

Kris Aquino and the/as a Philippine Horror Genre

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This paper discusses Kris Aquino as text vis-à-vis as a unique horror genre, within the context of her title as the “Philippine Box Office Horror Queen.” While foregrounding comprehensive arguments about Aquino’s textuality, the essay also reveals her cinematic history, which has crowned Aquino as the queen of the genre, which the author calls, *pelikula ng lagim* [translation]. This cinematic history is used as a narrative guide in constructing an in-depth scrutiny on the concepts of genre, *lagim*, and the *pelikula ng lagim*. The author strategically plays with these concepts, thus heightening their meaning, while revealing the rich, covert discourse of Aquino as a genre that has launched itself as “a culture of *kasarian*” [literally, gender, but by way of a Filipino root word, *sari*, variety, or more appropriately, polysemy], highlighted in the two franchise *Feng Shui* movies (Roño, 2004, 2014), where she played the heroine. While these movies may be said to have placed the Philippines into the realm of Asian Horror Films, they also present Aquino as a text that is “becoming a complete genre.”

Keywords: *Kris Aquino, tekstualidad, pelikula ng lagim, genre, Feng Shui*

A generic look at Kris Aquino

This essay may begin by setting its key words. First, genre. On one hand, its definition is no secret, although there are new ways of looking at this word, which is closely linked to writing, even the “writing” created through the practice of reading. From an etymological standpoint, it can be seen that the word has its origins in the definition of class, lineage, or style, most often of the forms of communication, usually written. The definition has been both descriptive and definitive since the time of Aristotle, and can be understood as a discipline of letters (most commonly known as literature), yet the public needs to learn the discussion about genre to articulate, in a way, what one feels when watching a tragedy, for example. A tragedy is dreadful, and who wouldn’t be upset by the gush of blood, for example, from Oedipus’s blinded eyes? For Aristotle, bad emotions are awakened, shaken, and eventually purged because tragedy is written as horror. Tragedy is made up of parts—which we will eventually call elements—and how these are constituted results in a singular effect of, for example, pity and fear in

tragedy. This happens because, according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1992), “a literary genre is a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers or audiences from mistaking it for another kind.” (p.90)

However, the characteristics of the kind, group, and style of genre stem from classical rules. It would be good to follow the direction of the discussion in figuring out the genre’s determining characteristic, from which this essay will begin. Because genre is a specific literary type, this essay will argue that what is written down, the *prima materia*—aside from literature, or the actual language of literature—breaks free from its classification and creates its own category. On this occasion, this essay’s objective is to introduce a text—or “extratext,” those cultural discourses that are different from classical texts, according to Isagani R. Cruz (1996)— which will bring the potential proof of what has been written in text (and can be said to be classified), yet also creates, establishes, and supports the genre, not just as a type of narrative with its own rules, but a narrative that spreads an armada of its own laws to overcome on one hand, being part of a culture “as a text” and, on the other hand, to assert that “it itself, is a part of culture” (Cruz, 1996). That’s why it is important to include the word *kasarian* [polysemy] on this occasion. Although the word *kasarian* already has an established definition as the imposed primary difference between the male and the female (which in the age of postfeminism is also a Western and patriarchal imposition), the essay plays with the word to name the *kasarian* that might be connected with the possibility of a genre that has many differences, and which organizes and is ready to disturb whatever typologies have already been established. Here, *kasarian* [gender] will be examined as something that can be found by analyzing genre as reading a Filipino text, which is understood to be truly polysemic and indeterminate in different places and times. It can also be said that the sheer number of readings about this text is proof of the discovery of the genre’s potential to establish a way of writing, a style of writing, and widespread discourse. Michel Foucault’s (Rabinow, 1984) teachings about discursivity or that of the author’s moving beyond the discourse echo this. On this occasion, the singular text, the author, the matrix of the concept we analyze, creates her own genre, writing, a practice of reading, and an understanding of culture and of herself “as culture.”

Kris Aquino is the text, the author or the said culture. Because this is an occasion that looks at *lagim*—what the visual cultures call *katatakutan* or horror—Kris Aquino’s title as the acclaimed queen of horror will be examined, which becomes more interesting when the translated word *lagim*, the second key word to be defined, is read. Many online news, e.g. an article coming from the “Kapamilya” network (or “family member”, the

marketing branding of Aquino's network, which denotes its community of loyal viewers), name Kris Aquino with this complete moniker: "Philippine Box Office Horror Queen." Proof of this claim to fame are her two "landmark box office scare flicks," *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2004) and *Sukob* (Director, 2006), as reported in the Facebook Account of ABS-CBN Film Productions or Star Cinema (2010). In the same December 17, 2010 press release, the company also promoted Kris Aquino's return to the horror genre, by way of the movie *Dalaw* (Santos, 2010), an entry to the Metro Manila Film festival, which always features horror films. It would be good to examine how the article examines the horrific content of Aquino's films. The film's material supports the actress's "Philippine Box Office Horror Queen" moniker, even her being a representation and enactment of *lagim*:

In *Feng Shui*, Kris portrayed a wife and mother who was seduced by wealth, but in the end paid the price when she was haunted by grim misfortunes. In *Sukob*, she played a newlywed who terrifyingly eluded the horrors brought about by her cursed wedding. Now in *Dalaw*, Kris faces the challenge of giving life to a very complex persona. [Interview with Aquino] "I play Stella who was a widow and then remarried. This is [where] the complication starts. Stella of *Dalaw* has a deeper approach as far as the woman's characterization is concerned." (ABS-CBN Film Productions Inc., par. 3)

The *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (Almario, 2010) defines *lagim* as "the highest level of fear" (p. 1209), while P. Juan de Noceda and P. Pedro de Sanlucar's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* (1860/2013), which was republished and translated into Filipino by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, defines it in this manner: "experiencing fear, as one is in a higher place" (p.268). In the explanation from *Sinaunang Tagalog* [Early Tagalog] (Sanlucar, 2013), the placement of affixes and repetition turns the word into a state of mind, for example, *walang kinalalagiman* (fears nothing), or a quality, such as *kalagim-lagim*, horrific. The emergence of "fear" in the two definitions pushes for a continued analysis of this word, especially since the vocabulary of film outfit's press release also suggest connotations of *lagim* like "undesirable feelings, a result of believing that a person or thing is dangerous; or that which usually causes pain or anxiety in the mind... (and) a feeling of trepidation about a thing's possible outcome, or about a person's safety or condition" (Almario, 2010, p. 1209), even the "fearfulness (weakness) of spirit in order to fight or enter into an activity that is assumed to be dangerous" (p. 1209). If these definitions presently constitute—and

might even influence—our native idea—of fear and horror, these can also give form to the genre where Aquino is said to reign as queen, in her role as “a wife and mother who was seduced by wealth, haunted by grim misfortunes” (ABS-CBN Film Productions, 2010, par. 3) or “a newlywed who terrifyingly eluded the horrors brought about by her cursed wedding” (par. 3), which is positioned in the meaningful space of fear and horror. In these first parts of the essay, we can observe a typology of *lagim* in Philippine visual culture that is being currently established (meaning, perpetrated) by Kris Aquino, the Philippine Box Office Horror Queen.

But we are just at the beginning of this paper’s analysis. If we delve into Foucault’s (2010) explanation, we will go beyond making sense to “genre” and “*lagim*”/“the horror genre” in the Philippines. As ideas, the words may be contained in quotation marks in order for us to take another look—as in *epoche*—at their *kasarian*. At first glance, the analysis of *lagim* can be rooted in the visual culture of Hollywood horror films, which was once tackled by Bliss Cua Lum (2011) as a product of “generic appropriation and exchange” (p. 193), and was illustrated by Wood (1985) as the staging of the “return of the repressed” (p. 195). As a branch of an imported type of visual culture, the Philippine horror genre as an awakening and imagination of fear surely has roots in the tradition of ghosts or what Wood terms the return of the “monster,” which embodies all that is “repressed” or has been rejected by culture. Jason Zinoman (2011) in *The New York Times Sunday Review*, once described Nichols’s seminal text “An Introduction to the American Horror Film” as the “‘It’s alive!’ moment” in horror studies, and at the heart of it is the articulation of American horror films as an *exposé* of everything that embodied forms of sexuality that are “inimical to the status quo” (p. 195). While almost all the aspects that Wood (1995) mentioned and valued in the American horror film can also be observed in Philippine horror movies, most especially the “severe repression of female sexuality/creativity; the attribution to the female of passivity, her preparation for her subordinated and dependent role in our culture” (p. 198), the most essential insight we can infer from our review of Hollywood’s influence on Philippine *pelikula ng lagim* (horror films) is the noticeable existence of a kind of otherness in the structure of consciousness that Wood described as “(c)losely linked to the concept of repression—indeed inseparable from it... another concept necessary to an understanding of ideology on which psychoanalysis throws much light” (p.199). *Halimaw* or monsters can also be seen in *pelikula ng lagim* as hauntings—although this writer is not too comfortable with the use of this term—which for Wood symbolizes everything rejected and hidden, and for this reason, considered “simply evil” because “what is repressed (in

the individual, in the culture), must always return as a threat, perceived by consciousness as ugly, terrible, obscene” (p. 215).

It will not come as a surprise that Kris Aquino, the main female persona in her horror films and in other aforementioned “horrific” films, may be seen as the “rejected” or repressed using Woods’s lens. For example, in her first film *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2004), she represented middle-class women with the simple dream of a comfortable life for their family. This is her ordinary normality beginning, a necessary part of any horror movie that Wood (1979) criticized: “The definition of normality in horror film is in general boringly constant: the heterosexual monogamous couple, the family, and the social institutions (police, church, armed forces) that support them.” (p. 208) However, she will be haunted and disturbed by all the luck she receives, after she is chosen to own a *bagua*, a charmed mirror from Chinese culture and Taoist belief. One by one, the loved ones of Aquino’s character die, and the next person she sees in the center of the charm is herself (as fated). The gruesome deaths follow each of the person’s year of birth based on the Chinese zodiac. The movie *Feng Shui* is the primary text that will be discussed, although the different parts of analysis will need to be intertextual. However, in just this movie, it can be seen that Aquino’s figure, as a symbol of the othered gender (*kasarian*), unravels various definitions of gender, most of which are classified as *signifié*, in accordance with the earlier explanation. Pacing Wood, Aquino’s performance, as a female persona shaped by Hollywood, is a type of *lagim* that engenders the hidden, the rejected, the many different versions of “other” that multiply as they are all paradoxically staged in an othered space—the Philippines—which is part of the existing and established “global south”—the First World’s other—and by economic standards, soaring, developing. In her films, where she is set to uphold her queenly regime, she follows the primary conventions of the horror movie genre, which Bill Nichols (1985) calls the “royal road to the repressed dimensions of contemporary society” (p. 195). Through horror, she also somehow embodies both fame and the “most disreputable of Hollywood genres” (Wood, 1995, p. 202), pacing Wood, while in her own way, as a popular cultural figure, establishing herself as a genre, a form of writing or literature which is not just a representation of the nation’s unconscious, but the nation itself, while she is being viewed, patronized, and discoursed in the public sphere (if we think about it, Filipinos are more fond of melodramas, but this is a different story).

But the reading may also be reversed in order to include the audience. Aquino’s popularity is strange for people who enter cinemas or watch films in order to be entertained. Consider how her films continue to dominate the box office. Why are the masses fascinated with her? A more appropriate

question might be, why does her brand of fear and horror sell? We can examine the word *palabas*, performance, as from the start, Aquino herself has been a performance. In one instance, Doreen Gamboa Fernandez (1996), Aquino's own teacher and thesis mentor at the Ateneo de Manila University, says that the word *palabas* has two meanings. She says: "*Palabas*—indeed it all is—performance, show, entertainment, fun. *Palabas*—outward it also is: people-based and community oriented" (p. viii). The two definitions of the word may be used as perspectives on how she is seen by viewers. As performance or spectacle, Aquino embodies, on a primary level, how she has become an object of entertainment. As an object of entertainment, she is seen as a meaningful image, an image related to what Guy Debord (1994) called the spectacle, which should not just be remembered as "mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies." (p.7) While she performs horror movie roles, incites terror, and provides entertainment through her fear, she provides brief moments of entertainment, and is upheld as an embodiment of horror that can be viewed in movies. Her movies are anticipated and patronized in cinemas because she celebrates everything about victims and the othered who are wretched yet beloved by the masses. However, it is indeed true that *palabas* is very much connected to people, which is why Debord also opines that "the spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification" (p. 7). So the discussion goes onto the second level of Aquino's being a spectacle as a discourse of the people who consume her image of horror. After she is watched and made a subject of entertainment, she becomes a discourse, while she is talked about, covered in the news, or gazed at. Some cursory but significant commentaries from fellow theorists shed light on the meaningful reasons behind Aquino's strong following. One major theme emerges: Aquino embodies beloved disgust. Aquino is the site of various contradictions: she is a powerful person being stripped of power, an elite proletarian, and in the case of the movie *Feng Shui*, a rich person consumed by ill luck. In watching Aquino as well as *Feng Shui*, the primary image seems to transform into a paradoxical dramaturgy, for instance, of a desire to rise from poverty but also of rejecting the responsibilities that come with freedom from it. One may just review the occasional Social Weather Stations survey about people's self-rated poverty in different periods of time. It is as if there is no freedom, and everything is a mere spectacle, while everyone is brought along to *daang matuwid*, the righteous path.

A trace of horror may be seen because of the Filipino definition of these types of readings of Aquino, the daughter of one who is perceived as a national hero and a former president swept to power by a revolution, and the sister of another president who aspired to be a symbol of reform

after yet another corrupt regime. From beginning to end, Kris Aquino is the personification of all of the kinds of *lagim* that we can think of in today's contemporary culture, a counterpoint to everything that her surname symbolizes. She is truly different from any of her relatives. According to Roland B. Tolentino (2000), she is a "relic of a family with political and economic power, how we perceive the politics of showbiz and the showbiz of politics. Politics and showbiz are two of the most effective ways to achieve the dream of mobility" (p. 111). What Tolentino says is an effective summary of Aquino's history, which distinguishes, in a way, her persona as a primary television and movie actress, even in the political realm in which her family is immersed. However, as a text that is read, Aquino rejects being placed in what Tolentino calls mobility, which is why this paper is now laying down the complicated process by which she produces genre—first, the genre of *lagim*, second, the genre of Kris Aquino's self, which has already been said to horrify and shake the established ways of measuring extratexts, and thus, definitely needs to be examined. We cannot help but remember, then, a disturbing episode in the life of a young Aquino, when she was just on the rise, and looking for, as the saying goes, her niche in the world of showbiz. She sang in *The Sharon Cuneta Show*, where she did not hit a single note, and afterwards was interviewed and praised by the host, the widely-known "Megastar." A few questions were asked before the conversation ended: when the conversation turned to her dreams of becoming a celebrity, Aquino said without hesitation that she longed for the day when her mother, who was then in power, would allow her to act in films. After this, she asked Cuneta for advice. Cuneta was her idol, she said, so an advice coming from her would be important for Aquino. What is "disturbing" here, especially in the world of television, is how, as the new face of democratized television after the revolution, Aquino symbolically forces her power in the presence of Cuneta, who is part of the old society of broadcasting, as well as a member of an old political order in Greater Manila. Aquino disturbingly took what we call Cuneta's discourse of power (in the forms of questioning, hosting, and providing viewers with entertainment) so that she could establish herself, as in various positions, in the world of showbiz.

This is why it seems like Kris Aquino, as a text, becomes even more interesting when her status as the Philippine Box Office Horror Queen is tackled. She not only embodies what Cua Lim (2011) calls the "ghostliness of the genre" (p. 190) of horror movies (especially as a type of Asian Horror Film) but from the start, she herself, as a meaningful text, personifies the horror of the places that she has engaged and continues to engage. And where else does she exceedingly emphasize her being horrifying, if not in *Feng Shui*? Here, she truly individualizes the trademark, after trying

different types of movies in the Philippines and determining—according to her own statement—her “integrity” and “strong credibility” (ABS-CBN Film Productions, Inc., 2010, par. 5) as an actress of horror films, aside from being a “TV host, movie star and product endorser” (par. 5). Before Feng Shui, and before becoming the queen of horror, Aquino first “horrified” the masses with her famous and cringe-inducing mechanical acting and lack of comedic timing with her launch in the film *Pido Dida* (Cruz 1990), together with the late actor Rene Requeistas. For Tolentino (2000), this hilarious film served to legitimize Aquino as a “star” although this was a “movie that would simply remind the collective consciousness that it was a box office hit when it was released, and that Kris had no other proof to show that she was a movie star.” (p. 115). The commentary is harsh, yet it was also purposely impatient, because the horror of Kris Aquino’s celebrity was not quite completely understood, and it is true that building her image can be called the “most orchestrated planning and implementation that the Cory (Aquino) administration, and Mother Lily Monteverde, producer of Regal Films, had done” (p. 115). The truth is that Aquino was given many other opportunities, including her initiation into the genre of horror, the “Yaya” episode in *Shake, Rattle and Roll 2* (Gallaga & Reyes, 1991), the oldest horror film franchise in the country. She horrified viewers in “Yaya” while trying to keep her baby safe from the haunting *yaya* [nanny] using her hysterical scream and surprised expression. These serve as her trademark in the horrific massacre films of the mid-90s movies based on true stories of forced entry and murder during those times.

Now, with the emergence of the process of Aquino’s appropriation of horror in her acting, it can be seen that her definition of *lagim* plays between forgettable acting performance (it might have been said before that she should have remained a talk show host, but this label might be rescinded if we consider how she hosts a program) and eventually, hysteria and violent shock. A lot of people are probably horrified by her because as a “tragedy,” according to Tolentino’s (2000) explanation, there can be no expected “contribution” from Aquino as a “product that was purposely formed to make money.” (p. 115). Yet Aquino’s tragic effect will continue, especially with her being a horror actress, which, when massacre films came, will be space of ambiguity for the “over-acting,” “self-centered,” and “patron of the lower and middle class which is always placed in disadvantageous poverty” (p. 121). In the movies *The Elsa Castillo Story: The Truth* (Guillen, 1994) and *Myra Diones Story: Lord, have Mercy* (Caparas, 1994), Aquino presents the woman who has been defiled, murdered, and whose body was even dismembered, in the case of the first aforementioned movie. After receiving multiple stab wounds from assailants who robbed her family, Diones was

the only victim who miraculously survived. As Elsa and Myrna, Aquino's screaming and fighting reverberates with the horror the people experienced during the time when they were frightened by consecutive massacres. But before these two movies, Aquino had already begun another definition of her *lagim*—the horror of cruel urbanization in the time of fenced subdivisions in *The Visconde Massacre Story: God Help Us!* (Caparas, 1993). Here she played the role of the slain teenager Carmela Vizconde. Aside from the hysteria, it can be said that there is another word that truly illustrates Aquino's horrific effect during this time of Aquino's career as an actress, and eventually, as the "Massacre Queen": scandalous, which not only pertains to the public alarm a single person can cause, but also refers to the seemingly planned terror and fear experienced by the public because of these events. The God Help Us! in the title is a sign to arouse viewers' feelings, after watching news reports about the death of the mother and her daughters in Parañaque. In this Aquino film (and most likely, even in *Elsa Castillo* and *Myrna Diones*), they let themselves be scandalized by violence and the absurd guts, while watching, for example, Carmela attempting to fight the assailant who defiled her purity and killed her afterwards. The people were apprehensive then. The fear increases in the tragic depictions of horrific crimes where, even until now, the perpetrators remain unknown. Her mother's presidency was over by this period, yet the country was still trying to rise from numerous crises, such as the lack of electricity (which was why people went to malls and watched movies). Yet the public sphere was extremely horrified by the problem of public safety, and perhaps it became a role for Aquino to give voice (shrilly, in a voice that could never be proper) to masses' extreme fear.

Yet Aquino would become busy with proving that she still had hope. She did not fail. Along with her shimmering ascent in the space of television as a talk show host and in a public service program where she helped awaken and horrify government officials who were sleeping on the job, her "artistry" in the *The Fatima Buen Story* (O'Hara, 1994) was also noticed. This movie is the story of a woman who descended into a life of crime—a scandalous role, in fact, one that certainly horrified her political image (however, when she accepted roles in massacre films, she had already surrendered her security from being ravished). From being the focus of criminal violence, she achieved a contrary spirit in this movie, and was recognized by the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, through a nomination in the Best Actress category for that year. She has horrified popular culture at this stage because she shows her variegation, her *kasarian*, in the spaces of entertainment where she sought to establish herself. *Fatima Buen* is a monument to Aquino's horrification, because in this movie, she entered

into a type of internal definition of horror, an inward diligence for whatever her earlier dissemination or distribution as a female figure might encounter. As Fatima Buena, she internalized the character of a female criminal who brings only horror to Filipinos society. She tried to be righteous and proper, yet eventually ended up at a correctional facility after a long period of hiding. While still embodying the scandal, the alarmingly unacceptable status in life, the *lagim* in this period of Aquino as an artist—and as a text—rests on a seemingly internalized learning of the creation, the separation of self, and the forming of a persona that is separate from herself, that only hears its own screams and nasal tones—which, if carefully listened to, could be a voice against all of the structural horror that a democratized government cannot control. Yet no one can be sure. And Aquino is really proud of this film, according to her interview with Butch Francisco (2002): “[Question: Film projects she’s proudest of]—‘Fatima Buen. Watching it again after almost a decade, I said to myself, ‘Well, not bad’” (par. 9). Truthfully, it is debatable whether or not Aquino has learned, especially at present, to act the character, and not as herself. Yet this reading believes that aside from following the virtues of horror, her supposed “beginner” stance on the concept of “horror” (Que horror!) would mean nothing and would have no effect, if she doesn’t learn, even a little, the important skill of internalization, which is one stage in the exercise of acting. Yes, this is a proposal, in the name of doing an archaeology of Aquino’s concept of *lagim*, so that the idea that she embodies may be told.

Aquino would continue to act in movies and even enter into other genres, such as comedy, which inaugurated her career. This is actually ironic, because if the classic definition of comedy is examined, its turn to distortion will be emphasized, which she may also embody, aside from tragic horror. She also entered the *kilig* (romantic excitement) world of romance, and even the wonder of the fantastic. A few records of her movies—most often called a filmography—may all be viewed as primary texts, and anyone would be puzzled by the *kasarian* of the direction of her acting, which almost cannot be halted. This is extremely different from what can be seen in the record of her television appearances, which only flow in three directions—acting (or attempting to act), hosting, and product endorsement. Not all artists have been given chances like Aquino’s, and most likely, Tolentino’s (2000) initial assessment of her is correct. Yet in this paper’s reading, this is a part of Aquino’s horriification as an artist in the whole Philippine showbiz system. She benefitted from her power and she was told to do / was able to do many things, and this no longer needs to be questioned. This *kasarian* of her oeuvre can be felt by looking at the years when she was just starting, before 2004, the year she starred in *Feng Shui*. From 1990, in a span of approximately

10 years, Aquino was only absent from creating movies for around three years. There were years when she only made three movies, and there were years when she doubled this figure, such as in 1994, when she made six. Her slowest production is one per year (1995, 1998, 2000). Her most fruitful year was 2002, when organizations, including Manunuri, recognized her performance as an often silenced and sidelined Chinese Filipino woman—which was very cruel, if you think about it, for her, who seemingly has no control and acts hysterically—in the first movie of the *Mano Po* franchise. Aside from the aforementioned horror and crime films, she also had dramatic movies [*Pangako ng Puso* (1990), *Bakit pa Kita Minahal* (1994), *The Fatima Buen Story* (1994), *Saan Ako Nagkamali* (1995) *Mano Po* series (2002, 2003)]; action [*Ang Siga at Ang Sosyal* (1991), *Magic to Win 5* (1991), *Nandito Ako* (1993), *Geron Olivar* (1993), *You and Me Against the World* (2003)]; fantasy [*Tasya Fantasya* (1994), *Hiwaga ng Panday* (1998)] and some cameo appearances, where she played herself or a composite of herself [*Eto Na Naman Ako* (2000), *Jologs* (2002) *Dekada 70* (2002)]. The caliber of her acting is not being discussed here. This paper simply wants to reveal Aquino’s implied horrification of the golden screen with this data: Aside from moving to and fro and conquering almost all genres, Aquino was given not a few chances to play the role of herself where she is a natural, of course, and which almost falls under the process of metafiction. For example, look at the description on the Lopezlink.ph release written by Katherine Solis (2013) about her: “her versatility as an actress knows no boundaries” (par. 3). There’s a telling temptation in recalling the memory of the biblical “I am legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9), when Christ asked the “evil spirits” what its name was, how it was known. In this fundamental assessment before we look at *Feng Shui*, we can see that the fulfillment of her dream to become an actress turned her person into a “legion.” This legion is the *lagim* that will become Aquino’s virtue when she becomes the genre itself—no longer just an actress that is slated to be formed by gender and the “gendering” of the genre given to her by the machinery of the Filipino film industry.

Lagim in Feng Shui

After the meticulous conceptualization, which was accompanied by the need to follow Kris Aquino’s filmography, what does genre now mean, and how can it help in establishing another new idea of the genre itself approaching Aquino and her *pelikula ng lagim* as a text? What I propose is that Aquino, as an actress and as a text, embodies the richness of meaning which cannot simply be established by the “regulative and prescriptive” characteristics of the classical genre theory, which is “based upon certain fixed assumptions about psychological and social differentiation” (Fowler,

1982, p. 82), even the modern theory of genre which “tends to be purely descriptive, and to avoid any overt assumptions about generic hierarchies” (p. 82). At a time when Kris Aquino reigned as a queen, at a time when she was called the “Queen of All Media” for her far-reaching presence in all mass communication, she emerged as a sign of *lagim* in gambling on and establishing the conventions of a showbiz career. It is true that her being an Aquino played a huge role, on one hand, especially since the “contribution” of her parents to the return and re-establishment of Philippine democracy cannot be erased from collective memory. Yet being the counterpoint to all regulations, being a rebel, in short, is how Aquino defines all of this. Aquino admits that for example, her fundamental *hamartia* or fault is her love life, which everyone knows about because of her clear revelations to the public about this and her signature tactlessness. Even if Aquino keeps her mouth shut, she is still saying something, and saying certainly something about herself. This is why Aquino is truly a text that has transformed herself into a genre; she herself, or her presence, discourses on how she is discourses in the public sphere. From setting the discourse (with the way of writing, for example), Aquino-as-text sets the genre of the methods of “writing” about her, in every opportunity of story and history, and making meaning. Aquino is a genre of herself, a genre that horrifies the definitions that have been established for her, the public, the critics, the discourse in general. Before reinforcing this point, the subject of this explanation may now be followed.

How is *Feng Shui*, the monument of Aquino as the Philippine Box Office Queen, part of the discourse, first of all, of *lagim*? We should remember that first, this movie is important because this, at present, can be said to be the peak of Aquino’s career and textuality. Let’s not also fail to mention the Filipino Academy and Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS) Best Actress nomination she received for her role as Joyce Ramirez, a middle-class woman engrossed in her real estate career while her husband cheats on her. If we return to Nichols (1985) in the first section of this explanation, all of the figures that have been rejected and sidelined coverage in the character of Aquino-as-Joy-Ramirez, which always has the potential to return/haunt the society that has limited her for being a part of the othered gender, and because of this has become a part of the *kasarian* that has negative value. Joy Ramirez is one of Aquino’s chapters in continuing to discover films to horrify viewers, and to rise above, again and again, all possibilities in the horizons of possibility. This is probably why her new moniker is apt. The word “possibilities” in the previous sentence, first of all, has to do with all the material riches that Joy Ramirez wanted, which, on one hand, is symptomatic of the meaningful story that Aquino wishes to embody and seize as a text. While Aquino’s performance horrifies people who are

discouraging about greed—using the concept of luck—she also seizes, as a text, all of the negative concepts or beliefs, such as “all good luck come with bad luck,” or “be careful of what your wish for” to use all these as legion of *lagim* in a society of viewers who are mostly struggling and poor. This, in this case, is not immediately apparent if the analysis is merely based on the spectacle of “fantasy production.” Yes, there is no joy in the family and professional life of Joy Ramirez, no dimension, like the identical two-story houses in their subdivision. No life, in that sense. When she picked up the bagua, she saw herself in it, as the luckily chosen, as its new owner who would receive all of the benefits that it would bring. It can be said that this situation is a moment of recognition of her erased potential as a woman in that situation. Yet gender also dictates that when she looks at the mirror in the center of the *bagua*, she needs to sacrifice her loved ones, who serve as payback for her continued reception of good luck. She needs to be alone. Or solitary, as the so-called queen, of this horror genre, a significant turn for Aquino. This truth is horrifying, and while what she sees in the mirror is slowly being revealed to viewers, including her own death, Aquino-as-text also warns with the lesson of recognizing the folly of materialism, which is not only brought about by her gaze, but by everyone’s gaze—even if they’re just watching inside a cinema.

Yet Nichols (1979) said in the discourse, when he stressed the importance of horror movies from the ‘30s in America, that “horror is always foreign” (p. 215), so that gazing into the *bagua*’s mirror signals an extreme anxiety effect, if we talk about the Aquino text as a discourse of ethnicity, as well, and the othering this includes. Every gaze into the mirror is identification, a recognition of the other, of the othered, of “something that is not you.” This always contains a shock that cannot be immediately understood. But the horror is always foreign here has an extreme effect, if we keep in mind *Feng Shui*’s contribution, as a Filipino reply, in those days, to the emerging “Asian Horror Film” genre, which has slowly disturbed Hollywood. This trend, according to Cua Lim (2011), enables the “deracination” of Asian films, which the whole world has started to support by buying the rights to create Hollywood versions. Through the process of translation, the material is also colonized using “refamiliarization” (p. 191). Written (with Roy Iglesias) and directed by Chito Roño, *Feng Shui* was released in 2004, one year after movies like the Japanese Takauhi Shimizu’s *Ju-On: The Grudge* and the Korean Kim Hee-won’s *A Tale of Two Sisters* became famous. It is said that the Roño film made over P100 million, but its most important contribution was a meaningful Chinese-turn, a Filipino response, not only to the rise of the regional genre of horror, but also to the common view of Filipino culture as more Western than Eastern or Oriental. This is an

important topic, first, because Aquino herself has Chinese blood, and whenever her middle name Cojuangco is involved, you may expect the weight of its political, feudal connotations, which only further horrify the concept of *lagim* that Aquino embodies. While the genuine distribution of their Hacienda Luisita land in Tarlac under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program is still being problematized, *Feng Shui* seemingly mutes the effect of Aquino's Chineseness, probably because of its traitorous tyrannical symbol (on one hand, longstanding ethnic discrimination, and on the other hand, political-economic control), which grows increasingly heavy because one month before the movie was released, the Hacienda Luista massacre, which claimed the lives of some locals, happened. *Feng Shui*, which also embodies the "generic repetition" of ghostly appearances in horror movies (Cua Lim, 2011, p. 193), is a story of the haunting of Lotus Feet, a Chinese woman who was left by her family when they joined the evacuation of Sun Yat Sen's forces to Taiwan during the revolution. Lotus Feet was left behind because her feet had worn restrictive shoes since childhood. Because of this, she was deemed a burden because she could not run or walk fast. She couldn't do anything when enemy forces attacked their mansion. Hugging the bagua, she cursed everyone who witnessed her being murdered and burnt. Under mysterious circumstances, her curse reached the Philippines, which Sun Yat Sen tried to help during the revolutionary period, according to the annals of history.

The *bagua* came to the Philippines and fell into the hands of Aquino-as-Joy-Ramirez, and there would be a particularity in the way it would dole out blessings and claim lives, in the fictional time of the heroine in *Feng Shui*. Yet overall, *Feng Shui* embodies the synecdoche of the *bagua*, which stands for all the possible imaginative stereotypes about the Chinese in the country, a figure from our history that we learned to reject because of the powerful wave of colonization. What *Feng Shui* did, then, is a courageous return to our Asian roots, although it is clear that it still situates, as a topic of fear, Chinese ethnicity, in the accustomed space of the marginal and othered. It doesn't even have the slightest pretense to make what Caroline Hau (2014) calls the "Chinese Question" understood. For the mass of moviegoers, it allows the reflection of the tired Chinese difference and horror, which haunts Aquino's person, even though she is being watched as Joy Ramirez, who has been stripped of ethnicity, homogenized, and made to be a typical middle-class Filipino. Aquino's parents were Filipino heroes, and in their own discourse, the Chinese ethnicity (especially of the mother, Cory), remains mute, because their hagiography is full of legends. Aquino horrifies this silencing of this discourse on her family by letting/freeing the ghost (literally, in the movie, figuratively, in real life) of being-Chinese, which only

she can do. When Aquino looked into the bagua, she saw not only blessings, but a curse on an aspect of herself that even history has silenced. If in the olden times the Chinese—whether *Sangley* or *Intsik*—were seen as pests, because they brought illnesses, etc. (this despite our vigorous trade with them over a long period of time), there are different forms of othering that our consciousness defines about the Chinese or Chinese surnames, which may represent “riches” with the accompanying “poverty,” especially if the conversation is about the connection between lord/master/capitalist and worker/laborer/employee. In this conceptualization, it is like Lotus Feet’s approaching steps growing heavy/becoming heavier when set beside the ghost that Hacienda Luisita caused for the Aquinos. The said “ghost,” the surname Cojuangco, which has seemingly been covered by Aquino’s change of surnames because of marriage and other attempts to find love, continues to engender meaning because of the importance it shows as a Chinese surname, a sign of dominance in business, and even in national politics. This is probably silenced because the sign of “Aquino” is needed, whose meaning would remain purely in the Filipino consciousness. Yet in a sense, “Conjuangco” is a horrifying bagua in Aquino’s hands, as Joy Ramirez, merely a Filipino, no more, no less.

Meanwhile, on another level, the meaning of being Chinese has been systematically silenced in *Feng Shui*. It can be said that as a paradoxical entry into Chinese culture, and agreeing, at last, to its presence in the Filipino system of meaning, it horrifies a fundamental basis of feng shui, an antique Chinese science which aims to spread the balance of energy and maintain the flow of health and luck. Aquino’s film brings chaos the Chinese zodiac into a nightmare to increase the meanings it symbolizes, aside from the human characteristics that are usually understood to be connected to each sign. As Joy Ramirez, just another Filipino who seems to have middle-class slips in being fond of Chinese superstition (remember that she also wears charm beads—probably brought about by her wish to sell a lot of real estate), the image of the bagua, as a feng shui object, even though it can be said that this is common exoticism, is an apt introduction to her—and to all. Yet the introduction ended when she placed the bagua on her door. Its miraculous potential ended when its seemingly diabolical aspect is tackled, which is actually the opposite of the meaning where the bagua comes from (and this cannot be said to be an imbalance of yin and yang, which is at the heart of feng shui). The labeling of others as evil—and in the film’s discourse, “misfortune”—is a clear judgment of others, of difference, and yet as another form of *lagim*, this can be read as an introduction to the bagua’s hybridity before it entered—looked carefully—into *Feng Shui*’s Filipino discourse. The movie, even though it implements Orientalism which

sports fixed categories and assumptions, is also a clash of two cultures with a long history, yet their combination underwent, and continues to undergo, a violent merging. This is what can be noticed at the start of the movie, where there is a montage of city scenes that stage the lucky decorations that are being sold in Binondo, which are placed beside—and do not equal—the Christian images that are put on the altars/dashboards of taxis and passenger jeepneys. The merging-metamorphosis of these symbols is purposely violent, like the death foretold by the Chinese zodiac signs in the movie where it does not think twice in claiming lives, while luck continues to enter Joy Ramirez's life (will its meaning ever die?). Yet this contains the *lagim* that Aquino herself embodies, which has already been staged as a text that also silences the Chinese discourse. However, this ghost keeps on returning, because of the existence of cruelty and death inside the film. The deaths continue to happen, as well as the rising of the ghost of Lotus Feet, the betrayed and abandoned figure, a synecdoche of the whole Chinese culture which has shaken the system of meaning of films that have dreamt of becoming a canonical Philippine Asian Horror Film. On one hand: These distortions of/brought by the Chinese zodiac can be read as a haunting of the Chinese culture which eventually became a part of our own culture; the Filipino consciousness has long been conditioned to believe in Western categories (like the Western zodiac). The horrification being mentioned may also be because of the effectiveness of the horror of "Asianization," which takes and murders the standardized definitions of colonization and globalization; these are probably the requirements in order to be conquered again, to return to becoming Asian (and its metonymy of being Chinese) in the Philippines. This is why the hanging of the bagua in this movie has a special significance.

Lotus Feet's steps are small, yet no one could prevent her from reaching the Philippines, from giving Filipinos a taste of her horror. In this multicultural society, Aquino is slowly staged as she gave birth to the concept of *lagim* in current Filipino films, a horror that could be given meaning as the endurance of the othered gender, and because of this, the spread of the *kasarian* that might fight against these restrictions. Yet there is no wish to make Aquino a saint here, although her text has a seemingly subversive form. At the end of the first franchise of *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2004) the family, friends and other people around Joy Ramirez died, and in the end, Aquino remained—and was staged—as the only embodiment of triumph amid all the horror. It seems like she emphasizes this, because her text, like her, also internalizes her constant reference to herself, and being alone and singular. In the second franchise of *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2014) which is also part of the Metro Manila Film Festival, Lotus Feet returns to haunt Joy Ramirez, and the

movie brings back the previous owner of the bagua, the ambitious and greedy Lily Mendoza (Cherry Pie Pichache), who is also apparently haunted. The new haunting is because the *bagua* has chosen another owner—said to be a new chapter in completing the cycle of claiming lives based on the Chinese zodiac. The curse of the bagua was almost broken when it was received by Hsiu Lao (Jonee Gamboa), a recurring character, Tao priest, and feng shui expert. However, Lotus Feet's sibling, from China, ordered the theft of the bagua, and she went to the Philippines to “take back” the bagua, pray over it, bring peace to the ghost's soul and return it to their own country, where it would be laid to rest among their relatives. However, the thief, Lester Añonuevo (Coco Martin), accidentally peeked at the bagua. According to the set pattern, the bagua would follow Lester through his street-smart, and *barong-barong* [shanty] life, and what was meant to happen would happen. At the start of the movie, actually, Aquino's sole specter is her credit as co-producer—said to be a significant turn because she was able to reach the apex of establishing the horror of *Feng Shui*. Yet she is connected to the bagua's new story, which isn't really new; it only repeats what was already fulfilled by the first franchise, and underlines her important role as the story's “savior.” But notice that the bagua has changed hands, from Lily, who, like her, has a comfortable life: Lester is a teenage boy who lives by stealing, whose house isn't even on the ground (his house, where he lives with his drunkard mother, stands on top of a canal) and whose sole possession is a mortgaged motorcycle which was almost taken from him, had he not been saved by the bagua's “luck.”

The bagua is a horrific representation in the urban poor home of Lester and his mother, played by Carmi Martin. It is horror that seems to be shrugged off, even though Martin's character gives a sharp response when her wondering son asks her why the bagua is hanging on their door. “Well, I don't know. Why should I put it there, am I Chinese?” Although she knows what the bagua brings, and in this situation, her son receives some luck, they look curiously at the bagua, and the audience knows their glances will end. The quote is sharp because it examines the movie's argument about the seemingly slippery connection and combination of cultures, which has already been shown to be savage. And because this is the quality of their life, the wrong configuration, the presence of a bringer-of-luck, and even its meaning in their poverty-stricken context are clear to them. At present, it is hard to determine what the real meaning of the spread of horror in the new *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2014) is in this poor, crime-ridden area. It can be supposed that it aims to emphasize the presence of different forms of othering, aside from the differentiation established by race or ethnicity, and being outside the safe haven of high rise and concrete walls of homogenized

subdivisions. Most likely, the movie chose to tackle class issues, and this can be seen in the sudden mobility that the bagua gave Lester, from the sudden reappearance of his father, who had not made his presence felt since he traveled abroad as an OFW, to their moving to an extravagant house, in a fenced and elegant subdivision. This film's legion of *lagim* has financial support—and a starring turn—from Aquino, which simultaneously attacks the aforementioned issues. It seems like it also allows the masses to be haunted, probably for them to be perturbed, especially those who support and establish oppressive social structures, which become the reason for the increased destitution of many, like Lester's family. Yet this is not what we will see happening, especially if we look back, and closely read the constant advice of the bagua's owners, whenever they can no longer take the lives it claims. "Reject the luck," Joy Ramirez will say this when she meets Lester, which was also what Hsui Liao said, as a form of help: Lily had the same advice, but only because she wanted to reclaim the bagua. There is a huge difference between Joy and Lily, if we talk about the meaning of their utterance off "Reject the luck." Both Joy and Lily have the capability to continue with their lives, which is clear in the backstory. This is the gift of their class. There is a *kasarian* to their choices, for their possibilities are vast. In the end, a drained Lester admits his weakness, as a member of the lower class (Coco Martin is successful here: his character, and his own history, is a story of rising from poverty; he is like Nora Aunor, who shares his skin color). The bagua took his father and mother, and because his progress was very swift, he wasn't able to do anything but be dazed by the moral dilemma, while facing the need to destroy the bagua in Hsui Lao's Taoist temple. The lack of safety in the place of illegal settlers emphasizes his placelessness in those moments of confusion. In this movie, those from illegal settlements have no moral consciousness, unlike Aquino-as-Joy Ramirez who has been repeatedly burned by the tragedy in her life. Meanwhile, Lily is a caricature of greed, which isn't appropriate for a moral reading.

It would be good, on this occasion, to discourse on luck as the only one which provides everyone's equality. On one hand, everyone dreams of being lucky, a state of life where good fortune enters bountifully, fulfillingly, and overwhelmingly, yet in this great challenge, the poor feel weakness, which can be said to be a critique of class, where it cannot be determined whether Aquino's horror as a text is being opposed. When she sees Lester destroying the bagua, Joy Ramirez's insistence echoes: "Reject the luck, while you still have time." Though Hsui Lao asks the three living owners to destroy the bagua—Lily, who represents the very rich entrepreneur/capitalist; Joy, who represents the middle class; and Lester, who represents the working class—their difference in branches in social classes can never

be destroyed. This is proof of the two roles that the bagua embodies. This should not be appreciated just as a lucky symbol with attendant bad luck, which also takes lives, but as something with the potential to equalize the structure of society and the impossibility of doing this—both a combination of ambiguity in what continues to be called by the Aquino text to seemingly spread the almost unknown yet very real ghost that continues to rise for Aquino as an Aquino. She remains part of the bigger machinery of the oligarchy in the Philippines, which continues to dictate, even though the time of the dictatorship has long passed, how this horrified (and debased, based on the ancient definition of *lagim*) country should be run. This is probably why it is important to continue returning to the recurring answer to all of the problems that the bagua brings: Reject luck. For example, as the saying goes, fate can be rejected, so one can be free from the chains of poverty. What is most important in hearing this again is to critique whoever advised and said these words. With the shifting of the role of adviser/explainer from Aquino-as-Joy Ramirez, it is like the phrase acquires color (is it yellow?), emphasizing the warning, becoming a decoy so that a figure that may still progress, if given time, remains merely an opinion in life. This lack of mobility can be said to be the worst horror in the Philippines, and this surely echoes the sorrowful forest that Balagtas sang about in his time. The move to revive *Feng Shui* (Roño, 2014) and its ambiguous finish, are symbols of the ghost in Aquino's person and text, not only in acting but in the funds that were invested in order to support this film. What the first *Feng Shui* fulfilled was to produce and take pride in its own "Asian Horror Film" genre, while the second one seems to still have something to say about its play on *lagim*, and the different forms of horror that live in the society at present. One friend of this researcher describes the *Feng Shui* movies as "a nightmare of signs." In its investigation of Aquino, and the texts she has created, the complicated system of meaning essayed by an actress who has supported, and reigns over a genre, which even though it has been imported from Hollywood now serves as a way to debate on the multiple meanings of horror in the Asian region, while giving meaning to what it means to be a Filipino, has been revealed to us.

Yet the fact that Aquino remains alive is still important to the film's latest franchise. In the film's last chapter, the surprise of her character Joy Ramirez at what she found at the door of the Tao temple, where the "weakened" bagua (there's a discourse about the importance of the religious/spiritual space, that can be felt here, and its strength against the evil camp, that reminds us of the importance of the safety dealt by the Catholic church's space in fighting the denizens of darkness such as *aswang* and the possessed) was successfully destroyed, could not be determined.

This movie is a deliberate orchestration of synecdoche. The connotation that Joy's faithful suitor (whom everyone thought was dead) is still alive is immediately revealed by showing a telling glimpse of a familiar white T-shirt hung with a dog tag necklace. This is when Joy emits a loud scream, while cradling the dead Lester *ala* Pieta. She thought that she was with the teenage boy in destroying the bagua (the truth is, it's hard to understand the configuration of miracles in this part of the movie). What disturbed Joy Ramirez then? No one can say. Yet what can be said about the movie's "bonus track," after the credits, shows horrific dissemination of the bagua's image—through Facebook! How many followers does Aquino have on that site? Almost 2.5 million from the account KrisAquino.net. When Lester's girlfriend shared the picture of the bagua that he sent to her via smartphone, viewers immediately liked it. The teenage girl is in a speeding taxi, whose dashboard is filled with tiger stuff toy. The taxi rams into a truck marked by a snake. On one hand, this doesn't just show that the bagua's life will continue, even though viewers of the movie believe that this has been destroyed and undone. Aside from the certainty that there will be more *Feng Shui* films—which seems to be planning to equal Monteverde's earlier seminal *Shake, Rattle, and Roll* series—it can also be said that the appearance of the horror it embodies, as an example of the Filipino horror genre in a time of Asian Horror films, will continue to spread, be patronized, and allowed to be a reason for perturbation. This is also based on Aquino's success in the war of meaning. As her own genre, she has surpassed the institutional praxis that has measured and established her. In this part, her widespread title of "Queen of All Media" is meaningful, which should not only be read as proof of her "skill" in all the forms of public entertainment (which was staged in this paper as an aspect of her moviemaking). This is also proof of her being a riddle in managing the mediums or in an etymological definition, the "mediator" of all the meanings that can be understood. In all of the horror that she has undergone, and all that she has given meaning to, she remains the only one who is screaming in fear. The definitions she uncovers can be seen in this gaze, which fall under a lot of disseminations that will continue to increase and spread her meaning, like the bagua that is resurrected by means of social media, where Aquino is also queen.

At the end of this essay, I invite the reader, as a summary, to remember Barthes (1989) in his book *Sade Fourirer Loyola*. In the book, the three major authors who were read and were portrayed as "Logothletes, founders of language" (p. 3) which was as "obviously not linguistic, a language of communication" (p. 3). Added Barthes, "(i)t is a new language, traversed by (or traversing) natural language, but open only to the semiological definition of text" (p.3). In this instance, Kris Aquino is the author, from the start, an

author that Barthes hails as someone who is not “identified by institutions,” yet “who lives her text and comes into our life (which) has no unity” (p. 8). Yet isn’t this lack of unity, scattering/littering on television, radio, social media, and billboards what Aquino does to us every day? She has scattered her presence, her *kasarian* of meaning. To fulfill her becoming a genre, she needs to undertake what is also called becoming an author who has a “mere plural of ‘charms,’ the site of a few tenuous details, yet the source of vivid novelistic glimmerings, a discontinuous chant of amiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic fate.” (p. 8). Authorship in its two senses is both a subjugation under and destruction of the regime of conventions and establishments, aside from going through the process of “death” that she has escaped from twice in *Feng Shui*, in the name of her reign as the queen in the world of showbiz. And because authorship is presently being destroyed, no longer as direct participation in writing, but of the establishment and teaching of discourse itself, it is important to name Aquino, as a text, as a spectacle of horror films, in the discourses which she created, including this discourse in the hands of readers. And because of this, understanding her carries out what is being set, teaches the directions of discourse, of how she is talked about, imagined, or written/read is enriched, as a turn towards her part of becoming a genre, because she is involved in a generational decision, the inauguration of what is called *usapin* (dialogue, talk, discussion) or everything that can be discussed about her. This discussion continues to free the definition of *lagim* as a momentary tremor to accustomed settings, especially as “products” or “phenomenon” of popular culture in the Philippines, which remains trapped in an othered place, probably because these have become ordinary and everyday. This paper, while studying history, as well as the history of Aquino as an actress in horror movies, sought to reveal what became the parts of how she was defined, while also embodying the concept of *lagim*, and being the Philippine Box Office Horror Queen. Yet instead of being a conventional queen—one who disseminates all her behavior and patterns—Aquino, releases (has become a loose figure that dispense) her legion of meaning in order to reverse and interrogate what has been established about her. Her history as an actress, an immediate analysis of her filmography are clear pictures of this, as well as the two franchises of *Feng Shui*, where she revealed her existence as an embodiment of the paradox of *kasarian*, and other genders. This paper reviewed her as a woman, her becoming a womb of the possibilities as a text, as an “author” and at present, as a genre that is part of the genesis, of the birth of what could be discussed, as a culture, as a self-absorbed culture that was created by her culture, which is everyone’s culture. In this insight, one can’t help but recall Raymond Williams (1983)

and one of his statements in *Keywords* about the portrayal of culture: “to speak of ‘cultures in the plural.’” (p. 89) In the end, I think the most important part of Aquino as a genre—the sole element she can claim—is her ability to horrify and unsettle the whole system of Filipino discourse, by means of seemingly ordering the multiple disseminations of meaning and connotation, especially when alluded to, like what Barthes says of the ability of dispersal, which is an authorial characteristic whenever one stands up and fixes the outline to disperse oneself—one’s own discourse—“ad infinitum” (p. 6). Kris Aquino, as a genre, is a culture of *kasarian* itself that can be seen as a meaningful outcome, which seemingly opposes or misprisons the text, its authorliness, and the genre that has been dictated by the myths she has taken on, especially her last name.

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Notes

- 1 While I did my best to look for more reliable sources, I was led to maximizing the use of the filmographic entry on Wikipedia.org on Kris Aquino. I only performed a very simple observation, and I exerted effort in examining details available that may help support information, as well as my opinions, especially when it came to the categorization of her films, as well as the demographics

of the years I mentioned. I ask for understanding if I needed to use a platform that is quite unreliable, though I still believe that it is a good space to begin the creation of secondary and primary sources.

- 2 The “Hacienda Luisita Massacre” has been the term used in media referring to the brutal killings of workers in Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac, one afternoon of November 2004. The workers in the picket line had an encounter with police forces sent to quell them. This was largely ignored by then Pres. Gloriam Macapagal-Arroyo. This hacienda is owned by the Cojuangco family, where former Pres. Corazon Aquino, mother of Kris, hails. The hacienda has long been a subject of controversies because of its conditional enforcement of land reform.

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Kris Aquino (left) top-bills Feng Shui while Vilma Santos (right) stars in The Healing. Philippine folklore is a rich source of ideas for Filipino horror movies. Writers can focus on the duwende (goblin/elf/dwarf), the white lady terrorizing Balete drive, the kapre puffing away in trees, the tiktik, the manananggal, the tikbalang, or even the tiyanak. Even Pinoy superstitions can inspire filmmakers to come up with plots that thrill audiences. Filipino horror movies can be terrifying because they seem so familiar. Most of the time, horror movies tend to be overlooked at awards shows because it is not considered as a serious genre. But Yanggaw is different; it bagged the major awards when it screened in the 2008 Cinema One Originals Digital Film Festival. Yanggaw is a true masterpiece. Starring Philippine Scream Queen Kris Aquino, Feng Shui centers around a cursed Bagua mirror that kills anyone who looks in it, and their death would be based on their Chinese zodiac sign. Throw in Lotus Feet's creepy, click-clacking feet, and you've got a film that continues to be a benchmark for original, well-made local films in its genre. Vesuvius (2012). Yanggaw takes us through the transformation in a grotesque and disturbing way, but not without heart-wrenching emotion as the victim's family tries to deal with a horror they cannot stop. Advertisement - continue reading below. Dementia (2014). Director: Perci Intalan Nora Aunor has done it all, and she lends her talents to Perci Intalan's artfully filmed but terrifying feature.