attention to "how the *bayan* [who consumes the same forms of the media] is trapped by the media and technology. He ends by saying that such change in the curriculum of formal education can serve as a catalyst for change.

Interestingly, Bautista (2011) also argues for the inclusion of media in classroom teaching. She mourns every teacher's dilemma of coming up with motivational activities to ignite the attention of her students, who spend most of their time not with books, but in front of a 'screen' (cf. Baudrillard). Through activities like ad making and song (and video) appreciation, as Bautista (2011) claims, students are enjoined to participate in the ordinarily dreary task of reading literature, particularly poetry.

In her thesis *Various Approaches in Using Films in Teaching Philippine History*, Bondoc (2002) affirms Bautista's (2011) claims on the use of media and film in the classroom. In her paper, she attempts to identify and analyze the various approaches employed by teachers of Philippine History through the use of films. She concludes by saying that the use of film in teaching enhances the qualities of a teacher and proves to be instrumental in the development of his abilities as an educator.

Writing as a true educator and film enthusiast, renowned filmmaker Nick Deocampo's (2008) monumental book on film literacy serves the function of promoting the use of motion picture to access and disseminate knowledge. His *SineGabay: A Film Study Guide* provides students, teachers, and even ordinary movie goers with a way to better understand the films they watch. The book also highlights the different subject areas recommended for study in each of the films included in the volume, makes available some guide questions for an in-depth

study, and emphasizes a ‘cinematic focus’—all of which contribute, in the words of the Filipino National Artist Bienvenido Lumbera, who contributed a foreword to the text, to making the book a “landmark in [the] quest for education that restores pleasure to classroom learning” (in Deocampo, 2008, p. iv).

Other studies made on Filipino films include theses that employ various literary theories in the analysis of different film texts. One is the use of Mythological/Archetypal criticism anchored on Northrop Frye’s theories in the reading of Laurice Guillen’s selected works. In her *Symbolisms in Guillen’s Religious Movies*, Jaro (2010) looks into the multi-awarded filmmaker and actress’ *Tanging Yaman* and *Santa-Santita* to bring to fore archetypal images based on plot, character, setting, and symbol. She also attempts to relate these prevailing archetypal images and movie themes to the Philippine cultural and religious realities.

Another study is Cabatuando’s (2004) use of Feminism in the analysis of the ten (10) most popular Filipino films in 2002. The study examines the *Gender Responsiveness of the Images of Women as Presented in Filipino Top-Grosser Movies of 2002*. The film content analysis of the images done by Cabatuando (2004) sheds light on the representation of female leading characters in the selected films, and reveals the following major representations: women as professionals, women as assertive, women as pessimistic beings, women as hopeless romantics, etc. The abovementioned researcher also posits that Filipino

films have come a long way in their portrayal of the roles of women as compared to previous studies and literature.

In the context of film adaptation of literature, Bantugan's (2004) dissertation *An Analysis of the Film Adaptations of Two Selected Filipino Novels Along Content, Language Style and Media Effect* aptly uses literary, linguistic and film, and even media concepts in his investigation of two (2) Filipino film adaptations. The study endeavors to co-relate the formal characteristics of the selected novels with the film content, paying close attention to the dialogue styles and the mass media effects in the film adaptations of setting, characters, and subplots. The subjects used in the study include Edgardo Reyes' *Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag* and Lualhati Bautista's *Bata Bata...Paano Ka Ginawa?* and their film adaptations are chosen based on the following criteria: recognition accorded to the texts by award-giving bodies, relevance, and recommendation of experts. The aforementioned criteria used in the study serve as model in the present researcher's exploration of Filipino film texts from the perspective of postmodernism.

Although the idea of postmodernism may be far from his mind when he conducted his research, Abuan's (2000) study on *The Effect of Science Fiction Films and Science-Oriented Movies in Students' Conceptual Understanding of Science Concepts* deals with the postmodern concepts of time, space and relativity. This study, being more scientific than literary or filmic, aims to find out

the most effective way of teaching science concepts in the classroom using science fiction films.

Lastly, Corpuz' (2010) paper "Subverting Zsazsa Zaturnnah: A Critical Analysis on the Gender Representations on Carlo Vergara's *Ang Kagila-gilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Zsazsa Zaturnnah*" (presented at the 8th ASEAN Inter-University Conference, Manila, May 2008) examines the graphic and its adaptation into a musical and film in an effort to tackle the media's discourse on homosexuality. It explores the representation of the *bakla* [gay man] to throw light on the stereotypes of gay men by 're-imaging' (or re-imagining) the gay persona as a strong superhero. The paper demonstrates how Vergara succeeds in challenging or subverting the dominant patriarchal notions of masculinity and homophobia. Corpuz' (2010) analysis of gay (postmodern) representation in his paper prompted the researcher to consider the inclusion of the aforementioned film in the study; it is unfortunate, however, that a copy of the said film is a rare find, which prevented it from being part of this undertaking.

All the aforementioned studies made by Filipino researchers, critics and theorists point to the scarcity, if not lack of a substantial study done on Filipino films using the perspective of postmodernism. Hence, the present undertaking would indeed contribute a lot to the growing body of literature that highlight the scholarly attributes of the motion picture. With its attempt to examine Filipino films from the lenses of the postmodern, an originally/ historically western phenomenon and body of thought, this study necessitates a survey of related

studies—composed of theses, dissertations and other critical essays from periodicals—that apply the theories of *le postmoderne* in the reading of films.

Related Studies

On Pop Culture, TV and MTV

In her study of the phenomenon of “the end of the real” as shown in the relationship of reality and its representation in the postmodern society, Tam (2003), in her *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, explores the connection between postmodernism and the medium of popular culture, which is television. Based on the postmodern doubt that reality no longer exists, her study focuses on TV as a form of postmodernity and a constructor of ‘reality’ by demonstrating how ‘reality TV’ works and how the Persian Gulf War, according to Baudrillard (1994), a major theorist in the present undertaking, is only a ‘TV war’ and not a ‘real war.’

In a similar study on postmodernism and TV, Bjornsson’s (2006) *Postmodernism and The Simpsons*, offers a postmodernist reading of the popular television program, with special regard to the theories of intertextuality, hyperreality, and metanarratives. By applying the prominent theories of Baudrillard, Lyotard and Jameson on Homer and *The Simpsons*, Bjornsson (2006) argues that mass media serve a major role in the creation of a postmodern ‘hyperreality’ (Baudrillard) which is both ‘anti-authoritative’ (Lyotard) and lacks ‘historical reality’ (Jameson).

Kaplan's (1987) work seems to have sown the seeds of the abovementioned studies in her *Rocking Round the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism and Consumer Culture*. In here, Kaplan (1987) provides one of the earliest models from which to 'read' an aspect of postmodern culture, particularly the music videos. By analyzing some of the MTVs of Madonna, she posits the blurring of categories (high art/pop art, male/female, etc) as a distinctly postmodernist phenomenon.

On Films: Hollywood and Beyond

In the context of film, Khosravishakib (2012) provides four (4) main concepts to think about when postmodernism is applied to film (p. 3):

- A. Simulation – taking what has been made and using it through pastiche; intentionally replicated style or through parody; drawing irony from styles to make new styles.
- B. Pre-Fabrication—draws even closer to already existing and even more noticeable scenes, and simply reuses them in narratives, dialogue, etc.
- C. Intertextuality—text that draws from other texts; clearest example is the blatant remake.
- D. Bricolage—building a film like a collage of different film styles and genres

The abovementioned concepts are useful in the present study for they are all discernible in the motion pictures under study, particularly the intertextual qualities of the subjects analyzed.

In his study, Caires (2010) emphasizes “The Interactive Potential of Postmodern Film Narrative: Frequency, Order and Simultaneity.” By analyzing films like *Memento*, *Irreversible*, *Smoking/ No Smoking*, *Elephant*, and other Hollywood films, he sheds light on the narrative models employed by contemporary motion picture directors. For his study, he pays close attention to the art and craft of cinematography and digital filmmaking to highlight the ‘temporal’ disorder prevalent in the narrative structure of most postmodern films.

The use of postmodern theories to read popular Hollywood films seems to be a staple in both the academia and the digital media. Studies from researchers and critics, like Branston (2006) on *Pulp Fiction* and Croome (2002) on *Fight Club* all emphasize the applicability of postmodern textual criteria to a visual text. Works like those of Le Blanc (2009) on “Representing Postmodern Marginality in Three Documentary Films” and Kelly (2004) on *First Knight*, *Braveheart*, *Gladiator*, *The 13th warrior*, and others in his “Beyond Historical Accuracy: A Postmodern View of Movies and Medievalism” situate the postmodern reading in the center of a growing literature both on postmodern representation and historicity/ historiographic metafiction, respectively. Moreover, Fabe’s (2004) reading of Woody Allen’s *Annie Hall* in her “Film and Postmodernism” concretizes

the concept of a “postmodern cinematic sensibility” in her close look at the funniest moments in Alvy Singer’s life (p. 173).

The studies of Branston (2006), Croome (2002), Caires (2010), Le Blanc (2009), Kelly (2004), and Fabe (2004), among others, prove that a postmodern reading of films transcends the typical genre categories of motion picture. Thus, the postmodern theories could be applied to any genus of film. However, the sub-category of science fiction (SF) lends itself well to a postmodern reading due to the fact that the environment of the film itself is a manifestation of the ‘simulated reality’ or ‘hyperreality’ envisioned by the postmodernist theorists. Begley (2004) and Aparicio (n.d.) both analyze films that belong to the science fiction sub-genre, particularly *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Cube* (1997) respectively, to bring to fore the relevance of SF to the wider context of postmodern literary and critical theory. Similarly, Condon’s (2003) study on *The Matrix Unlocked* provides a thorough survey of the ‘simulated world’ created by the filmmakers of the said film/ postmodern phenomenon. Lastly, Ross’s (2001) take on the *Nostalgia in Postmodern Science Fiction Film* sums up the most important characteristic of the genre—its nostalgia (or throwback?) mode. In his analysis of *Blade Runner*, *12 Monkeys*, and *The Matrix*, two aspects of nostalgia are detailed—‘simulacra,’ as identified by Baudrillard (1994) and pastiche in order to discuss the films’ manner of looking into the past to envision a possible future. The paper posits whether postmodern SF is able to visualize a likely future if it is filled with intertextual images of the past. It also offers a unique re-interpretation

of history, as claimed by Jameson (1991), in its portrayal of the encapsulated past, present, and future into 'perpetual present'.

Fantasy films and animation also offer a postmodern rendering, as proven by Degim (2011) and Burningham (2000), in their 'reading' of *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (LOTR) and *Toy Story Duology*, respectively. Degim (2011) problematizes the notions of time, historicism, and subject through the perspective of postmodern theory in his study of the magical and mystical elements of LOTR, while Burningham (2000) posits the intertextual qualities of Buzz Lightyear and Woody of *Toy Story* and *Don Quixote* and Sancho. The use of concepts like intertextuality, historicity, and nostalgia in the aforementioned studies provide a better model for the present undertaking.

Finally, in the Philippines, "embracing the spaces" provided and rising to the challenge of "traversing postmodern" from the concluding statements of Montealegre's (2007) paper on "The Postmodern in Film, Fiction and Poetry," and Arriola's (2006) monumental work on the *Postmodern Filming of Literature*, wherein both postmodern experts render a thorough and systematic reading of films and literature, the present study is an attempt to prove that the primarily western concept of postmodernism has, at last, reached the developing, Eastern shores of the country, through her contemporary, independently-produced films.

As revealed in the related literature and studies, there appear to be a number of foreign studies that examined the postmodernist tendencies and concepts discernible in the motion picture. However, most of these studies used

literary characters in fiction and drama, rather than in films, as subjects for their analyses. More importantly, local literature seems to show an insufficiency of studies about *Postmodernism* and *Films*, which proves that the *Postmodern Reading of Films* attracts little attention from the academic community, hence, confirming the necessity for the present study, along with the findings and analyses of the writers and authors in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Research Procedure

As an attempt to read Filipino film texts from the perspective of postmodernism, this study used the framework of Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson, coupled with postmodernist theories in fiction spelled out by Umberto Eco and Brian McHale.

This chapter presents the procedure that the researcher used to come up with an interpretive and descriptive analysis of the selected Filipino films. The following phases were involved in the researcher's course of action:

Phase 1: Preparation

The initial steps undertaken by the researcher in the Preparation Phase include the following:

1. Library research on films and the postmodern theory, particularly those applicable to the study of the cinema, had been made before drafting the selection criteria, both for theories and film texts.
2. After a thorough study of the postmodernist strain in the motion picture, the researcher arrived at the decision of using the theoretical frameworks of Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), Frederic Jameson (1991) and Jean Baudrillard (1994). However, the adviser prompted the student researcher to concentrate on the practical notions/ concepts of postmodernism as applied to the study of cinema, not only on the historical aspect of the theory. Moreover, she advised the researcher to adopt other theories/ authorities in postmodernist fiction to substantiate the film analysis. Hence, the theories of Baudrillard ('simulacra'), Jameson ('historicity', 'temporal disorder', and 'nostalgia', among others), and Eco ('intertextual collage'/ pastiche), along with McHale's other

theories in postmodernist fiction ('fragmentation' and 'paranoia' anchored on Jameson) were used to ground the present study.

3. A list of ten (10) films had been prepared based on the following set of criteria:

- 3.1 The films should be created and produced by Filipino filmmakers from the 1980s onwards, must feature Filipino characters portrayed by actors from the country, and were screened/ viewed in the Philippines.

- 3.2 The films should show aspects of the 'postmodern situation,' that is, the protagonists are set in a 'postmodern' backdrop, characterized by what Jameson (1998) refers to as a "consumer society," wherein elements of the media, advertising, business, service-oriented interaction and communication are discernible.

- 3.3 The films feature innovative, non-traditional, if not experimental techniques in filmmaking, as reflected in a non-linear storytelling, infusion of old/ pre-existing styles, plot structure, characterization, and dialogues from other films, and/or blurred genre categories.

- 3.4 Although the films are not necessarily/ intentionally conceived as postmodern, they should exhibit some postmodernist strains like nostalgia/ sentimentality, temporality, fragmentation, and even paranoia/ derangement.

3.5. Finally, the filmmakers (screenwriters and directors) of the films to be analyzed are either award winners/ nominees or have received recognition from film critics and other bodies that focus on the Filipino cinema.

4. The above-mentioned set of criteria was then subjected to the close scrutiny of experts in the field of literature/ film criticism in order to ascertain not only its validity, but more importantly, its efficiency and relevance to the present study. Suggestions and comments from experts were mulled over and considered in the revision of the initial set of films considered for study.
5. The same set of film/ media educators and experts had been consulted by the researcher and asked to fill out a survey form (See Appendix A) regarding the films to be used in the study.

Phase 2: Actual viewing and Re-Viewing of texts

Based on the results of the survey, the researcher arrived at the following set of films for a postmodern reading:

1. Yam Laranas' *The Road* (2011)
2. Marlon Rivera's *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* (2011)
3. Chris Martinez' *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nApo Sila!* (2012)

Even if most of the films in the final list for study had already been viewed/ seen by the researcher, a second (and third viewing) of the films were deemed necessary to account for a postmodern 'reading' of the film texts. Bailey (2007)

remarks on the benefits of seeing films (for a number of times) on the home screen, which he refers to as the “fourth screen,” and claims that it is similar to ‘reading’ a book, for the viewer/ reader becomes more intimate with it, away from ‘crunching popcorn, nattering patrons, and mobile phones” (p. 20). Also, copies of the films’ screenplays had been sourced out in order to closely scrutinize the postmodernist aspects of not only the narrative structure, but also the characters’ dialogues and ‘stream’ of thought.

Phase 3: Postmodern Reading: Analysis and Interpretation of the Films

Comprising the ‘meat’ of this present study is the analysis of the films using the tools of the postmodern. To illustrate the presence of postmodernist features in the film texts and to address the research questions that were raised for the present study, the researcher divided the analysis and interpretation of each selected contemporary Filipino film into the following parts:

1. A Look into the Film and its Genre

The analysis of each film begins with a preliminary glimpse on the special achievements accorded to the films to throw the spotlight on what makes them worth reading and what sets them apart from other movies in the same genre pool. Also, some introductory notes on the genre are provided to situate the film in the grand scheme of film making and genre/ film studies.

2. Dominant Features of Postmodernism in the Films

To shed light on the questions: *What are the dominant features of postmodernist fiction discernible in the selected films?* and *How are these postmodernist features related to the narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content of the film?*, the researcher looked into fictional elements of the film to bring to fore what exactly makes them postmodern. Specifically, this part of the analysis problematizes the filmic form of each text, investigating each element while enlightening the aspects that make them postmodern.

3. The Postmodern in the Contemporary Filipino Society

To explain how *postmodernism can be used to understand the contemporary Filipino world*, the researcher attempted to draw out the significant Filipino experiences/ issues from each film (e.g .family, poverty, etc.), and situated them in the contemporary postmodern world, to ultimately understand how these issues/ themes affect our Filipino ‘structure of feeling.’

CHAPTER IV

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the three (3) selected contemporary Filipino films from the perspective of postmodernism. To address the research questions that were raised for the present postmodern reading, the examination of each film is divided into three parts: first, a glimpse on the film itself and its genre; second, an investigation of the fictional elements of the film and of the extent of the influence of postmodernist thought on the film’s narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content; and last, a

journey into the inner realms of the Filipino society and its complex contemporary issues and experiences and situating the tenets of the theory amidst the 'real' and 'hyperreal' in the country today.

***The Road* as a Postmodernist Asian Horror Story**

The Postmodernist Horror Film

Pinedo (1996) qualifies what characterizes a 'postmodern' horror story in her "Recreational Terror and the Postmodern Elements of Contemporary Horror Film" (p. 17):

1. Horror constitutes a violent disruption of the everyday world;
2. Horror transgresses and violates boundaries;
3. Horror throws into question the validity of rationality;
4. Postmodern horror repudiates narrative closure; and
5. Horror produces a bounded experience of fear.

Simply put, as Pinedo (1996) claims, a postmodern horror film operates on the notions of disruption, transgression, undecidability, and uncertainty—elements that haunt hallowed strip of land that is Yam Laranas' *The Road*. Being one of the very few Filipino films that were screened in Hollywood and graced different film festivals abroad, including the prestigious Brussels Film Festival, *The Road* did not go unnoticed in the country as well, with its nomination from both the PMPC Star Awards for Movies (which some people say is the counterpart of the Golden Globe Awards, with the members of the press

composing the award-giving body) and the very celebrated FAMAS Awards (the country's Oscar?).

Temporal Disorder, Disrupted Narrative

The film tells the story of three teenagers whose lives have been disrupted when they sneak off in the middle of the night to take a drive down a closed-off dirt road. As the police officers try to investigate the whereabouts of the missing teens, they uncover and unwittingly reopen a twelve-year old case involving two sisters who have gone missing while traversing the same road. The film then, in the words of *The New York Times* reviewer, Catsoulis (2012), “crawls back in time” in its attempt to make sense of the disappearances through spine-tingling fragments of vignettes told in a sequence of flashbacks. The traditional ‘linearity’ of a typical horror film is repudiated by driving the viewers on a backward ride to the cause of the haunting, into a dilapidated house with an eerie past.

The past, too, is not presented chronologically. The story literally moves forward through a sequence of scenes that run backward in time. When the film opens, we see a grim-faced, highly-decorated police officer as he accepts another recognition from the force. Similar to the dual personalities/ fragmented identities of the *Fight Club* lead character in Croome's (2002) study of the cult classic, this police officer in *The Road*, who serves as the protagonist/ hero in the film's prologue ends up as the villain/ perpetrator, as revealed in a series of calculated backward jumps in time, from 2008 to 1998, and by 1988, the viewer

gets a glimpse of the troubled past that haunts the hero/ villain. However, the epiphany does not take place in 1988, but in 2008. In the epilogue, the viewer is yet again brought back to the 'present day,' which in the film's time is 2008, and shown the unraveling of the events after the epiphany. The story, in another of the films numerous shifts in time, ends in a seemingly positive light, as it cuts (and lingers) in the scene showing the hero, when he was still a young boy, traversing the path that leads outside of their haunted, dilapidated house. The viewer sees the boy's smiling face as he strains his eyes from the harsh, but welcoming rays of the sun. In effect, the scene invokes the feeling of acceptance if not sympathy for the boy's plight, having been locked inside the house with a controlling mother and a homicidal father.

Fragmented Recollections, Schizophrenic Subject

The transgression in the linear story-telling, cause-effect structure of a typical narrative is not the only postmodern slant of the film. It also capitalizes on the notions of fragmentation and paranoia. A schizophrenic self, as Jameson (1991) suggests, is a fragmented subject, unable to "organize its past and future into coherent experience" (p. 71). The 'incoherent experience' or 'schizophrenic experience,' as Jameson (in Barbara, 2006) furthers, "is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers that fail to link up in a

coherent sequence” (p. 3). The film appears to be the puzzle pieces of an ‘incoherent sequence’ of events, occurring in the disjointed mind of the lead character. The scenes serve as the fragmented recollections of a young man, raised in a household of fear, paranoia, and even derangement. Is it not paranoia that compels the mother to lock his son inside of the closet every time the son spills water on the table or steps for even an inch out of the house? Is it not derangement, brought about by extreme jealousy and frustration for having no control over his own wife and home that drives the father to kill the wife and hang himself, in front of the boy’s innocent eyes? Are these events in a young boy’s life not enough to transform him to a murderous, bludgeoning monster? Are these eerie recollections from a troubled, haunted past not enough to shatter a young mind into fragments?

Such questions affirm Pinedo’s (1996) confident claims that undecidability and uncertainty are things that define the postmodern horror film. The film screams of a lot of uncertain events and situations: Will the spectral car without a driver that haunts the road continue to cruise the tiny strip of land? Will the bludgeoned body of one of the sisters stop haunting the dirt road? Will all the murdered bodies ever be found? In a time that is characterized by ‘perpetual presents’ which is the postmodern, in a road, which could be situated anywhere as in the postmodern notion of ‘placelessness’ where the ghosts of 1988 still haunt the ghosts of 1998, where the soft whisper and muffled cry of the

phantoms of 1998 can still be heard in 2008, history is not only transgressed but ultimately rendered non-existent. Ah, postmodern!

Ghost of the Nuclear Family in Contemporary Filipino Society

The fragmented subject, as Jameson (1991) argues “is condemned to live in a perpetual present in which the various moments of his/ her life have little [or no] connection”, a direct opposition to the “once-existing centered subject, in the period of classical capitalism and nuclear family” (p. 119). Hence, the postmodern character in *The Road*, as in other Filipino horror films of late, also is unable to escape this curse of a postmodernist “isolation and disconnectedness” – different from the “once-existing centered individual” that belongs to a “nuclear family.” The ghosts of his troubled past that haunt the now ‘decentered’ self are mere ‘simulations’ produced to help the subject cope with fragmentation.

Interestingly, stemming from the same ‘Asian horror tradition,’ the Filipino variant of the postmodern horror film shares some elements with its neighboring countries. Aside from its propensity for providing slow, atmospheric narrative transitions, the Filipino horror film also constructs the ‘Other’ and ascribes this, in a number of cases, on the female. McLarty (1993) posits in her dissertation titled *The Limits of Dissatisfaction: Postmodernism, The Contemporary Horror Film, and The Problem of the Feminine* how in the postmodern, a period characterized by the effacement of distinction between the ‘norm’ and the ‘other,’ the dismantled distinction is then displaced on the feminine:

Much reactionary postmodern horror directs fear and disgust towards the feminine by transcribing postmodern anxieties onto the female body... becoming a woman is the ultimate postmodern horror. The threatening social world is made sense by ultimately invoking the feminine as an indication of its monstrousness (p. 182).

This points to the fact that the contemporary horror film can also be better analyzed and probed within the confines of a feminist discussion, which, however unfortunate, is not part of the present reading. It is useful to note though that in most postmodern Asian horror films, monstrosity is also ascribed to the woman. Consequently, in *The Road*, the monstrous feminine is still seen in the guise of the young boy-hero's domineering mother, who refuses to let his son set foot outside of the female-dominated household, or the possessed body of one of the missing teenage girls, who has the power to recognize her assailant, and even the bludgeoned bodies of the sisters who continually haunt the road and the dilapidated house. Such burden of monstrous female representation is carried by *Sadako*, *Shom-Ba*, and other female horror victim/ monster figures in Asian horror films.

Moreover, in their introduction to *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, Choi and Wada-Marciano (2009) posit that a number of themes, which appear to be nation-specific, are discernible in recent Asian horror films:

In the case of Japanese horror films, technology seems to be the most crucial aspect as iconography and for narrative development, such as the cursed videotape in *Ringu* and *One Missed Call*. The horror films from South Korea are often concerned with adolescent sensibility, which can be seen within the *Whispering Corridors* series, while recent Hong Kong horror films seem to be tied to the Chinese national identity, and reveal Hong Kong's oscillation between desire for and anxiety toward China (pp.4-5).

Asian societies, however, despite the difference in economic status, share similar socio-economic concerns, as Choi and Wada-Marciano (2009) further, including technology, sexuality, and a blossoming youth culture—which explain the recurring themes in their horror film production.

In the Philippines, however, it is not so much from technology or sexuality where our postmodern concerns spring, but from the threat that postmodernism poses on the “nuclear family.” It is observable that most if not all of the ghosts that haunt the Filipino horror film, as exemplified in *The Road*, are a product of the fragmented family. The Filipinos' sociological concept of the family lies deep within the subject's now ‘decentered, fragmented’ self; that is why, when the unit collapses, as illustrated in boy-hero's witnessing of his mother's murder, committed by the father, aggravated by the refusal of the mother's ghost to leave the home and the father's suicide, the self disintegrates into fragments. The hero ends up just living in his own Baudrillard's ‘simulacra,’ filled with ‘simulated’

images of his 'once-existing' family. Later Filipino horror films like *Pridyider*, *Tiktik: Aswang Chronicles*, and even TV's *Juan dela Cruz* perpetuate this theme—the desire for a unified, centered whole stems from the loss if not lack of a 'centering' agent—the family.

Indie within an Indie: 'Simulacra' in *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank*

The Self-Reflexivity of the Postmodern 'Indie'

After winning most of the major awards in the 2011 Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival, and dubbed as the “most successful independent film in the history of cinema” with box office receipts of not less than 38.4 million pesos (www.pep.ph), Marlon Rivera's directorial debut *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* was the country's official entry to the 2011 Academy Awards for Best Foreign-Language Film. Penned by another veteran filmmaker in the 'indie scene', Chris Martinez, and picked up for a nationwide release by Star Cinema, one of the biggest studio production outfits in the country, the film was able to accomplish more than any other 'studio' films had in the past—a testament to the fact that the boundaries between high art/ low art or commercial/ art films have been transgressed in the postmodern times (Jameson, 1991).

Transgression of Genre Categories, Pastiche of Old Styles

The film also rejects strict genre categorization. Although advertised as a comedic film, the story opens, rather gravely, in the most somber of fashion, reminiscent of a typical *telenovela*/ soap opera, with a perplexing narration, detailing the kind of scene that is about to unfold:

Sequence Number 34. Exterior. Establishing shots. Day.

Magbubukas ang eksena sa iba't ibang tanawin ng kahirapan sa lungsod.

Ipapamalas din ang mga kalunus-lunos na kalagayan ng mga taong naninirahan dito.

Then, the movie fades in to a bombardment of miserable images of the slums in an urban area (Metro Manila, perhaps!) exactly depicting what the foregoing narration has just described. And as the opening credits appear in every dejected and wretched scene representing the impoverished metropolis, the narrator's voice chimes in again:

Wide shots. Establishing shots *ng slums, ng mga barong-barong, ng gabundok na tambak ng basura. Dadako and camera sa lugar nina Mila.*

Sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon, papakita ang malakahong tirahan ni Mila.

Typical of the characters that inhabit the world of 'indie' cinema, Mila (the title character) looks pitiable, in her tattered clothing and haphazard hair, as she cooks the pack of 'instant noodles' in a steaming pot of boiling water—this means lunch for her seven (7) children. The movie continues in this fashion for the next few minutes, evoking a documentary-drama 'feel' to it. What could be a better

subject for a 'real' life documentary that the impoverished condition of a widowed mother, living dirt-poor, in the slums with her seven young children? What makes her plight even worse is that on that particular Thursday morning, she is going to sell/ pimp one of her small children for the all-important cash she need to feed the rest of her brood. The film that promised to be a fun-filled, comedic laugh-out-loud ride into the 'toilet-humor-filled' septic tank of a life of a character portrayed by one of the leading comediennes in the country quickly turns into 'real' life drama, a non-fiction narrative, a truthful chronicle of a life—a serious documentary on poverty.

What Jameson (1991) refers to as the effacement of distinctive lines between categories, as seen in the blurring of genre distinction in *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* is made more manifest when the film turns into a musical! The characters that are previously seen living in the monotony of everyday, hard-up existence suddenly churn into a well-choreographed dance number, the impoverished denizens of the city slums break into song, and the spotlight is thrown on the lead character, still preparing her brood's lunch, as she belts out a Fantine-inspired performance, decrying the misery in her impoverished existence. 'Cultural eclecticism' as in the term used by Nicol (2009) is shown here in the muddling up of the film genres—documentary, musical, soap opera/telenovela, situational comedy, and even stand-up comedy, as shown in the sequences where comedienne Eugene Domingo plays herself, an actress who is asked to read/ audition for the role of Mila, and she readily demonstrates the

kinds of acting in her book: the elevator acting, the TV patrol acting, and 'as is, where is' acting.

The idea of self-reflexivity, resulting in what postmodernists refer to as a 'vicious circle,' wherein the boundaries of what is 'fiction' is transgressed by what is perceived to be 'real,' (McHale, 1987; Lewis, 2001) however, is magnified in the film not only by the notion of a real-life actress playing herself in a film that stars herself, but more emphatically by the film's major premise: three young filmmakers—Bingbong, the producer, Rainier, the director, and Jocelyn, the production assistant—are dreaming of making it to the film festivals abroad with their story, which they believe is the film that country needs to see. They set out to do pre-production work, which includes an interview/ audition/ story conference/ stand-up comedy top-billed by their lead actress, and a location inspection at the Payatas dumpsite. Simply put, the film is an 'indie' film made by two young filmmakers (Martinez and Rivera) about two young filmmakers (Bingbong and Rainier) who are making an 'indie' film. Ah, postmodern!

The filmmakers, the 'real' ones, in their attempt to create an 'indie' film, which in the words of Levy (1999) in his *Cinema of Outsiders*, is "ideally a fresh, low-budget movie with a gritty style and offbeat subject matter that express the filmmaker's personal vision" (p.2), samples numerous other film styles that came before it. *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* is indeed a pastiche of Lino Brocka, Mario O'Hara, Brillante Mendoza, and even Cheche Lazaro and the PROBE team. In its portrayal of the filthy, grimy details of poverty, the film juxtaposes Mila with

Brocka's *Insiang* (1976) or Turing of *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (1984). Similarly, *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank* could easily be *Babae sa Breakwater* (2003) by Mario O'Hara, in its representation of a woman trapped in the miserable, degrading slums of the metropolis. Interestingly, Mila could also be any of the poverty-stricken 'subjects' featured in the multitude of documentaries made on the issue. One of Mila's children, whom she is about to pimp to a pedophile, could be, in fact, Brillante Mendoza's *Foster Child* (2007), as shown in the scene wherein Mila gives her child a bath before she 'delivers' her to the foreign client, which is lifted directly from Mendoza's film (Wee, 2013). Hence, the film's intertextuality and its pastiching of pre-existing films, as a form of tribute to Brocka or O'Hara or parody of Mendoza, as Branston (2006) showcases in his highlighting of Tarantino's homage to French modernist auteur Jean-Luc Godard in *Pulp Fiction*, emphatically points to the postmodern tendency of films to create a 'hyperreal' world, built on the intertextual images of the 'simulacra.'

Baudrillard's 'Simulacra' in the Age of Jameson's Late Capitalism

Jameson's (1991) voice is protracted in the entirety of the film. In its representation of the independent film industry's attempt to capture 'poverty' in the country, the film echoes the postmodern critic's notion of "narratives that are about the processes of reproduction and include movie cameras, video, tape

recorders, the whole technology of the production and reproduction of the 'simulacra'" (p. 37). The practice of consumerism that characterizes Jameson's (1991) late capitalistic age is illustrated in the film's manifest 'branding' and product placements. Whoever watches the film serves not only as a viewer, but also a 'buyer,' a consumer of goods, as he/ she witnesses the characters walk in a 'café' and order "tall, iced, non-fat, two packs of Splenda, extra shot mocha". The viewer/ consumer also gapes in amazement as brands familiar to him/ her is paraded on screen: Mila cooks Payless instant noodles, uses Safeguard to bathe her child, and goes to Echelon Condominium unit, above the Echelon branch of Bank of the Philippine Islands, its wall decorated with Cathy Valencia's youth promising spa treatment, to pimp her child to a Caucasian pedophile named Mr. Smithburger. Buzz words like wi-fi, iPad, Google, FB status, and even 'pear salad' reverberate in the characters' dialogues. Such is the atmosphere of the postmodernist age, as emphasized by Nicol (2009), echoing Jameson's (1991) howl of the "accumulative logic of capitalism extending into every possible area of society" (Nicol, 2009, p. 3), including the media and popular culture.

A reality filled with images of advertising, profits, business opportunities, and consumerism is a world that Baudrillard (1994) refers to as the 'simulacra.' As a consequence of living in the postmodern, knowledge/information-driven, media/culture-saturated world is that human beings have become alienated from the aspects of life considered to be authentic or 'real'. In the 'high-tech' postmodern society, people now spend most of their time in front of a 'screen',

processing ‘information’ of one kind or another, engaging in what Baudrillard (in Nicol, 2009) refers to as ‘symbolic representation’ rather than real, tangible objects. Existence has become more ‘virtual’ than real. In the movie, the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’ are also problematized. The ‘virtual’ filmmakers IN the *Septic Tank* are juxtaposed with the ‘real’ filmmakers OF the film. Or is it the other way around? Ah, postmodern!

Poverty Pornography in the Contemporary Filipino ‘Indies’

Wee (2013), in his article “Weighed and Found Wanting: Pinoy Pathology in Pictures,” spells out what constitutes the notion of ‘poverty porn’:

In these films, poverty is the formula that influences plots and motivates characters. Expositions are sliced from life. Stories are set in shantytowns where society’s under classes call home. Characters are cut from tattered and vulnerable cloths. Yet these attributes are overwhelmed by a lewd obsession with the pits of deprivation. Little is spared to show the most abject instances of filth and misery to dramatize the harshness of Filipino life as it is. While foreign consumers have praised these films as raw and uncompromising, few have pointed out how their images conjure a myopic vista of the Philippines (p. 66).

Filipino critics decry this recent trend in the blossoming independent cinema. To attract foreign attention in international festivals, filmmakers have all looked into the age-old issue of poverty in the Philippines—a theme which has already been explored in the note-worthy films of auteurs like Lino Brocka,

Ishmael Bernal and Mario O'Hara, and exploited by the Philippines' own "Cannes protégé" Brillante Mendoza (Wee, 2013, p. 66). The filmmakers in the *Septic Tank* are guilty of the same crime. They are shown to be more concerned with creating an Oscar-worthy film, which would catapult them to instant success characterized by international film distribution, film festivals in Berlin, Brussels, Vesoul, and Cannes. They also see the miserable plight of the Filipinos in the slum areas of the Payatas dumpsite when they go there to check out their film location. They squeeze themselves between very cramped spaces among grimy shanties, and smile in satisfaction as they pose for a photograph on top of a mountain of trash.

This condition of the independent film industry in the Philippines is what the 'real' filmmakers of the "most successful indie film in the history of cinema" attempted to lampoon. What lies in the core of Rivera and Martinez' (the 'real' filmmakers) "strong personal vision away from the influence and pressures of the few conglomerates that control the industry" (Tzioumakis, 2006) is a postmodern self-reflexivity. After focusing the camera on the poverty-stricken misery of their subjects, they point it at themselves, only to show that nothing could be seen there but a mirror reflecting the same deprivation that permeates both the Filipino 'indie' scene and the contemporary Filipino society. The independent filmmaker ceases to exist outside of the dejected subject which he/ she himself/ herself created. The creators of the image or the 'simulacrum' become entangled in it, as Baudrillard (1994) exclaims, the 'real' becomes 'hyperreal.' The 'real' filmmakers

OF *Septic Tank*, in their nostalgia for the Formalistic films about social injustice and poverty created by Brocka and O'Hara in the second Golden Age of Filipino cinema in the 1970s to 1980s (Wee, 2013), try to make sense of the contemporary 'indie' scene by transforming it into a 'hyperreality' characterized by society's slum-dwelling underclass citizens, dancing and singing in a choreographed musical number created by the postmodernist society.

The Postmodern Nostalgia Mode in *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nAPO Sila!*

Intertextual Collage of Nostalgic Themes

The nostalgic value of musical films, as Conrich (2006) asserts, in his essay "Musical Performance and the Cult Film Experience," arises from the fact that the contemporary times witness a great decline in the commercial and popular appeal of film musicals. With the exemption of sleeper hits like *Moulin Rouge!*, *Chicago*, and *Mamma Mia!*, the audience has turned to the revival of classical themes from some of the greatest film musicals that Hollywood ever produced, including *The Sound of Music*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *West Side Story*. The sub-genre's relegation/ promotion as a cult film, then, as Conrich (2006) furthers, is an apparent effect of the development in cinema during post-war/ postmodern period. The cult film, which the critic defines as "a film with a following" becomes a site for the postmodern nostalgia and the "celebration of a pleasure gained from revisiting and re-experiencing a known text" (Conrich, 2006, p.115). Thus, in the case of *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nAPO Sila!*, the known

texts that the audience finds pleasure in re-experiencing are the songs of the APO Hiking Society.

Nostalgia in the Pastiche of *APO* Pop Songs

Dubbed as the country's *Mamma Mia!* (Admittedly, filmmaker Chris Martinez was inspired to create the movie after witnessing the famous Broadway musical.), and graded 'A' by the Cinema Evaluation Board, the film serves as a homage to the songs of one the country's most influential artists, the APO Hiking Society. The film screams of the 'nostalgia mode' that pervades postmodern cinema as the lyrics and melody of familiar APO hits that were popularized in 1970s are masterfully incorporated into the storyline. The result is, as Montealegre (2007) remarks in her study of the Hollywood musical *Moulin Rouge!*, "a product that looks new, but there is nothing new in it" (p. 3). The exchange of dialogues and the situations, which appear to be just a hodgepodge of intertextual elements from pre-existing texts, from *Romeo and Juliet* to *Sound of Music*, unfold before the viewers' eyes, evoking a feeling of *de ja vu*:

Rock gets his girlfriend Tracy pregnant. The young couple suddenly has to face the prospect of getting married. Plans are made, but it all falls apart when their families meet. Rock's working class parents take offense when Tracy's grandfather objects to their union. Meanwhile, Tracy's parents are struggling to sustain their own marriage. Rock and Tracy are kept apart from each other, and are made to confront the possibility of being apart for the rest of their lives (www.clickthecity.com).

The feeling of *de ja vu* that the all-too-familiar film story evokes is attributed to what Umberto Eco (1986) calls, in his study of the Hollywood classic *Casablanca*, the “intertextual frames” or intertextual “archetypes that do not claim to have any psychoanalytic or mythic connotation, but serve only to indicate a preestablished and frequently reappearing narrative situation, cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts and provoking in the [viewer] a sort of intense emotion..that everybody yearns to see again” (p. 464).

The result is an ‘intertextual collage’ or more specifically, an intertextual soundtrack, composed of songs that not only evoke *de ja vu*, but also moves the story forward. Songs like “Panalangin” in the film’s opening alludes to the manner in which poets of the classical Greco-Roman epics invoke the muses to their aid in the telling of a great narrative, about grand battles, and sweeping landscapes, in the case of *I Do Bidoo Bidoo*, the backdrop is set amidst the hustle and bustle of Metro Manila, and “Ewan” as the movie cuts to another recognizable scenery, a traffic jam. Moreover, upbeat tunes like “Syotang Pa-class” and “Blue Jeans” are performed in intricately choreographed musical numbers, involving the male lead character, describing to his friends the girl he is about to marry.

On more somber tones, songs like “Mahirap Mahmahal ng Syota ng Iba” and “Batang-Bata Ka Pa” are tearfully carried out to emphasize the thwarted, unreciprocated romantic feelings of the ‘best buddy/ friend’ character towards the male lead, and the howl and whimper of the young couple’s parents as they mourn about their children’s early matrimony.

Indeed, the film manages to reach the very core of the songs and create an almost flawless narrative about them. The postmodern concept of *pastiche*, or the intentional borrowing and transformation of another writer's unique style from pre-existing texts (a priori) sheds light on the frustration, which Montealegre (2007) shares with Jameson (1983), that in the postmodern times, everything has already been done before; nothing new can be written and created anymore, and all that is left is *pastiche*. Jameson's (1983) essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (in Lewis, 2001) sums up this postmodernist frustration: "the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds...only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already" (pp. 125-126).

Nostalgia and Cultural Alleviation in the Contemporary Society

Proving to be a unique Filipino cinematic experience, despite its recycling or *pastiching* of old song, styles, and story lines, the film indeed becomes a site for the postmodern nostalgia and the "celebration of a pleasure gained from revisiting and re-experiencing a known text" (Conrich, 2006, p.115). Moreover, the film also becomes a mouthpiece, in its celebration of Filipino sentiments through songs, of what remains to be good in the traditional culture. Through its depiction of Shakespearean chaotic events that lead to a 'star-crossed' wedding, the value of the Filipino family is affirmed. Through age-old practices like *pamamanhikan* and *panliligaw*, presented in a fit of nostalgia, the film upholds

some of the customs that, in the words of Eco (1986), “invoke a sort of intense emotion” in the hearts of the postmodern Filipinos that they “yearn to see again.”

The Postmodern in the Philippines

In the final analysis, it is still noteworthy, if not commendable, as gleaned from the film texts under study, that there still remains a ‘reality’ that is distinctly Filipino. That in spite of the **postmodern characteristics of intertextuality, indeterminacy, undecidability, decentering if not schizophrenia, and self-reflexivity in its “cultural style as having arisen from the technological and consumerist propensities of the times,”** as Eagleton (1996) sums up, some of the playfulness and optimism of the Filipino spirit still remain.

Moreover, the universal belief in second chances, as represented by the reconciliation of estranged couples and the possibility of a follow-up hit from a songwriter dubbed as ‘one-hit-wonder’, humming the whimsical tune of *I Do Bidoo Bidoo*, or the blissful reunion of a kidnapped daughter and her grief-stricken family, after witnessing the phantoms of past gruesome murders that took place on a deserted, fragmented *Road*, reminds us that the most genuine of Filipino values like the importance of the family, justice, equality, and optimism are able to survive the tide of the postmodern, as they are still represented on the contemporary Filipino films.

Similarly, the Filipinos’ sociological concepts of family and its disintegration in the postmodern times serve as the nucleus in the understanding

of characterization and thematic content of postmodern Filipino films. Also, traditional socio-economic issues like poverty, class struggle and social stratification, which *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank*, clearly shows, still provide contemporary films with a rich subject matter for representation.

Finally, the close interrelationship among social realities, popular culture and media representation performs a crucial role in the viewers' understanding of the postmodern situation in the country.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations supported by the conclusions.

Summary of Findings

As an attempt to read Filipino film texts from the perspective of postmodernism, this study used the framework of Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson, coupled with postmodernist theories in fiction spelled out by Umberto Eco and Brian McHale. The films that were subjected to the postmodernist reading were Yam Laranas' *The Road*, Marlon Rivera's *Ang Babae sa Septic Tank*, and Chris Martinez' *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nApo Sila!*. In coming up with an interpretive and descriptive analysis of the selected Filipino films, the researcher underwent three (3) phases: Preparation, Viewing, and Analysis and Interpretation.

The postmodern reading of the selected contemporary Filipino films yielded the following findings:

1. Postmodern Filipino films operate on the notions of disruption of narrative, incoherent sequence of events, transgression of genre boundaries, and uncertain or unreliable fragmentary recollections of events.
2. The postmodernist features of temporal disorder, intertextuality/ pastiche, nostalgia, and fragmentation, among others are discernible in the films under study.
3. The Filipinos' sociological concepts of family and its disintegration in the postmodern times serve as the nucleus in the understanding of characterization and thematic content of postmodern Filipino films.
4. Traditional socio-economic issues like poverty, class struggle and social stratification still provide contemporary films with a rich subject matter for representation.

5. The close interrelationship among social realities, popular culture and media representation performs a crucial role in the viewers' understanding of the postmodern situation in the country.

6. Positive values like importance of the family, justice, equality, and optimism are able to survive the tide of the postmodern, as they are still represented on the contemporary Filipino films.

Conclusions

In light of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions may be drawn from the research study:

1. The postmodern effacement of distinctions between high/low forms of art renders scholarly the philosophical reading of popular culture.

2. The theory of the Postmodern lends itself well in the reading of popular cinema, particularly contemporary Filipino films.

3. Even if a filmmaker might pursue a film project without the intention of theorizing on the postmodern, a postmodern reading of the said film is still possible.

4. Postmodernist features that are apparent in works of literature/ fiction, including temporal disorder, intertextuality/ pastiche, and nostalgia mode, among others are also discernible in motion pictures.

5. Amidst the 'virtual' atmosphere of the postmodern society, the representation of existing socio-economic conditions and cultural values still lies in the very core of contemporary Filipino cinema.

6. Lastly and most importantly, the historically western body of thought referred to as the Postmodern has indeed reached and is now being felt in the country, as shown in the elements of mass media/ popular culture, particularly the motion picture.

Recommendations

As an offshoot of this study, the following activities may be engaged in:

1. A postmodern reading of Filipino literature, including fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, and dramatic works can be explored.
2. Other postmodernist features not included in the study may be looked at and applied in the study of films/ literature, and other literary theories can be applied alongside postmodernism to come up with a more comprehensive study of Filipino film.
3. The use of postmodernism in the investigation of Filipino films can be limited to a particular film category to figure out features of the theory that are genre-specific.
4. Other media, including TV and print can be subjected to a postmodern reading using the theories of Baudrillard and Jameson.
5. Literature courses (both in the Secondary and Tertiary levels) may be examined with the purpose of including film and other mass media in the content.
6. Instructional materials, including lesson plans/ instructional guides and worksheets may be prepared to account for a postmodern reading of film and/ or literature.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey Form

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Degree: _____ Specialization: _____
 School: _____ Year Graduated: _____
 Years of Teaching: _____ Related Experiences: _____

DIRECTIONS: Listed below are the titles of films and the names of their respective filmmakers considered for the study titled **“Postmodern Reading of Selected Contemporary Filipino Films.”** The compilation of the list below is carried out through the use of a carefully drafted set of criteria for selection. Please choose the films which you believe best embody the features of a postmodern Filipino film. Put X on the boxes that correspond to your THREE (3) titles ONLY.

Film Title	Year	Director	X
1. Ang Babae sa Septic Tank	2011	Marlon Rivera	☐
2. Ang Panggagahasa kay Fe	2009	Alvin Yapan	☐
3. I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nAPO Sila!	2012	Chris Martinez	☐
4. Ligo na U, Lapit na Me	2011	Erick Salud	☐
5. Manila Kingpin	2011	Tikoy Aguiluz	☐
6. The Mistress	2012	Olivia Lamasan	☐
7. One More Try	2012	Ruel Bayani	☐
8. The Road	2011	Yam Laranas	☐
9. Tiktik: The Aswang Chronicles	2012	Erik Matti	☐
10. Zsa Zsa Zaturannah Ze Moveeh	2006	Joel Lamangan	☐

What makes the chosen films 'postmodern'? Please explain your choice briefly.

Appendix B

Synopsises of the Selected Films

I. *The Road* (2011)



Prologue

Luis is a successful policeman who has been recently awarded for his skill in investigations, despite his track record of being reckless and failing to follow protocol. After his award ceremony, the chief of police is approached by a woman asking for new information about her daughters who went missing twelve years ago. Luis asks for the names of her daughters so he can try to find them, and the woman tells him that their names are Joy and Lara Luna. Asking his partner to retrieve the missing persons file, Luis sets out for his investigation, despite his colleague Greg's advice that he shouldn't give the woman false hope.

Story 1: 2008

Ella sneaks out at night with her cousin Janine and Janine's boyfriend Brian taking her mom's car so that they can find somewhere for Brian to teach Janine how to drive for her driver's test. Ella and Brian are on bad terms because of Brian's alleged cheating on her cousin, however, and tensions are high between the two. On the highway they spot a patrol car, which causes them to panic as they don't

have drivers' licenses. Brian tries to make a U-turn, but accidentally drives into a fence blocking a dirt road. While checking for damage to the car, Brian notices a gate and drives into the isolated road beyond, thinking it the perfect spot for them to learn to drive. Eventually the three notice a red car which keeps on passing them although they never pass it themselves, and that the car doesn't seem to have a driver.

Panicking, Brian tries to get them off the road but discover that they are stuck in an endless loop, passing by the same tree again and again. Finally, the car stalls and Brian and Janine gets out of the car while Ella stays inside. Janine tries to convince Brian to go back for her cousin but Brian refuses to do so and instead promises Janine that they will go back for her with help. As the two walk through the woods, they spot a crashed red car. Meanwhile, finally panicking, Ella leaves the car and manages to catch up with the two. Ella manages to call her father and beg for help, but the red car suddenly bursts into flames, causing the three to leave the crash site. While running, the two girls are separated from Brian. They manage to get back into their car and attempt to drive away, but a ghost behind the wheel scares Janine. Ella, in a panicked state of mind, accidentally opens her car door and falls out of the car while Janine loses control and hits her head on the wheel. As Ella opens her eyes, she screams upon seeing the ghost of a burned woman looking down at her.

A few hours later, Ella's father, Luis and some officers, appear at the same road. They find Brian dead by the corn fields and it is revealed that Janine died when she hit her head on the wheel but they are unable to find Ella. Luis and Officer Allan find a house deep within the woods. Officer Greg tells them that he already searched the house and tells them that Ella isn't there. They also find the crashed car that the three teens passed by earlier. When Luis opens the backseat door, he sees a skeleton wearing a heart shaped locket.

The next day, they take the three bodies to the morgue. It is revealed that the skeleton corpse that they found is Lara Luna, whom her mother identified through her locket.

Story 2: 1998

Lara is driving with her younger sister Joy on the same dirt road. As they drive, they pass by a teenage boy walking along the road and a few feet away from him, their car overheats. They get out and then ask him where they can get water and the boy tells them that he'll give them water by his house, which is the same house Luis and the others found years later. As they wait for him outside his house, Lara senses that something is wrong and tells Joy that they should leave. As they try to, the boy comes out and hits them with a wooden stick.

Lara wakes up a few hours later, with her foot chained to a bed post. She hears Joy's screams for help and begs him to let her and her sister go. The boy takes Joy down to the basement and proceeds to savagely beat her. A few minutes later, he returns Joy to her room beside her sister's. Lara apologizes to Joy that she couldn't protect her but Joy tells her that it's not her fault. As the boy comes to take Lara, she puts up a fight and scratches his neck. For now, the boy leaves her alone. Lara notices that he dropped the keys to her chains and proceeds to take it. She tries to search for Joy but notices that she's no longer there. She manages to sneak out of the house and falls into a pit which has corpses dumped in it. She sees that one is Joy. As she cries, she apologizes once again and finally leaves. The boy, meanwhile, has taken their car and proceeds to chase Lara with it. Eventually, he gently runs her over. As Lara tries to crawl away, The boy knocks her out and wraps a plastic bag around her head and ties a belt around her neck and her hands. As he drives back to his house, Lara suddenly awakens, causing the boy to crash. He leaves the car and watches it and Lara burn.

Back to the present day, Luis takes the officers back to the same house to look for Ella. As he and Officer Allan scope around, they find a picture of the old owners of the house. As Officer Allan goes to search someplace else, Luis finds Ella, who wasn't noticed by Officer Greg. She keeps yelling at him to 'let us go home' and finally passes out as Luis holds her in his arms. Luis takes her to the rendezvous point and takes her to the ambulance. As Ella's father tries to talk to her, she says that their car stalled due to overheating and tells him that they asked a teenage boy for water, revealing that Ella is possessed by Lara. Luis and Officer Allan decide to return to the house.

Story 3: 1988

A young boy lives with his family in the house deep in the woods. As he looks out of his window, he notices a girl named Martha looking for his mother. The girl was there to see if the family needed their laundry doing. It is revealed that the boy isn't allowed to come out of the house and his abusive mother Carmela tells Martha to come back tomorrow morning. Mistaking her son's conversation with Martha as an attempt to go out, Carmela locks him in a cabinet. During the evening, the boy's father, who is a preacher, comes home and lets him out of the cabinet. The reason behind his isolation is because his parents believe that the outside world is full of sin. The reason behind Carmela's bitterness is because the family is struggling financially and her husband refuses to ask money from his congregation. The next day, the boy spots Martha doing their laundry. As he comes down and watches her by the door, she invites him to come out to play but he tells her that he's not allowed to come outside. Wanting him to experience some fun, Martha comes inside with a bucket of soap and they blow bubbles. Carmela comes down and is enraged at the sight. As Martha tries to stop Carmela from hurting the boy, Carmela accidentally knocks her into the door post and Martha dies. As the boy tries to wipe the blood away, he faints. Later that night, the boy wakes up and sees his mother hugging another man. As he comes down, his father tells him to wait upstairs so he and his mother can talk. It is revealed then that Carmela plans to leave her husband and the boy for the man. The boy's father tries to convince her not to do it, but she is stubborn and decides to go through with it. As the boy was listening, he passed out by his bed. The next morning his mother woke him up to have breakfast. When he came downstairs, his father tells him that Carmela left them and his father starts to throw up due to drunkenness. The boy adamantly insists that his mother is still there and in a fit of rage, his father shows him Carmela's corpse, revealing that his father killed Carmela. Frightened, the boy locks himself in the cabinet where he sees Martha's corpse. His father tries to get him out of the cabinet but when he sees Martha's corpse, he is shocked and has a breakdown. The next morning, the boy comes out of the cabinet and when he enters his parents' room, he sees that his father has hanged himself. It is revealed that the boy didn't go out of the house until he became a teenager and that the boy was the one who killed Joy and Lara Luna.

Epilogue

Back to the present, Luis and Officer Allan arrive at the house and when Allan finds a room bound with a new padlock, Luis orders him to beat the door down. When he does so, he sees that the room is a bed room. As they look around, Officer Allan notices Luis' medal. Luis knocks him out, wraps his head with a sheet and seals it with a belt around his neck, revealing to the audience that the boys in the second and third parts of the movie was none other than Luis himself. He walks back to the rendezvous point as other cops search the house. As he walks, he keeps on muttering 'I'm sorry, Mama. It won't happen again.' Back at the rendezvous point, Ella's father asks her who was the boy and Ella, still possessed by Lara, points at Luis. As the Chief of Police calls out to him, Luis shoots the chief two times in the chest. He gets in his car and drives away but his car stalls. As he tries to get out, the ghosts of Joy and Lara are with him in his car. He reaches for his gun and it is shown that Lara is forcing his hand to point his gun to his chin. As he mutters 'Mama, I'm sorry', Lara forces him to shoot himself. A few minutes later, the other cops find Luis in his car, dead.

The film ends with Luis as a young boy, finally able to go outside of his house and be free from his mother.

(Source: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_\(2011_film\)\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_(2011_film)))

II. Ang Babae sa Septic Tank (2011)

Ang Babae sa Septic Tank chronicles a day in the life of three ambitious, passionate but misguided filmmakers as they set out to do a quick pre-prod at Starbucks, a courtesy call to their lead actress, Eugene Domingo, and an ocular inspection of their film's major location, the Payatas dumpsite. Director Rainier, Producer Bingbong and Production Assistant Jocelyn are well-to-do, well-educated film school graduates who are dead set on making an Oscar worthy film. They believe they have a winning script, the energy and the drive to make their dreams come true. Like most filmmakers they know, they have devised a screenplay that will show the real essence of our culture: poverty. In the course of one day, they brainstorm and exhaust all possible treatment of their project: the story of Mila (Eugene Domingo), a mother from the slums, who out of desperation to survive, has sold her child to a pedophile. As they discuss the possible executions of the story, the movie-within-a-movie gets reborn in Jocelyn's imagination several times. As a gritty no frills neo-realist film, as a glossy musical, as an over-the-top melodrama and as a docu-drama using non-actors. For their last task of the day, they visit the dumpsite for the first time. As filmmakers gunning for authenticity, they get excited with the "beauty" of the squalor around them. Soon enough, they are faced with reality as they come face to



face with the real effects of their chosen subject. *Babae sa Septic Tank* is a comedy about misguided ambitions, the art of making art and the romanticization of poverty.

(Source: www.cinemalaya.org/film_septictank.htm)

III. *I Do Bidoo Bidoo: Heto nAPO Sila!* (2012)



Rock Polotan and Tracy Fuentebella are teenage sweethearts and both nursing students in a university in Manila are in love and full of dreams. A youthful indiscretion leads them to early parenthood, a situation they face squarely, and quite maturely, by planning to get married. They shortly realize, however, that the problem behind their wedding plans has less to do with themselves than with their own parents.

Rock's parents are an oddball couple with odd professions. Pol Polotan is a one-hit-wonder composer now reduced to teaching guitar lessons to neighborhood kids. His sassy wife has the entrepreneurial smarts to be a caterer, even if it means her clientele are bereaved families at funeral parlors. Always struggling

to rise above life's hard knocks, the Polotans (like your average Filipino family) manage to get by somehow through their keen sense of humor, resilience and resourcefulness.

At the other end of the social spectrum is Tracy's family, the Fuentebellas. A landowner son of a retired general, Tracy's father, Nick Fuentebella, is a stuffed-shirt husband with more skills as a businessman than as a family man. Alienated by his passiveness and lack of ardor, his wife Elaine and daughter Tracy are mostly left to fend for themselves, when it comes to their own needs and problems. It also doesn't help that Nick's military father is a closed-minded conservative with no allowances for human frailties.

When the families finally meet for the eventual "pamamanhikan" at the palatial Fuentebella residence, what starts as a civilized encounter between two families escalates into a hilarious rich-versus-poor mano-a-mano where Tracey's grandfather insulted the Polotan's family, a scenario that turns the mansion into a madhouse of outlandish proportions which resulted in Rock and Tracey's separation. Rock got depressed and did not leave his room for three days. He was confronted by his mother Rose, saying that life must go on. Rose thinks her son is still young for fatherhood, so she is not in favor of the marriage. Nick thinks the family would be in shame if Tracy will raise a child with no father, so he wants the wedding to push through as soon as possible. Elaine, who also got pregnant at a young age does not want her daughter to experience a forced marriage and gets trap in a loveless marriage as what had happened to her and her husband, Nick. Elaine suggested that it would be better if Tracey would just go to the USA and give birth there, but before Tracey's departure, Rock was able to sneak into Tracy's room, and they elope. The two then sent an MMS to their families stating that they got married in the City hall. The two parties become so depressed because of Rock and Tracey's decision. Elaine, seems to be disappointed with Nick. She thinks that Nick is not a good father to Tracy so their daughter grew up to be imperfect person. She decides to leave, but on her way out of the estate, Nick stops her and proposes his undying love, stating that it would be best if they will try to start again. On the other hand, Rose and Pol also renew their love. Meanwhile, Brent, Rock's bestfriend who is a closeted gay and is secretly in love with Rock, professes his love when they were drunk but the two remain best friends. In the end, the two families are able to accept the fate of Rock and Tracey who become parents at 19. The movie ends with the cast singing "Pag-Ibig", and "I Do Bidoo Bidoo".

(Source: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Do_Bidoo_Bidoo:_Heto_nAPO_Sila!)

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College Instructor- Literature: History Immaculate Conception i-College
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