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Shake, Rattle and Roll Horror Franchise and the Specter of Nation-Formation in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The paper looks into the most successful horror franchise in Philippine history. *Shake, Rattle and Roll* has had a successful 14-film run since its introduction in 1984, and is composed of a three-part segment, each tackling a horrific experience: ghosts and folk creatures in provincial and city settings. My paper maps out the narratives, and the social and political contexts of the series. Specifically, the period beginning 1984 marks a series of national transition: the political crisis of the Marcoses, People Power 1, the rise of Corazon Aquino, the economic crises in 1997 and 2007, the ousting of Joseph Estrada, the rise of neoliberalism, the coming of Noynoy Aquino, and the incarceration of Gloria Arroyo. How might these films also be read as analog of the anxieties of the nation?

Keywords: Philippine cinema, horror, cultural politics

Shake, Rattle and Roll is considered the most popular and successful horror franchise in Philippine cinema.[1] Since its first release in 1984, it has already produced 15 titles as of 2014, most of which have been timed for the annual Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF), a national showcase of all-Filipino films during the Christmas holidays, as with the release of all other titles with the exception of one in the franchise. It has the most number of sequel titles, not just for the horror genre but for all kinds of genres in Philippine cinema history. In fact, *Shake, Rattle and Roll* is also a historic record of Philippine cinema from its first release: featuring the biggest stars of the year; the established and new directors, scriptwriters, sound editors, and cinematographers being tested for the horror genre that has sustained the production of genre films during the period involved; and the ebb and flow of production and box-office records in Philippine cinema. What used to be a showcase of the best of national art cinema in the annual MMFF has moved towards greater commercialism and formulaic sequels to successful franchise films from the festival's establishment in 1975.

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The festival, organized by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the governing body of the 17 cities covered by the Metro Manila region and is under the Office of the President, began to respond to the market with the decline of annual output and box-office share of national cinema (as a result of the greater global domination of Hollywood over local film industries) in the 1990s, and the slow but steady increase in profitability and output of local cinema in the 2000s up to the present. In fact, since 2007, only two local films made it to the top ten highest grossing films in the Philippines, with the eight other titles generated mostly from Hollywood's biggest summer hits, mostly comprising of D.C. comics titles, *The Twilight Saga*, and *Harry Potter* series, were also results of successful franchising.[2] Since MMDA's annual funding is subsidized by the festival, the earmarking of the biggest shopping and consumption period to local cinema needs to be ensured of continuous profit, especially as the festival has gone nationwide in recent years. With the exception of *Shake, Rattle and Roll 6*, which premiered in January 1997, all other runs of the series were targeted for the profitable MMFF. The initial releases of *Shake, Rattle and Roll* were the biggest or among the biggest box-office drawers in the festival. However, in recent years, it has produced only a decent share of the festival's box-office but nonetheless remains a viable formula showcase, primarily because of audience recall, that ensures an annual audience share.

The formulae of *Shake, Rattle and Roll* includes a three-episode film—usually showcased in romance, light sex, and comedy segments, laced in horror—featuring the biggest stars of the time, and that is set primarily in generic modern and rural Philippines. Regal Films, producer of the series, used to be the biggest film studio company with its own bankable stable of the biggest stars in the 1980s and early 1990s. The series has remained a prestige film that even with Regal Films' decline, the series is still able to muster the continuing participation of the most popular stars of the film studios of ABS-CBN and GMA, two of the biggest media conglomerates in the country, that also have their own talent management outfits. The horror series is one of the rare times one can see the biggest stars from the rival studios acting in segments of the series. In fact, one of the attractions of the initial output of the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* series was seeing the biggest young stars performing non-iconic roles; for example, an ingénue star doing a sexy scene would have been unheard of in the recent output of the series. The series has also been affected by the rise of the independent cinema movement since 2000, creating equally edgy horror film output, or directors and film technicians of the movement being incorporated for work in the horror series.

In this essay, I will look into the possibility of another fascination with the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* series—as analogue of anxieties of the nation in general, which contextualizes the series' scope of some 30 years of nation-formation: the decline of the Marcos dictatorship since 1983 and its eventual toppling in 1986; the rise of Corazon Aquino in 1986 and successive presidencies—Fidel Ramos (1992-1998), Joseph Estrada (1998-2001), Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-2011) and Benigno Aquino III (2011-present)—all enmeshed in the introduction and intensification of neoliberalism; the global economic crises of 1997 and 2007; and the political national crises that toppled the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, that toppled Estrada in 2001, and that lingered during Arroyo's administration. The period of the 1980s to 2010s also marks the rise of neoliberalism in the country that has privatized, deregulated, commercialized, and marketized public services, and the continuous and ever presence of the legacies of fascism and corruption of the Marcos dictatorship. What the horror franchise also informs are the anxieties, and making-do processes and mechanisms of both ordinary people represented by characters in the film, and the imperative of profit and state formation as rendered by the choice of horror stories to tell, stars and film technicians to incorporate, and the general competition to stay afloat in the annual nationwide film festival through the horror series. In short, horror films can be read as symptomatic of nation-formation involving on the one hand, state formation or how (mis)governance gets to be represented and state issues amplified, and on the other hand, subject formation or how citizenry is enforced by the state and embodied by citizens at the ground level.

HORROR FILM STUDIES

Genre criticism is the omnibus framework that has traditionally guided the analysis of horror films, focusing on distinct typology, narrative conventions and drives, and unique filmic style.[3] This approach made it easy to distinguish the pleasure of horror film, and called attention to how the horror film works, thereby providing legitimacy to the filmic quality and endurance of the horror genre. Prior to this, auteur theory was mobilized to privilege cinematic genuises in commercially successful directors, such as John Ford for the western, Vincente Minnelli for the musical, and Alfred Hitchcock for horror. Because of the excess of blood and gore, 1990s studies of the horror film focused on the recuperation of modes of representation of horror itself to abjected identities and subjectivities. Jonathan Lake Crane reads horror films as analogs of the everyday terror, a cultural studies focus of attention in the familiar and even the mundane.[4] Using psychoanalytic tropes, Crane historically diagnoses the characters, including the maker and monster,

to analyze the narrative and psychical drives, allowing for "adopt[ation of] revolutionary styles of excessive communication."[5]

Carol J. Clover examines the female and male viewer's stake in horror spectatorship, specifically of the 1970s to the mid-1980s American horror film, particularly, "slasher films, occult or possession films, and rape-revenge films."[6] Clover makes no apologies in her focus of study and selection of films to assert the problematic of identification in horror films (i.e., "What horror, what viewers, and what sort of 'identification' exactly?").[7] In other words, what Clover recuperates in horror films is the psychosocial drives that allow for desire and pleasure that foregrounds and forecloses liberatory possibilities, especially with the demise of independent and off-Hollywood horror productions. Barbara Creed focuses her feminist analysis of the horror genre with the central trope of the "monstrous-feminine," one "emphasizing gender in the construction of her monstrosity."[8] In the monstrous-feminine, Creed recuperates both the female monstrous character and psychoanalysis to complexify the issues of feminist horror gestural deeds in abjection and castration.

There is a dearth of materials in the study of Philippine horror films. What stands out is Bliss Cua Lim's transnational analysis of contemporary horror films in the Philippines, Asian America, Japan, and Korea, using the element of translation of time or the adaptation of the fantastic in local horror as resistance to the privileging of homogenous historical time.[9] Lim reads "temporal critique" as an antithetical discourse to two related issues: to supernaturalism and "occult modes of thinking encoded in fantastic narratives" and "the existence of multiple time" rather than the ascendancy of homogenous empty time.[10] With regards to my own study of horror films, and borrowing from Lim's use of Bergson's "heterogeneous temporalities" that belie common sense and are largely untranslatable, the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* franchise allows for a heteroglossia or multiple tongues (Bahktin)[11] to speak of the continuity of the historical past in the filmic present, and in the case of the seriality of the franchise, the more recent past in the later serial offerings. Thus, the franchise is able to engage *and* disengage in nation-formation, allowing for a conversation with and a critique of the mobilization and demobilization of its subjects and citizens.

What I am proposing as another direction for horror studies is the horrific real, or the translation of historical terror in filmic horror, or the conversation between historical and filmic terrors. In Jonathan Beller's analysis of *Orapronobis* (Lino Brocka, 1989), a film about the widespread human rights violations in the post-Marcos transition in Corazon Aquino's administration, reads the film as a critique of "Philippine totalitarianism," a condition of strong-grip control of the state of the

civil liberties it should protect.[12] This totalitarianism ensures the sustained growth of the elites and the mobilization of the government to facilitate this growth, both through the usurpation of civil rights and liberties. It is this totalitarian horror that makes for a divergent cinema in Brocka's film. Beller maneuvers between historical real and filmic mobilization to render the real as porous and artificial. The commercial success of the horror franchise, for example, represents a sustained interest and endurance in the form and content of the horror, and its capacity to act as a register of current national events over the period covered. This allows for an affect of both pleasure and terror, a blurring of the lines of the historic and filmic experience of the affect of horror, a transgenerational and transhistorical continuity of the project of desire and pleasure. My contention is to articulate what I had located as these liminal sites of pleasure of horror and horror of pleasure: the former as rendering of the impetus of the masochistic viewing experience, and the latter, through this trajectory of critique, the foregrounding of the reflexive desire in horror, one that can only be operationalized through a linking of filmic horror and the real.

HORROR AND SPECTER OF NATION

There are two short mentions of horror films in the *Encyclopedia of Philippine Arts, Volume on Film* that could easily be overlooked: the first, in the historical period of 1961-1992, to dismiss the demise of what is perceived to be a highly commercialized genre, "the accepted commercial recipe for the horror film—a salad of thrills and laughs ..." and that "the horror part is no longer meant to be taken seriously, either because scientific knowledge has made ordinary movie-goers less gullible or the grim tales have made terror less saleable than before"; and the second, in the forms section that provides the intent, classifications, sources and influences, and the turn to special effects of local horror films.[13] These miniscule references to the horror film attest to both the continuing dismal state of the film archives and the lack of critical interest.

With the declaration of martial rule in 1972, Marcos inculcated a new moral order, Bagong Lipunan (New Society), confiscated all media outlets, and imposed strict censorship rules to regulate the dissemination of images primarily under his network's supervision. Producers avoided producing films that resonated the new social and historical realities, and veered towards the horror films that supposedly evoke "out of this world" realities. However, the anxieties at the ground level over the present and future of the nation, I would think and among others, were filtered

through the proliferation of horror films in the period after the declaration of martial rule. The horror genre talks about the popular dialectics of the known and unknown, moral and immoral, sacred and profane, private and public, inclusion and exclusion, defeat and triumph, struggle and redemption, normal and abnormal, reality and alternate realities, religious and secular, and thus could have provided a new cultural idiom of popular understanding and making sense of the Marcos order.

Such new social and historical realities, I would contend, have remained the cultural context for the continued rise and prominence of the horror film in Philippine cinema. While other genres have faded and disappeared in recent years—the action films and the heterosexual sex-oriented movies, for example—the horror film has remained constant in the films produced and positively received and sustained by audiences. While some genres do get heralded in specific moments in recent Philippine history, such as the overseas contract worker melodrama during the Arroyo years and the romantic comedy in the Benigno Aquino III administration, horror films have remained a sustainable genre for working out of social and historical realities, especially newer traumatic realities, such as martial law, dictatorship, neoliberalism, corruption, and others. Aside from the overt social melodrama that casts characters representative of particular social and historic realities, the horror film, as I will argue in this essay, provides a cultural trope for the imagination of the nation, akin to a specter in the understanding of nation-formation.

Film studies in the Philippines has been preoccupied with the canonical art cinema and has left the more voluminous output in popular cinema out of its discourse, other than to be the binary opposition to what is the best in the adaptation of the film media to local and national contexts, or how national identity is evoked alongside the development of film aesthetics. In other words, film studies on popular cinema has been lodged as the worst of commercial cinema's profit motive. My contention is that similar to art cinema and its evocation of national identity and nation-formation, popular cinema more so exemplifies an allegorical discourse of the nation. Robert Sklar and Charles Musser reify the notion of resistance in film "to recover instances of oppositional filmmaking, or overcome the ideological intentions of conventional texts and criticism: cinema that resists, or resistance to a hegemonic cinema."[14] The resistance in popular cinema stems out of what Sklar and Musser have pointed out, "involve[ing] the capacity to develop active oppositional strategies for 'reading' films contrary to the ideological viewpoints and positions for spectators constructed by texts."[15]

Horror films for the most part have been one of the most understudied genres in Philippine cinema. The genre, however, is replete with allegory (synecdoche of national identity and nation-formation), as the high anxiety in film is evocative of the anxious state of audiences who are also citizens of the nation. The anxious state in horror film is representative of the anxious state and affect in nation-formation. The genre is also representational of irony in the anxious state of nation and citizen-formation. It is what it is not, it is not what it is. Tapping on the viewer's innermost fears and anxiety, the horror film commands the suspension of rational disbelief as integral in its viewing. The viewing itself is a sadomasochistic act: one knows that it is frightful yet enjoys the perverse pleasure in the viewing. Such perverse pleasure allows for individual and social categories to remain constantly in a flux, a carnivalesque moment of drawing pleasure from the intensification of anxieties.

While focused on alternative filmmaking practices, David James's work on *Allegories of Cinema* emphasized "the indetermination of filmic texts and the ensemble of social and material apparatuses—the cinemas—inside which they were produced and which they simultaneously produced; it explores the participation of these cinemas in other forms of political activity, or their self-definition against it."[16] The worlding of cinema through movie going and discussion is integral to defining the limits of its mode of production. The excess is what is also constitutive of a resistant reading, transgressing the very limits of its own mode of cinematic and social productions, as also mentioned by Sklar and Musser. As popular cinema is deemed excessive, a resistant reading becomes a double reading: how is popular cinema's mode of production able to contain and not contain its own underlying premises and practices, and what are the ways in which popular cinema is able to defy its own mode of production (including reception)? In so reading popular cinema, allegories of the nation are also evoked, similar to art cinema's capacity to quote larger national constructs of identity and nation. A resistant reading in popular cinema is a political reading of the limits and excess of the mode of cinematic and social productions.

Horror films are often set in familiar spaces, in homes and in small communities, evocative of the ever-present danger and fear in the everyday sites and spaces. What is made known in film, albeit slowly and purposively, is the history of the chosen locale in the everyday. The new intrusion of a family seeking out a home, moving to this new place, and wondering why such an abode has not been filled out quickly will soon be disrupted by the punctuated foregrounding of the logic of the absence—the prohibitive history of violence, torment, excess, and abuse in the everyday site. The presence of a new individuals and collectivity—signifying the

activation of the inevitable ritual of horrific foregrounding and exposure of the details and devices that would complete the reenactment of the scene of violence—becomes the impetus for the reiterative performance of the climactic horror scene. I am limited in my selection of segments from the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* franchise, because of the unavailability of all the films, and because of my own interest in making an overt case for the cultural relationship of filmic and historic horror. I have preselected the film segments to present this divergent trajectory of horror film studies to develop a conjectural history of the horror franchise and its various relationships to nation-formation.

In the segment episode "Pridyider" (Refrigerator, Ishmael Bernal) of the first *Shake, Rattle and Roll* (1984), the mother and daughter of an overseas contract worker based in Saudi Arabia moves to a new rented home. Together with the household helps—and following the convention of the horror genre that the underclass dying first—the mother and daughter face off with the torment of the appliance that seduces virgins and kills, and are left to fend for themselves to defend their lives. The appliance has been a witness to a crime and is now possessed by the spirit of the dead criminal. What is interesting is the internalization of fear in the new household, the violence inflicted on them through being able to see objects of the scene—the mother mistook a sausage for an internal body organ, a cabbage for a severed head; or to experience horror pleasurably—the daughter feeling refreshed and aroused by the cold coming out of the open refrigerator to beat the sweltering heat—are paradigmatically shifted with the repetition of the scene. The reiteration of the scene makes for the horror: the completing of the cycle—the act of repetition even as the act will never be completely the same—relocates the horror in its proper place and site, forcing the innocent to deal with the historic experience of the horror of the place.

The horror is never abjected or annihilated in the repetition of the scene. The promise of the horror—its specter—is that it is able to replicate, reenact, repeat, and re-perform itself, the scene, and the coherence of meaning. The horror is performative—it needs to be restaged in order to be evocative of meaning and signifying practices in the everyday sites and spaces. It is where history, at least of horror, will repeat itself. This is interesting especially in the context of the growing disenchantment with the Marcos dictatorship. The year 1983 would be a watermark year of the foregrounding of protest against the Marcos order. It is the year that oppositional leader Ninoy Aquino was assassinated upon his return to the Philippines, and melded the coherence of disenchantment with action in the ground level. Tens and thousands took to the streets, and finding out that this could be done, took every occasion to do so.

Director Bernal knew of engaging his films with the social and historic realities. He participated in anti-censorship rallies and upheld the right of the artist to free expression during the Marcos years. He, like the other directors of the second golden age of Philippine cinema, engaged his art with the production of indirect social critique in his films. With strict censorship rules, it was only *Batch '81* (Mike de Leon, 1982), a film about the initiation of neophytes in a fraternity, that overtly made reference to the Marcos rule. All other films that would compose the golden era of the period did so by evoking a claustrophobic feel of the dark city, proliferating images of poverty and corruption, and ensuring the further decline of social reality in the filmic diegesis as ways of engaging with the context of the Marcos dictatorship. These films provided the anti-representational claims of progress and "martial law with a smile" of the Marcos's megalomania, and of Imelda's dictum of only speaking and visualizing about "the true, good and beautiful."

Bernal unwittingly used his popular and now iconic segment to draw attention to the internalization of fear in the everyday, the introduction and penetration of fear, especially in domestic relations and spaces. The public already knows about the fear, they whisper about the horror and indirectly forewarn the new beings, but are themselves helpless in the prevention of the repetition of the horror scene. There is an interesting scene in the episode in which the mother goes hysterical at seeing and experiencing the foregrounding of another detail of the horror scene, and runs outside her home, screaming for her safety, only to find out she was alone in the street, that there was no relief or rescue from the horror scene. In the end, rescue comes in the form WHAT IS THE QUESTION? WHY IS IT MARKED? of the concerned investigator finding out from newspaper clippings about the reason for the disappearances of three people in the household. The lead provided had to do with a sex crime being committed in the same residence. He rescues the daughter from being "eaten" OR SLAUGHTERED by the appliance.

The popular complaint about Bernal's episode is the "annoying attempt of tacking on a rational explanation for the whole thing, via the intervention of some cops investigating a murder."[17] The prior representation of cops in genre films have never been popular: they come in late when the action hero has already killed his enemies, or that they are themselves the purveyors of crimes in social melodrama, and also in action films. Bernal was emplacing a positive image of cops and officers of the law as crucial to a solidarity front against the Marcosian horror. He will be proven correct with the 1986 popular uprising that was instigated by the military, and that eventually toppled the Marcos dictatorship. The police in Bernal's episode is a caring cop, does research, goes beyond the call of duty, appealing to middle-

class sensitivity and fear of crime, and of course, rescues the damsel in distress. It is only in the context of early 1980s social and historic realities that the ending could make logical sense.

SEXUALITY IN FILMIC AND HISTORICAL HORROR

Another interesting feature of the omnibus film of the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* series to lure male audiences into movie houses is to have sexy women on screen. The sexualization of women is integral in the series, even as the series will vie for a "general patronage" rating to ensure a wider audience reach. This is done through two modes: the emplacement of a leading female star in a love triangle, similar to the formula for romance films, and have the men—one representing evil and the underworld, and the other, true love—engage in a battle for love and the righteousness of choice of the young woman, often sexualized in the male contest; and the introduction of a known sex-oriented female star to portray the character of the *aswang* and *manananggal* (female viscera suckers). The latter would be overt sexualization as the female creatures need to show hidden skin and bodily parts, which as part of the Marcos censorship is officially discouraged, in their transformation into monstrous creatures.

The regimentation of bodies and sexualities of young and early adult women, as undertaken in the horror series, at least during the time of Marcos, had resonance with the economic development strategy of the Marcos dictatorship and the need to circuit productive laboring bodies, especially women, for multinational capital penetration. Marcos established export-processing zones or what would now be termed as "special economic zones"—haven from the national labor policies that allows workers to form union and to strike, for example—that emplaced primarily women's bodies in subcontractual feminine work. He also established the national policy of exporting labor, which in most recent years, have shifted the jobs to two-thirds or even as high as 75 percent women workers becoming more in demand and leaving the country to work overseas. Unofficially, Marcos also encouraged sex work and the underground economy as viable sites for mobilization of the national development program. He supported the presence of the US military bases in the Philippines, and unwittingly also encouraged the red-light districts in the bases periphery that served as magnets for young and early adult women, even children, for sex work. The first migration of women workers in the late 1970s was to become entertainers in Japanese nightclubs. With the bases gone and transformed into special economic zones, the red-light districts are still present or relocated to serve the foreign managers of the companies based in the zones.

The sexual productivity of female bodies is foregrounded in the first *Shake, Rattle and Roll*. In the first segment, "Baso" (Glass, Emmanuel H. Borlaza), it is the centrality of the woman figure and her love over two historical periods—the Philippines' under Spanish rule and 1980s modern nation—that catapult the storyline into its quest to disclose horror and redemption as foretold by the glass used in the Ouija board. In the second segment, "Pridyider," it is the ingénue, a former child actress turned biggest young female star of her generation that is sexualized by the relief from heat provided by the coldness of the open refrigerator. In the third segment, "Manananggal" (Peque Gallaga), it is the transformation of a young adult woman in the barrio, portrayed by a popular sex-oriented star, into a female monstrous figure that allows for the display of prohibited bodily parts and heteronormative desire. In all three episodes, the woman is rendered as the victim yet, at the same time, not wholly registering as such because the woman characters are all able to demonstrate temporal individual agency for exposing and defying the horror figure in the first two segments, and for embodying the horrific abject subject in the case of the last segment. In other words, women characters—with the audience foreknowledge of the statures of power that the female stars embody—are rendered both strong and weak, feminine and masculine, dominant and subjugated, among others. But in the end, so long as they are rendered as victims and not victimizer of horror and excess, then they are able to maintain the moral forthrightness that makes the female subject survive, endure, and move on. If they embody the horror subject itself, then they succumb to the conventions of the genre: annihilation but never total, with the possibility of a return, a comeback. This is also the functionality of the vamp character portrayed by vamp stars—that they are retransformed in the narrative of the horror, punished but never totally obliterated into the horror scene.

INTERNALIZATION OF EXTERNALIZED HORROR

The internalization of fear and horror oftentimes leads to female domestication, transforming women as foreboders of horror, resuscitating women's moral righteousness, or destroying the abject female horror and maintaining the status quo in the domestic and community fronts. This internalization renders the subject to be docile (Foucault),[18] thereby rendered productive for state formation. In the episode "Punerarya" (Funeral Parlor, Jerrold Tarog) of *Shake, Rattle and Roll 12* (2010), for example, a female tutor, also breadwinner for her brother studying to become a medical professional, decides to do part-time work with what she thought was a young brother and sister, children of a funeral owner. As the events quickly

unfold, the funeral parlor is revealed to be a decoy for the true identities of the owner, his family, and his workers—all are vampires driven away and almost killed in an isolated barrio by town folks who wished to banish them from their hiding. They fled to the city and used the parlor to get their daily meal of viscera. The tutor finds out, is drugged, and is terrorized in the locked out parlor, with her brother coming to rescue her. The brother is captured by the vampires. The female tutor throws chemicals near the converging vampires, flicks a lighter, and is ready to burn the parlor in exchange for her brother. The brother is released, and she throws in another lighter just as the vampires were ready to snatch them up. As they were about to escape, the male child begs her to rescue him from the fire, which she does. She brings the two males to the clinic, and as she was about to get medicines to treat their wounds, the boy devours her brother. The last scene is a quick cut to the boy about to attack the frozen terrorized face of the tutor.

There are several ways in which internalization and naturalization of horror take place: from the point of view of the abjected horror subject, the deliverer of the horror scene, such as the vampires, they are made to flee for the lives, use a source of livelihood as decoy for their daily survival, and exist in a perennial precarious state; from the point of view of the terrorized horror subject, such as the tutor and his brother, the receptacle of the return of the horror scene, the genre convention of the discovery of the scene means the danger for the acquired knowledge, being a knowing subject instead of the subject surviving through ignorance of the horror scene, and therefore must engage in a quest for survival, redemption, and destruction by the abjected horror subject. Both are rendered as productive horror subjects, dialectically representing and engaging opposing views and positionalities. What is also operationalized in the return of the horror scene is the open-endedness of the closure, of knowing and of being abjected.

The survivor never survives and triumphs over the adversities of the horror scene. And the abjected horror subject is never truly abjected, is able to linger through the next cycle of the horror scene—a perennial cycle of reenactments and restaging of the horror scene, and therefore the continuing performativity of the productive horror subjects: the same mold of the abjected horror subject, and the like or relation character as horror subject to fall again and again as recipient of the horror scene. The libidinal drive in *Shake, Rattle and Roll* is also the libidinal drive in citizenship claims in nation-formation: one cannot but not engage in the dialectics of power, as one is constituted through but never thoroughly in the tinges of the power relations.

Shake, Rattle and Roll 12 was produced and exhibited in 2010, another marker period in Philippine politics as Arroyo was laying the groundwork for the maintenance of her power, challenged yet triumphing over these adversities throughout her administration, in her post-presidency era. Benigno Aquino III would win in the 2011 elections, promising a "matuwid na daan" (righteous path) as moral compass and dictum to his presidency. His first item of the day was to undo Arroyo's stronghold to his power: replacing all Arroyo midnight appointees, including the impeachment of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Initially, Arroyo tried to move for exile but failed, until she was jailed for charges of election tampering but was later released on bail. However, with Aquino's consolidation of his faction of the ruling elite's power, little has been done to alleviate the condition of the general citizenship, 80 percent of which are poor or live in abject poverty, as with the Marcos and post-Marcos administrations. Aquino's main poverty alleviation scheme is the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), which provides monthly dole-outs (some PHP 1,500 or USD 35) to the poorest families as determined by a set of criteria, and in exchange for attendance of kids in classes, parents in meetings and political actions, and other restrictive conditions. Critics have claimed that the CCT scheme is also part of the state's counterinsurgency strategy of filling time for the most recruitable of families into participating in anti-government protest actions.

In other words, the libidinal drive between the horror subjects in the film genre—all abjected in generic underclass professions and experiences, or if part of the elite, still believing and experiencing primitive and feudal folk experiences—is foreclosed in the state's own dialog for nation-formation. Only the players of equal power engage with the state. At the ground level, there is very little ongoing dialog with the state other than to be temporally and spatially alleviated from total emasculating poverty, analogous to low wages paid to workers, only assuring for minimum survival and ensuring that they can return to work the following day. The state maintains the unilateral flow and nation-formation, but in film, the underclass is able to critique and engage the representatives of the state and their formational claims.

WHITE LADY, AND HORROR AS SOCIAL MELODRAMA

In the Philippines the ghost of the "White Lady" has many different versions through various times and spaces. Almost all famous old places, hubs, and historical moments have their version of the White Lady. The most popular is the Metro Manila city version as this provides a hub of iconic horror conventions to the White Lady langue:

A taxi driver is hailed in Nagtahan Bridge, off downtown Manila, around midnight by a pale woman, wearing a white flimsy attire. The woman states that she be brought to her house in Balete Drive in San Juan, another suburb in Metro Manila. All throughout the drive, the driver stares at the woman in his rearview mirror. The driver approaches the house pointed by the woman. He stops the taxi and looks at the rearview mirror to find out that the woman vanished. The following day, he inquires at the gate, describing the woman who rode his taxi. Upon hearing of the description, the caretaker mentions, "It's impossible since the woman has long died."

The reproducibility of the White Lady in various time-space idioms attests to its popularity and lingering presence. But it is also the tale, mostly orally told, of female violence and miscegenation, desire for liminal female sexuality and even necrophilia, female haunting, heterosexual desire, and nostalgia for truth, among others, that provides the template for cultural idiomatic imaginations. The langue may be reproducible but only if conventions are observed in the idioms of storytelling and reiterations.

In December 2012, the last segment of *Shake, Rattle and Roll 13* was evocative of these oralities of the horror scene. "Rain, rain, go away" (Chris Martinez) uses a popular horror scene in the aftermath of the Ondoy flooding of Metro Manila, the worst flooding to hit the metropolis in September 2009: a certain popular mall developer, wanting to ensure compliance of inventory checking, locked his employees in the basement that housed its supermarket. Several employees allegedly died in the flooding, their families and the media paid off to maintain their silence, and to shield the mall developer from negative public opinion. "Rain, rain, go away" tells the story of a plastic company maker and his brother drowning in the experience of torrential rains. The wife experiences another miscarriage from the anxiety of having to relive the flooding and the failed pregnancy caused by the flood's disruption of power and services, and now includes the newer experience of family members mysteriously drowning. She and the audience discover that her husband and his brother were complicit in locking up child workers in their factory, thereby dooming them to die in the aftermath of the Ondoy floods. In the climactic closing scene, she prays for forgiveness, but the torrential rains outside do not stop and the floodwaters engulf her house, drenching and drowning her.

The filmic cultural idiom does not thoroughly parallel the historical experience, foretold and enunciated through the orality of retelling, and being capable of retelling. Constructed within the formula of the horror franchise, the woman

character endures the horror scene but not the climactic retribution of the floods and death of innocent child workers. The closing scene remains open as the knowing audience *know* that justice has not been served against the historical/oral culprit. And since historical justice has not been served in actual social reality, the horror scene bears the constant threat and possibility of repeating itself in the future.

Similar to horror films, it is the social melodrama genre—with its multicharacter narratives made to represent multiclass, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity positionalities, and allows for the layering of oppression that far outweighs any totalizing mode of redemption in the film's closure—that finds affinity in being able to provide a critique of social and historical realities. Even as social drama films are getting rare in the Philippines, when one does make an appearance, it is with timeliness and veracity of social and historical trajectories that make for compelling affective reception, especially to the social subjects represented in film. Social melodrama films like *Orapronobis, Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag* (Brocka, 1975), and *Manila by Night* (Bernal, 1980) evoke the social through the horror in melodrama. These films are emotively driven by the horrific experience of the characters in their social milieus, to have the affect of drawing pathos from the audience. Horror films do not overtly foreground the obvious in social melodrama films. Instead, they hide the obvious within the experience of the horror, deploring the outright rendering of the reality without the history and return of the time and space of the horror scene.

The film segment is able to engage the audience in a double-speak, able to engage with the morality or lack of it in the complicity of the factory owners unwittingly killing their child laborers. It is able to quote the public oralities of hearsay and other horrific deaths, also involving capitalists and their helpless employees, capitalist greed that has led to massive deaths and dislocations of peoples. Similar to the urban legend and orality of White Lady tales pervasive nationwide, what is enacted in each retelling and reauthoring of the tale is the continuing scene of injustice: just as the White Lady continues to haunt, so do the scenes of violence in horror films. What is foregrounded culturally in both urban legends and popular horror films are the reenactments of the scenes of horror in nation-formation. The scenes have remained unceasingly horrific, escalating and intensifying, though these can also be read as the actual character of the Philippine state or the very modality in which nation-formation is achieved through horror.

The historic horror is the substantiation of experience of Philippine nation-formation. Extrajudicial killings have risen to 1,206 in Arroyo's almost ten years of power,

with 2,059 cases of illegal arrests, and Arroyo publicly acknowledging General Jovito Palparan's contribution to her anti-insurgency program that has resulted in swelling numbers of cases of human rights violations.[19] Since Aquino's takeover of power on June 2011, there have been 67 additional cases of extrajudicial killings and nine cases of enforced disappearances (July-December 2011).[20] The counterinsurgency program of Arroyo, Oplan Bantay Laya (Operation Freedom Watch), has been replaced by Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan (Oplan Traditional Teamwork), with additional emphasis on civil programs as counterinsurgency measures, but nonetheless continues to maintain its rippling effect on human rights violations. Retired General Palparan has evaded arrest after being issued a subpoena for the case of the abduction, rape, and torture of a University of the Philippines student. In August 2014, he was arrested.

It is not difficult to imagine that the state is the biggest impetus for the restaging of the national and local horror scene. With elections held every three years, and the president replaced every six years, the return is always already rendered as a necessary fiction for the reinvention of another faction of the ruling elite, with very little achieved, especially in the more intense implementation of neoliberalism, to genuinely alleviate the poverty conditions of the majority of Filipino citizens. While others have been co-opted, others have queued up for the monthly dole-outs of the CCT, the majority of the poor remains in abject conditions, others have gone to the streets to protest, and others have gone to the countryside to revolt. The experience of the state reification and recuperation of the horror scene is differentially posed by the various recipients.

Commercial cinema succeeds in the box office not just because of stars, high production values, efficiency in churning out production, or formulaic nature of its films but also because of its ability to be used as a filter for individual anxieties of the audience. For this allegorical reading of the horror franchise, I choose to locate the liminal sites of the historic and filmic horror that make possible the links to the simultaneity of experiencing film and reenacting the historic. What the *Shake, Rattle and Roll* franchise allows for is the divergent and relational experiences of the return of the horror scene, evoked in various times and spaces of nation-formation, hoping to capture and recapture the vicissitudes and verisimilitudes of newer social and historic realities. The constant staging of the repetition of the horror scene—the approximation of cultural idioms of the langue of power—allows for the possibility for more articulate and articulate-able enunciations of actual newer social and historic realities. Thus every sequel of *Shake, Rattle and Roll* provides

near-misses and near-hits of social and historic realities, akin to what Augusto Boal has mentioned about theatrical "rehearsals for revolution."[21] As Boal has foregrounded, theater itself, like film in this case, is not revolutionary. Instead, media allows for participants and audiences to reimagine an alternative social and historic reality—the staging of the means and conditions of their freedom.

ENDNOTES

[1] See "*Shake, Rattle and Roll Film* Series (1984-2012)" Video 48 (1 Nov 2014), http://video48.blogspot.com/2009/12/shake-rattle-roll-film-series-1984-2009.html.

[2] See Box Office Mojo and Philippine Entertainment Portal, "All-Time Highest-Grossing Films in the Philippines," "All-Time Highest-Grossing Local Films," and "All-Time Highest-Grossing Metro Metro Manila Film Festival entries," cited in "List of highest-grossing films in the Philippines" Web. 2 Oct. 2012 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_films_in_the_Philippines

[3] For a continuing exploration of genre in horror, see Reynold Humphries, *The American Horror Film: An Introduction*. Ediburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2002.

[4] Jonathan Lake Crane, *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 1994.

[5] Ibid, 17.

[6] Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. London: BFI Publishing, 1992. 5.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), 3.

[9] Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

[10] Ibid, 2.

[11] See Mikhael Bahktin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[12] Jonathan Beller, "Directing the Real: Orapronobis Against Philippine Totalitarianism," in *Acquiring Eyes: Philippine Visuality, Nationalist Struggle, and the World-Media System* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 133-62.

[13] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Philippine Film: 1961-1992," in Nicanor Tiongson, editor, *Encyclopedia of Philippine Arts, Volume on Film* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994), 45. See also the entry on "Horror" in ibid, 90.

[14] Robert Sklar and Charles Musser, eds., *Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 5.

[15] Ibid.

[16] David E. James, Allegories of Cinema (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 4.

[17] See "*Shake, Rattle and Roll,*" http://www.fright.com/edge/ShakeRattleRoll.htm, accessed on 25 Sept 2012.

[18] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

[19] See *2010 Year-end report of the human rights situation in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights, 2011).

[20] See *2011 Year-end report of the human rights situation in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights, 2012).

[21] See Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

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