

Ateneo de Manila University

Archium Ateneo

Filipino Faculty Publications

Filipino Department

5-2021

Reversal Of Roles: Stars As Fan-Protagonists in Filipino Movies

Andrea Anne I. Trinidad

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/filipino-faculty-pubs>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#)

Reversal of roles: Stars as fan-protagonists in Filipino movies

Andrea Anne I. Trinidad,
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

Abstract:

One key aspect of Filipino cinema during its 100-year history is its attempt at self-reflexivity. Films that revolve around films have been made repeatedly, exploring the morality of the industry, the highs and lows of actors, or the passions of fans. Fandom, in particular, is depicted at length in films like *Bona* (Lino Brocka, 1980), *Bituing Walang Ningning [Lackluster Star]* (Emmanuel Borlaza, 1985), *Konorang Itim [Black Crown]* (Jose Mari Avellana, 1994), and *Fangirl Fanboy* (Barry Gonzalez, 2017). Each features a narrative centered on the life of a fan in relation to a film or a music idol. Do such movies value and appreciate their highest patrons? In what ways are representations of fan practices and behaviors in such movies affirming or contesting of fan stereotypes? How do fan representations affect the movie industry's attitude, more broadly, toward its audiences? These are only some of the questions the paper shall address in order to identify an iconographic understanding of fans, based on movies that directly recognize their existence and narrate their experiences.

Keywords: Filipino movie fans, on-screen audience, on-screen fans, fan-protagonist, die-hard fan, fan representation, fan iconography

Philippine cinema, having celebrated its centennial year in 2019, represents a mature industry, providing movie-goers with entertainment and temporary wish-fulfilment, as well as helping to foster political awareness and consciousness-rising. Over time, its writers, directors, and actors have been able to produce complex narratives from different perspectives, to master different genres, and to support both traditional and experimental films that either affirm the status quo or push toward more progressive representations, especially of minor identities. However, among the greatest – and still unrecognized – achievements of the industry is the dedication of its audience.

The power and influence of Filipino movie-goers cannot be denied. They hail performances that earn artists lifetime titles as a ‘stars’¹ and work to help ordinary actors and actresses to realize their own films’ ‘rags to riches’ tropes.’² They situate reel (oftentimes assumed to be real) romantic pairs called *love teams* in public memory. They proliferate anecdotes and myths about the role of local viewers in giving films international blockbuster status and have the power to dethrone what is known to be the ‘highest local grossing film of all time’ almost year after year. Overall, they provide essential support to numerous film festivals belonging to both indie and mainstream cinema.

One understudied, but useful, way to understand the unique role of fans in Philippine cinema is to examine how they are textualized and depicted in Filipino films. Movies such as *Bona* (Lino Brocka, 1980), *Bituing Walang Ningning [Lackluster Star]* (Emmanuel Borlaza, 1985), *Konorang Itim [Black Crown]* (Jose Mari Avellana, 1994), and *Fangirl Fanboy* (Barry Gonzalez, 2017) each feature a fan protagonist, providing on-screen narrativizations and portrayals of Filipino fan identities.³ Furthermore, by narrating and depicting the experiences of on-screen fans at different times, they can be considered historical artefacts that show how different eras have understood the film audience. How are fans’ motivations, behaviors, desires, relationships with idols, and, most importantly, *agency as fans* depicted? How do these portrayals establish a fan iconography amidst an industry that is consistently influenced by, and negotiates with, socio-political and cultural contexts?

Shrieking, thrashing, and shrieking again: The prevailing fan-depiction in Filipino films

In analyzing films whose narratives directly aim to capture a fan-protagonist’s experience, the most common and recurring iconographic element is the display of a young female character who embraces the fan identity. This gendered and age-based characterization provides an initial backdrop on how fanhood is articulated by the four films studied, here. Arising from the stereotyped notion of fandom as a feminized entity,⁴ the films, as will be discussed, sustain the pathological portrayal of fans as hysterics whose immature decisions stem from the perceived valuing of emotion over reason.⁵

Demonstrating Stanfill’s argument that ‘fans do not operate in isolation from larger social systems’ in immediately associating their fanhood with existing prejudices of gender,⁶ there is a tendency for films to adhere to negative stereotypes in depicting ‘fannish markers’ that concretize fans’ notion of ‘idolizing’ or ‘showing support.’ In these movies, fans’ ‘enacted affinity’ is typically illustrated as a mass phenomenon, especially through images of fans acting as a collective that scampers towards an event and aggressively waves creatively-made banners in hopes of getting an idol’s attention.⁷

This familiar scene anchors an early scene in the movie *Bituing Walang Ningning*, a melodrama motion picture adapted from a serialized comics strip written by Nerissa Cabral to ensure box office by targeting original readers of the text as its initial market.⁸ The film revolves around Dorina Pineda (Sharon Cuneta), an orphaned sampaguita vendor who deeply adores the

singer Lavinia Arguelles (Cherrie Gil), someone whose popularity she hopes to achieve herself someday. In the scene, the singer Lavinia arrives in the country right after finishing her concert tour in the US,⁹ and the camera pans out to a group of fidgety and restless supporters who had collectively hurried to the airport to personally welcome the sought-after idol. The film depicts a clichéd image of fans collectively lined up on the sides of the barricaded road, awaiting the motorcade, carrying balloons and other paraphernalia they have brought to signify their utmost veneration, their fervor expressed with shrieks and screams [Image 1].



Image 1. Coming off from her US Concert tour, famous singer Lavinia Arguelles was welcomed by fans with full passion.¹⁰

Apart from *Bituing Walang Ningning*, the film *Koronang Itim* also adheres to this particular depiction of fans. Released at a period when local production companies such as Star Cinema, GMA Films, Viva Films, and Regal Entertainment were battling for commercial success, the film employs an effective formula of injecting the narrative with plot twists and reversals crafted to engage the emotions of the audience.¹¹ Initially introducing the character of Eva Cristobal (Sharmaine Arnaiz) as an avid fan of the actress Adana de Guia (Snooky Serna),¹² the film would reveal later on that Eva only embraced her identity as a fan as part of a charade to get the Adana's trust, learn the ins and outs of the industry, and achieve her deep-seated desire to dethrone the screen idol. At first, however, Eva is shown as innocent and loyal, fully trusted by Adana, who goes so far as to offer Eva a job as a trusted personal assistant.

In establishing Eva's front as an avid fan, the film starts off by employing an identical scene to that of *Bituing Walang Ningning*, highlighting fandom as a mass phenomenon defined by collective shrieking and thrashing. Launching her new project, Adana is welcomed by fans who collectively showcase their support for the idol's movie premiere by carrying and wielding handmade banners and offering loud and deafening cheers in response to a brief up-close moment with the actress. In this way, the public site of the movie theater is elevated from the profane to the sacred by fans' use of collective symbols that ritually subsume individual fans into a much bigger community [Image 2].¹³



Image 2. Fans of movie star Adana de Guia whose depiction adheres to the common representation of fandom as a screaming, trashing collective.

Apart from the use of extra characters that make up Adana de Guia's fictional fan club, the scene also portrays the first meeting between Eva as a 'fan' and Adana as her 'idol.' Fundamental in this scene is the passing out of Eva, who, directly hailing from the province, had queued for days just to wait for the arrival of the admired star [Image 3]. By feigning loss of consciousness, Eva takes an initial step to get the attention of Adana and to materialize her plan. This meeting calculatedly appeals to Adana, who appreciates this level of fan-loyalty. Although the scene is used immediately to introduce the melodramatic characters (the poor yet kind-hearted character and the rich but wretched one),¹⁴ which the film later contests and renegotiates, this representation of a fan passing out is rooted in the long tradition of embodying 'female fan expression' through their assumed vulnerabilities, physicalized by 'sobbing, screaming and fainting.'¹⁵



Image 3. Fan-protagonist Eva Cristobal passes out as her 'idol,' Adana de Guia arrives.¹⁶

With the mix of excitement, nervousness, and frenzied elation exhibited by Adana's fans upon being situated right in front of their idol (summed up by Chris Rojek's term 'collective effervescence'),¹⁷ on top of the chaos caused by the accidental fainting of Eva, fans appear as a threat to the overall safety of Adana, and the level of security escalates [Image 4]. The film thus further sustains pathological representations of fans as mostly comprising hysterical women who have the tendency to be 'crazed and frantic,' 'out of control,' and 'animalistic,'¹⁸ and fandom as disruptive, dramatic, 'carnavalesque and lawless.'¹⁹



Image 4. This scene from the movie *Koronang Itim* shows the need for on-screen security team that will escort the fictional actress Adana de Guia to prevent her from being hurt by fans who are seen to pose danger. For Stanfill, this form of representation constraints fans to the traditional stereotype that media casually imposes on them.²⁰

Apart from the negative implication of the cage-like space guarded by security figures, the depiction of fans as wild and raucous is advanced by the presence of a character who asserts a higher disciplinary authority. After depicting the chaos that ensues once the actress walks out to the red carpet to head inside the movie house, *Koronang Itim* cuts to a scene inside the movie theater, where the fictional director of the movie starring Adana (Tirso Cruz III) is waiting to be interviewed. Before gearing up in front of the journalist (AiAi delas Alas) to commence the interview, the on-screen director reprimands Adana's fans and reminds them to 'behave' themselves [Image 5].



Image 5. Fictional director of Adana's film massages temple as he tries to discipline fans and compose himself in front of the camera.

With a hegemonic identity that is directly opposed to the misbehavior of young female fans, the director can be considered as an agent of fan pathologization himself. Dismissive of fans' enthusiastic response toward his work, his dialogue and attitude further emphasizes that fans' excessive expression of emotion is an immature trait, one that people grow out of.²¹ He goes even further by rebuking fans as an 'uneducated' group of people who are to be blamed for the 'decaying nature of Philippine film.' This lowly depiction echoes observations of industry

professionals, like film-critic and scholar Nicanor Tiongson, who notes that fans are often *erroneously situated* at the lowest position in the industry because their ‘mind set and value systems...have been considered low-brow, but are nonetheless conceded as essential to a star’s career.’²² This ‘over-connectedness’ and ‘over-investment’ of fans in an idol, rather than in an idol’s projects (which are often clichéd and formulaic), has been further explained by Quijano de Manila, who argues that fans ‘go to the movies to see the stars they adore;’ and they will continue to disregard the narrative, the craft, and the overall production of the movie featuring their idol, as long as these idols ‘remain impossibly young, impossibly glamorous, impossibly beautiful.’ Idols sum up an unrealizable world that creates fan wonder rather than identification.²³

The negative representation of fans as ‘die-hards’ who must always be cooped up, supervised, and shushed is rooted in their misunderstood position as a group who are willing to do anything just to keep their idol’s career afloat and vibrant. Despite their obvious contribution to the industry, as Tiongson and de Manila imply, further analysis of Filipino films suggests that fans are often depicted as going to incredibly embarrassing levels of devotion.²⁴ While, in *Bituing Walang Ningning*, Dorina asserts herself as Lavinia’s ‘number 1 fan,’ enduring tiredness, lack of sleep, and hunger every time she waits for the idol to arrive, other examples, such as Eva (from *Koronang Itim*), Bona (from *Bona*), and Amy Bautista (from *Fangirl Fanboy*) endure all that *and more*, as they all, at one point, voluntarily enslave themselves to care for their idols’ personal welfare and professional growth.

Fans at your service: The on-screen depiction of fans as personal slaves

It is apparent in the movies analyzed that being tagged as a ‘die-hard fan’ includes the experience of being an idol’s stalker, aptly described by Dorina’s aunt Sioning (Lorli Villanueva) as ‘bubuntut-buntot na parang aso’ (*‘trailing behind [the idol] like a dog’*). This tends to be depicted through the plotline of a fan becoming a self-proclaimed personal assistant to a star, gaining every opportunity to get closer. As already discussed, in the movie *Koronang Itim*, becoming a star’s personal assistant is the key opportunity offered by the actress Adana to Eva. The importance of this fan-role is further emphasized when viewers are introduced to the character of Aday (Caridad Sanchez), who, prior to Eva’s presence in Adana’s personal life, also served as the actress’ attendant, readily presenting herself each time to serve Adana’s *alaga* [Image 6].²⁵



Image 6. One could trace disappointment in Aday’s face right after Adana told her to focus on her responsibilities as a house maid, since Eva was already hired to stand as the actress’ personal assistant.

In the movie *Bona*, the fan-protagonist, whose name bears the title of the film, brings the notion of providing service to the idol to a much more intense level. Aside from doing the things Aday, and later on Eva, does for Adana in the movie *Koronang Itim*, Bona busies herself not just by preparing the things Gardo would need, in the context of his professional career as budding action star, but also by committing an extremely long list of what seem to be sacrificial acts. Such voluntary service makes no difference to the idol, who does not have an inch of care for the fan. This servile attitude of Bona, heavily visualized in the film, seems to be rooted in the existing understanding of fans as devotees ‘who place inappropriate importance on devalued cultural material.’²⁶

Asserting herself as a loyal fan with abounding amounts of dedication,²⁷ Bona persists to live with Gardo despite her father’s disapproval. Tied with Bona’s decision to be right by her idol’s side, even in moments where he relaxes his celebrity persona in the confines of his home, she performs ritualistic practices that uniquely serve as the mark of her ‘fannish engagement.’²⁸ Thus, the movie depicts Bona not just as Gardo’s personal assistant, but also as a trusted servant who has the capacity to run the idol’s home by tending to different chores, like cooking daily meals, setting-up the dining table for him, fetching bathing water from the nearby community faucet, and even the unforeseeable task of repairing the roof of his house. The narrative would later on reveal that Gardo’s relinquishing of these responsibilities stems from the death of his mother, who took care of everything for him. [Image 7].



Image 7. Some of the household tasks voluntarily done by Bona to serve Gardo.

By dwelling on familial conflict and a lack faced by both the idol and the fan, the film provides an understanding of how para-social relationships, which celebrity studies theorists believe to be the root of fans’ loyal engagement, unfold.²⁹ Since it is not probable that Bona’s loyalty is motivated by an idol not-well established in the industry, her show of devotion can be understood as a desire to form a relationship that can fill the gap made by her ruined relationship with her father, and, by extension, with her family. By mimicking the possibilities of a daughter serving a father-figure through the conventional and gendered tasks of home-based feminine labor, Bona’s estrangement from her family is substituted by her newly-formed, yet

strained, relationship with Gardo. Though it seems at first that the relationship is due to Bona's inability to distinguish fantasy from her lived reality,³⁰ the film intertwines this with the lack experienced by Gardo. The movie thus provides complexity to the para-social interaction, mirroring Bona's need for relationship that can substitute for the loss of a family with Gardo's need for a relationship that can substitute for the loss of a mother.

Understanding Gardo's need for a nurturing mother figure, Bona also assumes the role of a working woman, prepared to do something about her idol's inadequate income and to sustain the needs of the home that he neglects. The obvious ineptitude of the idol, who is depicted throughout the film as a troublemaker, womanizer, and alcoholic, leads Bona to venture into buying and selling used bottles and old newspapers. To prevent Gardo from failing to establish a name in the action film industry, Bona does everything in her power to attend to his everyday needs. Even then, while Bona humbles herself in asking neighbors for food rations, the idol entrusts his life to another woman of fame and fortune to whom he is attracted. The absurdity of Bona's subservience is heightened by a cruel plot twist, in which the little amount of cash she earns is heartlessly requested by Gardo to pay for the abortion of the lady he impregnates. She willingly gives over the money and accompanies the woman as she undergoes an illegal clinical procedure.

With Bona's characterization as a fan who performs extreme and non-normative fannish rituals that seemingly overestimate Gardo's importance,³¹ the film depicts how exploitation is another aspect of fanhood--fans willingly provide free labor.³² By continuously engaging in activities that support her idol's everyday needs, despite any reciprocation of action and emotion, Bona's fan experience is laced with subjection and imbalance. Though this particular depiction easily connotes slavery, which, for Chris Rojek, is one of the reasons as to why the public condemns fans' tendency towards obsessive behavior,³³ Bona's rituals can also be understood using the violent matrix formed by heteronormative and patriarchal expectations, which center Gardo as a domineering and abusive masculine figure.

Arguments could be made that Bona's almost sacrificial fan-identity lies in her physical attraction to the idol. However, it is interesting that, as a fan, she is not depicted as a 'head over heels' type who is madly in love with the idol's flair and charisma, as effectively portrayed by Ella Cruz in another movie under consideration, here: *Fangirl Fanboy*. Cruz's character, Amy Bautista, is a part-time voice actress, working on a Korean drama that is being dubbed into Filipino. Unlike the previous film, however, the movie *Fangirl Fanboy* gives the audience a background story about why and how Amy developed an attraction towards her idol, Ollie (Julian Trono), a budding actor trying to find his luck in show business. Asked to deliver a performance in an all-girls school, which is effectively set as a background to highlight screaming and flailing female fans, the beginning of Amy and Ollie's relationship follows the formulaic nature of a romantic comedy movie that provides a "meet-cute" moment. Amy, in her hopes of getting a front row seat for Ollie's performance, races her classmates and accidentally trips right in front of the performer, who handles the mishap well by offering his hand and exhibiting a lovable personality [Image 8]. This is further emphasized when he unexpectedly offers a selfie [Image 9]



Image 8. Fan-Idol meet-cute moment in Rom-Com movie *Fangirl Fanboy*.

Since the film portrays Ollie as an idol who is clearly not crude and arrogant, like the character of Gardo in *Bona*, it plants the need to establish a cause of attraction. And because the viewers are evidently aware of where Amy's initial admiration comes from, her decision, as the film progresses, to materially support Ollie is effectively justified by situating the fan-narrative in the genre that welcomes the trope of 'going the distance' for the sake of the beloved.



Image 9. Ollie offers Amy a selfie to take her mind away from the previous embarrassment she caused herself.

As a budding actor who just launched his career, Ollie accepts Amy's support, especially Amy's willingness to spend time with him, practicing lines for an upcoming K-Drama adaptation where he is cast as the male lead. Since Ollie himself is a fanboy of the original Korean series, Amy's experience of dubbing the voice of the female lead comes in handy, as she utilizes her dubber persona to inspire the idol. Despite not receiving any talent fee whenever she practices with Ollie, and even if these sessions cause her to disregard important family matters (such as the celebration of her parent's 20th wedding anniversary), Amy's level of dedication and support towards her idol is depicted as reasonable compared to *Bona*'s self-sacrificing service, because the film demonstrates why Ollie is worthy of receiving such loyalty. Unlike Gardo, who shows no understanding of the value of *Bona*'s attention to his physical and emotional needs, Ollie fosters a give-and-take dynamic in his blossoming relationship with Amy, which mimics the fan-idol partnership that is at the center of global success for every Korean Pop group.³⁴ To compensate for the support he receives from Amy, Ollie makes sure to give gifts to her as small tokens of appreciation,³⁵ share and celebrate his victories with her and, overall, treats her as

more of a friend than a fan, someone for whom he later on develops love and concern [Image 10].

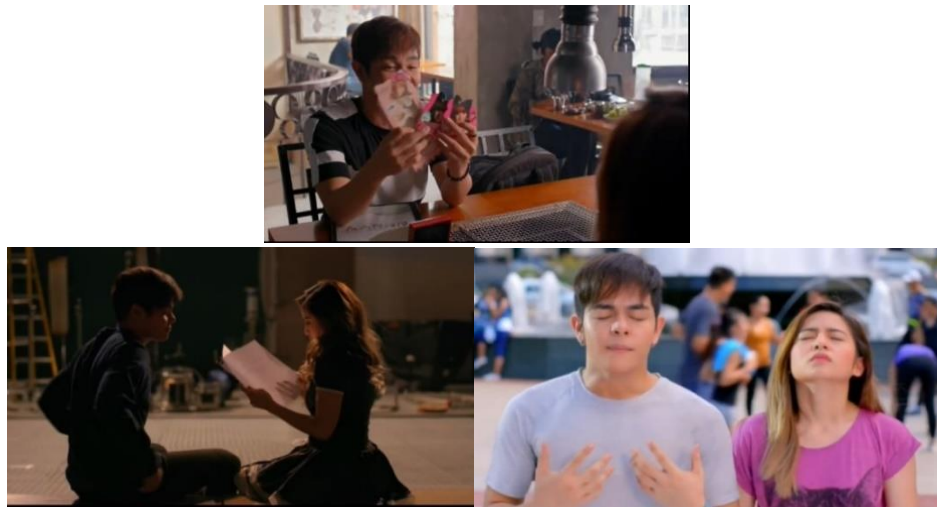


Image 10. Both having an experience as a fangirl and fanboy, Ollie and Amy make up their own gift economy where the process of ‘circular giving and receiving of ‘tangible’ (e.g. Ollie treating the fan at a Korean Samgyeopsal Restaurant and giving her Korean Skin Care products) and ‘intangible’ gifts (e.g.

Amy offering her time and talent for late night practice sessions and Ollie returning the favor by spending early morning jog with the fan in hopes of alleviating her tendency to suffer from heart-related problems) are materialized.³⁶

Due to the huge difference of the relationship that was formed between idol and fan in the movies *Bona* and *Fangirl Fanboy*, the narratives end in different ways. Despite Bona’s opportunity to close the physical gap with her idol (e.g. creating a space for herself in Gardo’s house, having intercourse with Gardo), her efforts seem to be worthless due to Gardo’s dismissive attitude towards her. He callously misrecognizes Bona and her selfless actions by introducing her to other women as ‘just a friend’ or ‘a sister from another mother’ and, at the latter end of the film, he confronts Bona with harmful sentiments that awaken her consciousness.

In becoming more aware of Gardo’s unworthiness, Bona tactically utilizes the intimate ritual of preparing warm water for his bath – highlighted in several parts of the movie as an activity Gardo shared with his mother – to exact revenge. Being able to extend a ‘disciplinary activity’ for herself,³⁷ Bona, filled with pent up anger and resentment towards Gardo’s haughty attitude, replaces the soothing and tender caresses Gardo expects with splashes of boiling water from the pot she just took off from the stove [Image 11]. Besides the fact that Bona finally awakens to her situation and decides to actively regain her status as an independent person, this conclusion depicts Bona’s anguish over the layers of pain her idol has inflicted on her. Not only is she a daughter renounced by her family but also a woman cruelly deprived of the opportunity to marry and establish a genuine relationship with a more genuine neighbor, Nilo (Nanding Josef).



Image 11. Bona plotting to splash the idol with boiling water as her emotions reached its peak.

While it is not made explicit in the film, Bona's characterization as a fan is made more complex by understanding the dynamics of her inner emotions and inclinations. In fact, the visual art of film is able to break off from a simple pathological representation of the fan by concretizing how affect may cause an individual to invest in an idol and then by dramatizing the agency of the moment when that same individual decides to cease giving 'authority to that which she invests in.'³⁸

Outside the discourse of fan affect suggested by Bona's story, the movie's social context, as a film produced during the authoritarian regime of Ferdinand Marcos, also has something to do with its eventful ending. *Bona's* director, Lino Brocka, is remembered as a director whose auteur capacity transcended the boundaries of commercial success by packaging melodramatic narratives with political critique and offering a counter-discourse to Marcos' state-sanctioned propaganda, including promoting Manila as a 'City of Man' where 'true, good and beautiful' reign.³⁹ In that context, Gardo's hypermasculine and patriarchal character can be read as a metaphor of Marcos' hegemony as a dictator. The abuses experienced by Bona under the hands of Gardo are comparable to the exploitation caused by the regime to its people, thus making the 'scalding of a bossy lothario' at its end an act of insurgency, according to the analysis of popular culture scholar and political activist Bienvenido Lumbera. Situating this political critique in the narrative, Brocka's craft displays the potential of defiance, resistance, and struggle.⁴⁰

If Bona's use of a ritual to 'get back at her callous exploiter,' can be extended to imply a refusal of dictatorial abuse,⁴¹ the movie *Fangirl Fanboy* utilizes the notion of a ritual – and its implication among the parties involved – in a different manner. In the movie, Amy engages in the repetitive ritual of gearing up, in the aspects of clothing, overall looks, and voice, to pretend to be Sandy (Yam Concepcion), Ollie's on-screen leading lady. By simulating Sandy, Amy gives her idol a chance to practice things that are expected to occur during the day of taping with the actual actress he admires and would like to impress [Image 12].



Image 12. Amy at the background dressed up as Yam’s on-screen character to support and help Ollie deliver his lines that they performatively practiced the night before.

Even if Ollie recognizes and grows closer to Amy, thanks to her talent in dressing up (as in cosplaying) and in mimicking Sandy’s voice and character, it is he who disrupts the performative ritual. Toward the end of the film, he admits to Amy that she no longer has to mimic and pretend to be his favorite actress, for he understands, sees, and wants to return her affection and admiration. It is another trope that fits the conventions expected from romance as a genre.

Oh my God!: Depictions of idols as gods to be praised

If the ultimate consequence of being a die-hard fan is burning bridges with one’s family, losing every opportunity to live an independent life, and surrendering to servitude, *Bona* captures this with a logical metaphor. In the beginning scene, the film’s director, Lino Brocka, decides to include in its mis-en-scene footages of the procession of the Black Nazarene, which is largest local religious tradition held annually in Quiapo, Manila, every ninth of January. Brocka consciously incorporating this at the beginning of the film suggests that the familiar depiction of religious devotees is similar to the would-be depiction of Bona as a fan-protagonist, who like a religious believer, is someone abounding with devotion and dedication towards an adored object [Image 13].⁴²



Image 13. *Left.* Scene captured from Lino Brocka’s *Bona*. *Right.* A much more recent photo captured by the Romeo Ranoco and published in the magazine *The Atlantic*.⁴³ In integrating this image, Brocka visualizes for its audience what Rojek claims to be the existing parallelism between celebrity culture and religion. In perceiving idols to ‘possess God like qualities,’ Rojek claims that fans feel something magical about the celebrity which they find comfort in.⁴⁴

Aside from the fact that there is an emotional intensity present in both pursuits, outsiders who have observed the actions of those involved, but do not understand their underlying motivations, find it easy to condemn the impractical nature of 'devotional activities.'⁴⁵ Showing similar characteristics and behavior that usually brand both devotees and fans as 'fanatics,' several scholars have tried to use the dynamics present in religion to explain this phenomenon. Nicanor Tiongson, citing Rondina, states that where religious concepts are primarily used as keywords to give definition to the entertainment industry, the parallel dynamics embraced by both the devotee and the fan are tightened: 'Stars have become the gods and goddesses of the new religion called showbiz, which has fan magazines as its Old and New Testaments and talk show charlatans as its new shamans.'⁴⁶

Treating idols as gods worthy of praise is reinforced by the recurring depiction of fans who ultimately *lower* themselves and offer various types of sacrifices to what they understand as a far superior idol; this 'turn[s] a distant figure from a stranger into a significant other.'⁴⁷ Such idolatry further advances stereotypical representations that Hills defines as seemingly 'unchallengeable truth,'⁴⁸ including the actions of trailing behind an idol like a servant (as in the case of Eva, Bona, and Amy), acknowledging the idol as someone of status and wealth who might help a fan to attain the dream of becoming a star (as in the case of Dorina), and finally, treating the idol as someone worthy to be emulated by highlighting all their positive qualities and neglecting to see those that are negative.

However, both celebrity scholars Dyer and Velasco believe that a fan's intimate reaction to a star-idol is heavily constructed by the industry itself. In employing mechanisms that create the star's image outside the filmic role,⁴⁹ and in providing technical glamour that cinematically provides the possibility of deification, the 'division between the worshipped and the worshipper, the goddess and the mortal' is formed.⁵⁰ Film (and in extension the industry) as a popular form, therefore, inherently stabilizes the adored-adoring dynamics that works as the basic foundation of religion. To push forward the analogy between film and religion, thereby strengthening the use of devotee as a metaphor for a fan who does the adoring, Cesar Orsal, a Filipino celebrity studies scholar, offers a fitting insight about fandom – '*ang fandom ay isang phenomenon na lumilikha ng isang ritwal na relasyon ng artista at ng kanyang mga tagatangkilik* [Fandom is a phenomenon that creates a ritualistic relationship between the celebrity and his/her patronage].'

Dorina, the fan-protagonist in the movie *Bituing Walang Ningning*, especially engages in forms of devotional behavior. Similar to the devotees of the black Nazarene, who sustain the miraculousness of the image by joining its annual procession while barefooted and waving white handkerchiefs, Dorina makes personal sacrifices and invests objects with sacred value to invoke the power of an idol.⁵¹

One of the sacrifices the movie highlights is Dorina's willingness to withstand her aunt Sioning's (Lorli Villanueva) taunting every time she notices that her niece is busy crafting a sampaguita flower necklace for her idol's neck, instead of selling them as part of their floral business. Moreover, Dorina immerses herself in layers and layers of sacrifices just to prove her adoration, such as spending her money on buying magazines that feature Lavinia instead of

providing herself with needed food. Her keenness to adhere to sacrifices can also be seen whenever she crashes at Lavinia's gate, enduring the cold and filthy pavement, just so she can eventually present the sampaguita flower necklace she spent her time making.

Over the course of the film, the recurring prop of the sampaguita flower signifies the fan's utmost adoration to the idol. Aside from adhering to several practices that connote the lowly suffering of the adoring fan, sampaguita is used time and again to honor and deify Lavinia as a worshipped idol [Image 14].



Image 14. Dorina's ritualistic offering of Sampaguita Flower necklace to Lavinia, her hailed idol.⁵²

The film's on-screen depiction of ritualistic and fannish activities provides visual examples of fan-celebrity relations discussed in celebrity studies theory. For example, in the depiction of Dorina as a solitary fan personally delivering sampaguita flower necklaces to the idol's home, the film's narrative conveys layers of signification that resonate with concepts in celebrity studies about fans' frequent interest in asserting their status as special, realized especially through recognition of their own status as a 'number one fan.'⁵³ With Dorina utilizing her knowledge of the idol's personal life, she ultimately and vocally 'claims herself above the pack of nameless fans to attempt a special, exclusive relationship with the star as a special fan.'⁵⁴

Aside from dwelling on fan-motivations and practices, the film also emphasizes how the industry employs mechanisms that build up the glamour of the celebrity's star image. Calling it the 'impossible diegetic world,' de Manila's analysis on 1960's 'mestiza stardom' vividly provides a characterization on how Lavinia's elite lifestyle as a fictional star-character is adapted on screen.⁵⁵ Filling the mis-en-scene with visuals of her 'impossible glamour' – private suburban home, expensive car, and wardrobe, alongside the auditory aspect of her wide use of the English-language⁵⁶-- the fictional star is conveyed as a 'goddess' that promotes the 'division between the worshipped and the worshipper'.⁵⁷

The socio-political context of the period also influenced the movie's decision to utilize sacrifice (as symbolized by the flower) as a trope in its narrative. Similar to Brocka's *Bona*, Borlaza's *Bituing Walang Ningning* was produced during the latter years of Marcos' dictatorship. Contrary to the ways that Brocka's earlier films provoked political awareness, the regime, through the Experimental Cinema and Film Fund, encouraged movies that provided audiences with spectacular and colorful themes that would draw them away from radicalization.

This was the tactic embraced by VIVA films, which, as a production company, gave rise to the commercial success of the Borlaza-Cuneta director-actor tandem. A year prior to *Bituing Walang Ningning*, Borlaza-Cuneta produced two blockbuster hits by providing the audience with movies that belonged to the melodrama genre.⁵⁸ Having a talent in singing as well as acting, Cuneta succeeded in an era when melodramas were often injected with elements of a musical to gain more popular appeal.⁵⁹ Centering its narratives in a female protagonist's personal dreams, conflicts, and hopes, while making sure that the 'fantasy of class rebirth' is sustained through rags-to-riches melodramatic tropes, Cuneta-Borlaza movies such as *Bituing Walang Ningning* also prove to be successful in removing the masses' attention from the possibility of political insurgency by embracing the virtuousness conveyed by sacrifice.⁶⁰

Utilizing the established framework of melodrama, the film's ending shows how the sampaguita flower, the almost consecrated object that pertains to Dorina's worship of the idol, is also used to convey the fan-protagonist's purity, a character trait always given importance in a genre that highlights the dichotomy of good and bad characters.⁶¹ Despite having been given the chance to succeed in her singing career, similar to what her idol experienced, Dorina sacrifices the status and fame she could get as a star after realizing that she does not want to be like Lavinia, whose sole obsession is to maintain her career at the peak. In the last scene where Dorina and Lavinia agree to have a sing-off to prove to the public who among them is the best singer of the decade, Dorina employs the ritualistic move of handing over sampaguita flowers to the idol, signifying her choice not to compete with Lavinia. Instead, Dorina realizes she is already satisfied with everything she has achieved so far, especially the genuine love she receives from Nico Escobar (Christopher de Leon),⁶² Lavinia's ex-fiancé, who finds in Dorina a sense of humbleness that he does not see in the self-centered Lavinia [Image 15].



Image 15. The movie's last act shows the sing-off between Dorina and Lavinia to establish who among them is worthy to be praised as the music industry's number 1 star. In her selfless letting go of her stardom, the used to be lowly fan asserts a 'moral high ground' by 'reverting to her kind nature and choosing to forgive her cold, calculating and ruthless enemy.'⁶³

Aside from the movie's adherence to the 'durable melodramatic convention' of showcasing the protagonist's virtuousness prevailing over the cruelty and the overall harshness of 'dog-eat-dog world' of show business,⁶⁴ the entirety of the film is carefully planned to tightly fit the elements that define the genre. First, the movie's narrative strengthens the characters' contrasting traits throughout until the very end. While the protagonist is described as a soft-hearted and innocent poor fan, the idol is depicted as a greedy rich star willing to undergo cutthroat tactics

just so she can maintain her position in the industry. Second, in order to create conflict that will destabilize the adoring fan-adored idol dynamics between Dorina and Lavinia, and to provide audience its favorite rags-to-riches trope, the lowly fan is given the chance to experience class mobility, entering the stardom she once only dreamt of.

Seemingly patterned after Nora Aunor's rise to fame, in which her beautiful singing voice became her ticket to stardom, Dorina's trajectory from a fan to an idol 'mirrors a powerful sentiment Filipino audiences look for in their entertainment – the triumph of the downtrodden.'⁶⁵ Having achieved wealth, fame, and influence, Dorina, who was once meek and ever accepting of the idol's ruthless words and actions, works hard, fights back, asserts her right to claim the throne. In completing the melodramatic cycle, however, the movie pays importance to the role of genuine love in establishing an ending where the virtuousness of the fan-protagonist is once again highlighted. Despite Dorina's taste of fame and influence, what prevails is her compassion towards the idol. In backing off from her career, she does not only allow Lavinia to reclaim her much hoped for spot at the peak but also basks in her newly found love that is more enduring than any form of commercial success.⁶⁶

Beyond admiration: Possible means of going against the pathological fan-depiction

Filipino films that present narratives about fans' lives, while sometimes sympathetic, still cling to the familiar notion of fan madness. These prevailing descriptions that box fans into a specific pathological representation is further enforced by visual tropes of clichéd fandom practices – going on a group excursion to keep track and follow an idol, preparing banners and other physical items that express unrealistic love, and lowering oneself to serve as an idol's servant.

Despite the appalling obsession of the industry in depicting its very own fans in this way, often equating the die-hard support of young girls, in particular, as irrational, it is interesting to note that such films also somehow showcase *moments of slippages* when admiration is questioned by the fan-protagonist, thereby encapsulating the fluidity present in the practice of fanhood. Even though a majority of scenes offer the description a fan who is 'too far up her idol's asses,'⁶⁷ some of the movies analyzed, here, attempt to display, as well, that there are factors that arouse the fan-protagonist to dismiss the responsibility once assumed and embraced.

The sudden or gradual process of demystifying the once-revered figure goes hand-in-hand with a fan-character's transformation. From simply being characterized as a fan that gains identity by showing support to the idol, protagonists like Bona and Dorina are able to claim in their own narratives a separate and different existence that is far from the world of fantasizing and admiring others to live their own reality. In addition, researching the off-screen fan collective, whether they are fans of movie stars like Bona, Eva and Amy, or fans of singers like Dorina, could provide a more comprehensive representation of fans who do not just engage themselves in activities that directly involve their idol. This is clear in various real-life fan journals and interviews during the decades these movies were released. In such materials, fan

practices and activities are not just rooted in the aim of pleasing the sole object of interest and desire, but also lie in specific collective goals. Real-life fans of Nora Aunor, who starred as Bona, for example, did not just focus on their idol's talent. These fans, who call themselves as Noranians, also engage in outreach and charity programs for the sick, for those affected by catastrophes, and for those stricken by poverty.⁶⁸ Though they are adamant in claiming that it is their idol's kindness towards them is what encourages them to act kindly to others, it is interesting to see that the fans' preoccupation do not just lie in a very superficial notion of showing their support but is translated to a higher and more significant goal.⁶⁹ As Velasco puts it:

Fandom does not only throb in scheming admiration of the star, but it also thrives in humanistic undertakings. Taking a cue from their role-model-cum-favorite-movie icon, the fans imbibe the star's virtue.⁷⁰

Aside from supporting worthwhile causes, belonging to a fandom can also enhance one's personal capabilities. Despite outsiders seeing fangirling/fanboying as a detrimental hobby that causes one to lose focus on real-life responsibilities – something expressed vividly by characters in the films, such as Bona's father (Venchito Galvez) in *Bona*, Dorina's Aunt Sioning in *Bituing Walang Ningning*, or Amy's parents (Yayo Aguila and Christopher Roxas) in *Fangirl Fanboy* – there are instances that an individual fan's talent and capabilities are further reinforced by the activities the larger group. This can, later on, become their ticket to personal success. As an example, Jovenal Velasco, a fan of Susan Roces, a Filipino actress, has written about how he would give Roces sketches of her and, in doing so, he was able to learn that he had a talent in drawing, particularly in the field of portrait sketching. Furthermore, because of his experience in creating scrapbooks or collages as fan-gifts for Roces, his present work as a layout artist of a magazine has been relatively easier compared to the experience of his colleagues.⁷¹

To further develop a genuine understanding of fans as a specific force behind the Philippine film industry, it is important to bring into research other methods that can more completely portray fans' identities, motivations, and practices alike. By moving beyond fan iconography in local Filipino films and studying artefacts that assert their identity and agency as fans, or highlighting their own voices, scholars can lessen the impact of movies' depictions, which seemingly limit the possibility of breaking away from pathological representations and negative stereotypes. In doing so, several other faces of fandom might arise that could eventually pave the way to new and provocative cinematic depictions of fans.

Biographical note:

Andrea Anne I. Trinidad obtained her AB-MA Filipino Literature degree from the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. Though currently working as a full-time Instructor of Filipino Language and Literature in the same university, she also considers herself as a full-time fan girl

that majorly influences her academic interests in fan studies and its underlying practices and dynamics as an online/offline community. Email: atrinidad@ateneo.edu.

Bibliography:

- Andrea. 'Twitter/ @singermedes: imagine being sooooo far up your idol's ass that you choose to ignore the wrong things they've done. can't relate.' June 29, 2017, 12:16 p.m. <https://twitter.com/singermedes/status/880278666042777601>.
- Avellana, Jose Mari, dir. *Koronang Itim*. 1994; OctoArts Films and Regal Home Video, VHS.
- Booth, Paul and Lucy Bennett. Introduction to *Seeing Fans: Representations of Fandom in Media and Popular Culture*, edited by Lucy Bennett and Paul Booth, 1-9. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Borlaza, Emmanuel H., dir. *Bituing Walang Ningning*. 1985. Viva Films. DVD.
- Brocka, Lino, dir. *Bona*. 1980. NV Productions and FPJ Productions. VHS.
- Capino, Jose B. Preface to *Martial Law Melodrama: Lino Brocka's Cinema Politics*, xi-xxv. California: University of California Press, 2020..
- Confessions. 'Twitter/ @fandombeliefs: 'i hate when fans are so far up their idol's ass that they refuse to admit their idols mess up and have flaws and arent always good people'. ' November 19, 2014, 8:03 a.m. <https://twitter.com/fandombeliefs/status/534859551640924161>.
- David, Jerrick Josue. 'Dulsita, Ang Kabuuan ng Kontradiksiyon ng Imahen ni Sharon Cuneta sa Pelikulang Filipino.' *Kritika Kultura* 25, (2015), 314-43. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/kk/article/view/KK2015.02516/2281>.
- De Manila, Quijano. 'Don't Rock the Star System!' *Philippines Free Press* 58, no. 31 (1965): 6-7.
- Duffett, Mark. 'Beyond Exploitation Cinema: Music Fandom, Disability, and *Mission to Lars*.' In *Seeing Fans: Representations of Fandom in Media and Popular Culture*, edited by Lucy Bennett and Paul Booth, 13-22. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Dyer, Richard. Introduction to *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. 1-16. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Flores, Patrick D. 'Makulay na Daigdig: Nora Aunor and the Aesthetic of Sufferance.' Dissertation, University of the Philippines, 2000.
- Flores, Patrick D. 'The Dissemination of Nora Aunor.' In *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures*, edited by Rolando B. Tolentino, 77-95. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000.
- Garratt, Sheryl. 'Teenage Dreams.' In *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, 341-50. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Gil, Baby A. 'Remembering Bituing Walang Ningning.' *PhilStar Global* (Manila, Philippines), May 15, 2006. <https://www.philstar.com/entertainment/2006/05/15/336675/remembering-bituing-walang-ningning>.
- Gonzales, Barry, dir. *Fangirl, Fanboy*. 2017. Viva Films and N2. DVD.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. 'Is there a Fan in the House: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom.' In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 50-65. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Guarana, Bruno. 'Martial Law Melodrama: A Conversation with Jose B. Capino.' *Film Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2020), 93-8. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2020.73.3.93>.

- Henson, Joli. 'Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization.' In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 9-29. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Hills, Matt. 'Negative Fan Stereotypes ('Get a Life!') and Positive Fan Injunctions ('Everyone's Got to be a Fan of Something!'): Returning to Hegemony Theory in Fan Studies' *Get a Life?: Fan Cultures and Contemporary Television*. *Spectator*, ed Lauri Mullens. Spring 2005, 35-47. Accessed August 24, 2020. <https://cinema.usc.edu/assets/097/15730.pdf>.
- Jones, Bethan. 'Fannish Tattooing and Sacred Identity.' *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 18 (2015). Accessed August 31, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0626>.
- Jung, Sun. 'Fan Activism, Cybervigilantism, and Other Mechanisms in K-pop Fandom.' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, (2012). Accessed August 31, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0300>.
- Kilgler-Vilenchik, Neta, Joshua McVeigh-Schultz, Christine Weibrecht, and Chris Tokuhama. 'Experiencing Fan Activism: Understanding the Power of Fan Activist Organizations through Member's Narratives.' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, (2012). Accessed August 31, 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0322>.
- Lewis, Lisa A. "Something More than Love: Fan Stories on Film." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 135-70. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Lim, Bliss Cua. 'Sharon's Noranian Turn: Stardom, Embodiment, and Language in Philippine Cinema.' *Discourse* 31, No. 3 (2009): 318-41. Accessed August 31, 2020. DOI: 10.2307/41389823.
- Llamas, Cora. "Bituing Walang Ningning": Please Connect the Dots.' *Lifestyle.Inq* (Manila, Philippines), July 4, 2015. <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/199227/bituing-walang-ningning-please-connect-the-dots/>.
- Orsal, Cesar D. 'Sharon Cuneta: Ang Romansa ng Komiks Movies at Ideya ng mga Pangarap.' In *Movie Queen: Pagbuo ng Mito at Kapangyarihang Kultural ng Babae sa Lipunan*, 96-101. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2007.
- Orsal, Cesar D. 'Si Dolphy sa Mata ng Kanyang mga Fans.' *Pelikula* 2, No. 2 (2001-2002): 26-30.
- Rafael, Vicente L. 'Preface to the Philippine Edition.' In *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, 164-7. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000.
- Ranoco, Romeo. *Devotees jostle one another as they try to touch the Black Nazarene replica during an annual procession in Quiapo, Manila, Philippines*. 2018, photograph, The Atlantic, online, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/01/the-2018-procession-of-the-black-nazarene/550094/>.
- Rojek, Chris. 'Celebrity and Religion.' In *Celebrity*, 51-99. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2001.
- Sam. 'Twitter/ @tinyballerini: if you can't call your idol out when they're wrong you're too far up their ass.' May 18, 2018, 12:34 a.m. <https://twitter.com/tinyballerini/status/864881939060322305>.
- 'Sandaan' marks PH cinema centenary.' *Inquirer.net*. November 22, 2018. <https://entertainment.inquirer.net/305960/sandaan-marks-ph-cinema-centenary>.
- San Diego, Bayani Jr., 'Honoring a Blockbuster Director.' *Inquirer.net*. October 14, 2017. <https://entertainment.inquirer.net/246139/honoring-blockbuster-director>.
- Spence, Kim-Marie. 'What BTS breaking Billboard 100 means for pop as the industry knows it.' *The Conversation: Global Perspectives*, September 9, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/what-bts-breaking-billboard-100-means-for-pop-as-the-industry-knows-it-145798>.

- Stanfill, Mel. 'They're Losers, but I Know Better': Intra-Fandom Stereotyping and the Normalization of the Fan Subject.' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no. 2 (June 2013), 117-134. Accessed August 24, 2020. DOI: [10.1080/15295036.2012.755053](https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2012.755053).
- Stanfill, Mel and Megan Condis. 'Fandom and/as labor.' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15, (2014). Accessed August 30, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0593>.
- Tadiar, Neferti X.M. 'The Noranian Imaginary.' In *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures*, edited by Rolando B. Tolentino, 61-76. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000.
- Tiongson, Nicanor G. 'Fans Create the Meaning of the Stars.' *Pelikula* 2 No. 2 (2001-2002): 2.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. Introduction to *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake, Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen at iba pang Sanaysay ukol sa Bida sa Pelikula bilang Kultural na Texto*. Pasig City: Avil Publishing, 2000.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. 'Marcos, Brocka, Bernal, City Films, and the Contestation for Imagery of Nation.' *Kritika Kultura* 19, (2012), 115-38. Accessed August 31, 2020. DOI: 10.13185/KK2012.01906.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. 'Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen.' in *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake, Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen at iba pang Sanaysay ukol sa Bida sa Pelikula bilang Kultural na Texto*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 2000.
- Turk, Tisha. 'Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy.' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15, (2014). Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0518>
- Velasco, Jovenal. 'Idolizing Susan.' *Pelikula* 2, No. 2 (2001-2002): 10-4.

Notes:

¹ Filipinos collectively recognize actresses Nora Aunor (active since 1967), Vilma Santos (active since 1969), Maricel Soriano (active since 1971), and Sharon Cuneta (active since 1978) as the industry's 'superstar,' 'star for-all-seasons,' 'diamond star' and 'mega star' respectively.

² The country's local celebrity studies often highlight the contribution of Nora Aunor's 'cinderella story' to her star power allowing her to amass wide following from the masses. Coming from a modest background, the superstar who plays the titular character of Bona in 1980 Lino Brocka film *Bona*, catapulted into fame after winning a national singing competition in 1967 thereby making her experience as a train station vendor an echoing anecdote that would often be cited as part of her mythological 'rags to riches' narrative (Flores, 2000 and Tadiar, 2000).

³ This approach builds on the work of Lisa A. Lewis (1992), who provides a detailed outline of how fans and fandoms are represented in Hollywood movies from 1950s to 1980s in her article 'Something More than Love: Fan Stories on Film.'

⁴ Mel Stanfill, "'They're Losers, but I Know Better": Intra-Fandom Stereotyping and the Normalization of the Fan Subject,' *Critical Studies In Media Communication* 30, no. 2 (June 2013), 124, accessed August 24, 2020. DOI: [10.1080/15295036.2012.755053](https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2012.755053).

⁵ Joli Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 20-1.

⁶ Stanfill, "They're Losers," 123.

⁷ Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology,' 19.

⁸ Baby A. Gil, 'Remembering Bituing Walang Ningning,' *PhilStar Global* (Manila, Philippines), May 15, 2006. <https://www.philstar.com/entertainment/2006/05/15/336675/remembering-bituing-walang-ningning>.

⁹ A detail that is mentioned in passing by the film yet is charged with geopolitical implications that is commonly associated with the desire towards the materialization of the 'American dream.' Not only did the character of Lavinia earned an international success as defined by her ability to saturate the US market through the fictional utilization of the then current hit 'I Just Called to Say I Love You' by Stevie Wonder as her single in the movie, but also showcased the level of mobility – both physical and social, that are available for local pop cultural icons.

¹⁰ Aside from centering US as the land of opportunity and success, Cherrie Gil's portrayal of the role signifies how neocolonial standards set by Hollywood as an ideological tool of the empire continue to proliferate Philippine popular cinema. Being 'a fine actress with patrician good looks' (Gil, 2006), the movie subscribes to what historian Vicente Rafael (2000) asserts about Filipino films – that it 'reproduces the power of mestizo/a as a social order' by situating its identity at a privileged position of wealth and influence. This racialized signification of dominance was further insinuated by the film through the character's use of English that eventually implanted the infamous line 'You're nothing but a second rate, trying hard copy-cat' to public memory.

¹¹ Franz Sorilla IV, 'Cine Sandaan: 10 Iconic Films that Shaped Philippine Cinema,' *Philippine Tattler*, October 9, 2019, <https://ph.asiatatler.com/life/cinesandaan-10-iconic-films-that-shaped-philippine-cinema>.

¹² The casting of Snooky Serna and Sharmaine Arnaiz further suggests the convention of privileging the 'mestizo star' in Philippine film as Rafael suggests. Both having mestiza or mixed-race features that approximate the physical appearance of Hollywood star, the film industry legitimizes this 'certain proximity to the sources of colonial power' by providing specific pop cultural icons with economic power both inside and outside the movie screen.

¹³ Bethan Jones, 'Fannish Tattooing and Sacred Identity,' *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 18 (2015). accessed August 31, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0626>.

¹⁴ Cesar D. Orsal, 'Sharon Cuneta: Ang Romansa ng Komiks Movies at Ideya ng mga Pangarap,' in *Movie Queen: Pagbuo ng Mito at Kapangyarihang Kultural ng Babae sa Lipunan* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2007), 97.

¹⁵ Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology,' 15.

¹⁶ Eva's character background provides an insight about the issue of social mobility in the country. Hailing from the province, it is apparent that in-migration towards the center, or the nation's capital for that matter, is perceived as a physical move that opens up opportunities including the fast-paced mobility that the inclusion in the entertainment industry as a celebrity provides. This also signify that having a movie or music career is popularly perceived as having the capacity to position the self at a higher socio-economic position – the very reason as to why B-list celebrity characters like Gardo in *Bona* and Ollie in *Fangirl Fanboy* wants to succeed in show business.

¹⁷ Chris Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' in *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2001), 56.

¹⁸ Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology,' 12.

¹⁹ Lisa Lewis, 'Something More than Love: Fan Stories on Film,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 144.

²⁰ Stanfill, 'They're Losers,' 117.

²¹ Stanfill, 'They're Losers,' 127.

- ²² Nicanor G. Tiongson, 'Fans Create the Meaning of the Stars,' *Pelikula 02*, no. 02 (2000-2001): 02
- ²³ Quijano de Manila, 'Don't Rock the Star System!' *Philippines Free Press* 58, no. 31 (1965): 6-7.
- ²⁴ Matt Hills, 'Negative Fan Stereotypes ('Get a Life!) and Positive Fan Injunctions ('Everyone's Got to be a Fan of Something!'): Returning to Hegemony Theory in Fan Studies,' *Get a Life?: Fan Cultures and Contemporary Television*, *Spectator*, ed Lauri Mullens. Spring 2005, 35, accessed August 24, 2020. <https://cinema.usc.edu/assets/097/15730.pdf>.
- ²⁵ *Alaga*, in the context of the local show business industry, is a loose translation that refers to 'a person under someone's care.' Apart from being used by individuals who serve as the star's personal assistant, it is also frequently used by managers who are expected to take care of the celebrity's career and image.
- ²⁶ Mark Duffett, 'Beyond Exploitation Cinema: Music Fandom, Disability, and *Mission to Lars*,' in *Seeing Fans: Representations of Fandom in Media and Popular Culture*, ed. Lucy Bennett and Paul Booth (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 14.
- ²⁷ Lewis, 'Something More than Love,' 136.
- ²⁸ Jones, 'Fannish.'
- ²⁹ Jenson, 'Fandom as Pathology,' 16-7.
- ³⁰ Stanfill, 'They're Losers,' 124.
- ³¹ Stanfill, 'They're Losers,' 125.
- ³² Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, 'Fandom and/as labor,' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15, (2014). accessed August 31, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0593>.
- ³³ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 51.
- ³⁴ Kim-Marie Spence, 'What BTS breaking Billboard 100 means for pop as the industry knows it,' ***The Conversation: Global Perspectives***, September 9, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/what-bts-breaking-billboard-100-means-for-pop-as-the-industry-knows-it-145798>.
- ³⁵ Stanfill and Condis, 'Fandom and/as labor.'
- ³⁶ Tisha Turk, 'Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy,' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 15, (2014). accessed August 31, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0518>.
- ³⁷ Paul Booth and Lucy Bennett, introduction to *Seeing Fans*, 2.
- ³⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, 'Is there a Fan in the House: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom,' in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 56-7.
- ³⁹ Rolando B. Tolentino, 'Marcos, Brocka, Bernal, City Films, and the Contestation for Imagery of Nation,' *Kritika Kultura* 19, (2012), 119-21. accessed August 31, 2020. DOI: 10.13185/KK2012.01906.
- ⁴⁰ Jose B. Capino, preface to ***Martial Law Melodrama: Lindo Brocka's Cinema Politics*** (California: University of California Press, 2020), xii.
- ⁴¹ Capino, preface, xii.
- ⁴² Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 53.
- ⁴³ Romeo Ranoco, *Devotees jostle one another as they try to touch the Black Nazarene replica during an annual procession in Quiapo, Manila, Philippines*, 2018, photograph, The Atlantic, online, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/01/the-2018-procession-of-the-black-nazarene/550094/>.
- ⁴⁴ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 53.
- ⁴⁵ Stanfill, 'They're Losers,' 120.
- ⁴⁶ Tiongson, 'Fans Create' 2.
- ⁴⁷ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 53.

- ⁴⁸ Hills, 'Negative Fan Stereotypes.' 42.
- ⁴⁹ Richard Dyer, introduction to *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2-3.
- ⁵⁰ Jovenal Velasco, 'Idolizing Susan,' *Pelikula 2*, no. 2 (2001-2002): 13.
- ⁵¹ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 59.
- ⁵² It is important to note that as a form of devotion, the same type of flower is usually hung by Filipino devotees around the necks of the religious statues and figures they have in their home.
- ⁵³ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 66.
- ⁵⁴ Lewis, 'Something More than Love,' 144.
- ⁵⁵ Quijano de Manila, 'Don't Rock the Star System!,' 6-7.
- ⁵⁶ Rojek, 'Celebrity and Religion,' 52.
- ⁵⁷ Velasco, 'Idolizing Susan,' 13.
- ⁵⁸ Apart from *Bituing Walang Ningning* (1985), Borlaza and Cuneta were at the center of melodrama blockbuster hits *Dapat ka bang Mahalin [Are you worthy of Love]* and *Bukas Luluhod ang mga Tala [Tomorrow the Stars will Kneel]* the year prior. Focusing on melodrama, these films aided in the launch of the 'gradual decrease of artistically expressive films (such as Brocka's) and rise of commercial films' which for Sorilla defined the second half of 1980s movie industry.
- ⁵⁹ Sharon Cuneta's success both as a singer and an actress can be attributed to Nora Aunor's star pattern who first started off as a singer later on crossing-over to both film and television (Lim, 2015).
- ⁶⁰ Orsal, 'Sharon Cuneta,' 97.
- ⁶¹ Jerrick Josue David, 'Dulsita, Ang Kabuuan ng Kontradiksyon ng Imahen ni Sharon Cuneta sa Pelikulang Filipino,' *Kritika Kultura* 25, (2015), 319. accessed August 31, 2020. <https://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/kk/article/view/KK2015.02516/2281>.
- ⁶² According to Gil, playing alongside Christopher de Leon as 'the country's top dramatic actor was a rite of passage for every young actress.' Apart from Borlaza's influence therefore as 'box-office director of the martial law era' (San Diego, 2017), Sharon Cuneta's stardom was aided by this pairing earning her later on the lifetime title as the country's 'Megastar.'
- ⁶³ Cora Llamas, "'Bituing Walang Ningning': Please Connect the Dots,' *Lifestyle.Inq* (Manila, Philippines), July 4, 2015. <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/199227/bituing-walang-ningning-please-connect-the-dots/>.
- ⁶⁴ Rolando B. Tolentino, 'Sharon Cuneta at ang Perpetwal na Birhen.' in *Richard Gomez at ang Mito ng Pagkalalake, Sharon Cuneta at and Perpetwal na Birhen at iba pang Sanaysay ukol sa bida sa Pelikula bilang Kultural na Texto* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing,2000), 63.
- ⁶⁵ Llamas, "'Bituing Walang Ningning.'
- ⁶⁶ The movie's thematic use of love being triumphant over greed is further encapsulated in its official soundtrack also entitled *Bituing Walang Ningning* that known for its line 'Mabuti pa kaya'y maging bituing walang ningning,kung kapalit nito'y walang paglaho mong pagtingin' [I would rather be a star without its shine, if it would mean your love would last forever.]
- ⁶⁷ A common critique hurled at fans and fandom at present as showcased by some of these tweets. Confessions, Twitter post, November 19, 2014, 8:03 a.m., [https://twitter.com/fandombeliefs.](https://twitter.com/fandombeliefs;); Andrea, Twitter post, June 29, 2017, 12:16 p.m., <https://twitter.com/singermendes.>; Sam, Twitter post, May 18, 2017, 12:34 a.m., <https://twitter.com/tinyballerini>.
- ⁶⁸ Cesar D. Orsal, 'Wilma Reads her Fans,' *Pelikula 2*, no. 2 (2001-2002): 56.

⁶⁹ Neta Kilgler-Vilenchik, Joshua McVeigh-Schultz, Christine Weibrecht, and Chris Tokuhama, 'Experiencing Fan Activism: Understanding the Power of Fan Activist Organizations through Member's Narratives,' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, (2012). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0322>; Sun Jung, 'Fan Acvitism, Cybervigilantism, and Other Mechanisms in K-pop Fandom,' *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, (2012). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0300>.

⁷⁰ Orsal, 'Vilma Reads,' 53.

⁷¹ Velasco, 'Idolizing Susan,' 12.