



# Parodic Hybridity in Francisco Buencamino Sr.'s Music for the Film *Ibong Adarna* (1941)<sup>1</sup>

JOSÉ S. BUENCONSEJO

## Abstract

This paper discusses the organic unconscious hybridity characterizing the folklike appropriation that Francisco Buencamino Sr. and Jr. exhibited in composing the musical score of the 1941 LVN film *Ibong Adarna*. This extant Filipino film is an adaptation of the folk epic *Ibong Adarna*, which was written into the metrical romance genre *korido*. Generally following the convention of the staged *comedia* with its formulaic musical setting, Buencamino imitates diverse musical styles in the film from a number of exterior sources such as *comedia*, Hollywood, *sarsuwela*, *bodabil*, and slapstick comedy. In two important scenes, he intentionally “ruptured” the musical imitation by interspersing the *comedia* archaic speech style *dicho* into the music. This paper argues that by switching from organic unconscious to intentional hybridity in the said scenes, Buencamino highlighted the narrative structure of the film. In this parodic and ironic transcontextualization of *comedia* into film, the effect of foregrounding the extramural moral message of the epic *Ibong Adarna* materializes. This message centers on the endearing Filipino value for human relationships.

**Keywords:** parody, music hybridity, mimicry, media, Filipino values

“All parody is overtly hybrid and double-voiced.”

– Linda Hutcheon

### Reading parody

PARODY, as Hutcheon tells us, is a reinscription of a past work into a particular moment of repetition (2000, p. 34). It affords an expression of the past with a different performative meaning—an enunciation—in the newer context. Thus, a parody “transcontextualizes” an old meaning into the new one (pp. 12-17). As commonly understood by many, parody is taken to mean “satire” because it mocks, ridicules, and scorns the “borrowed” original.<sup>2</sup> However, writing in the current modern/postmodern stylistic period when “quoting” and “borrowing” are ubiquitous and have been the norm, Hutcheon argues that there actually exists a range of pragmatic ethos (ruling intended effects, encoded in the parody, which the reader infers or decodes) in the act of parodying—that is, *sensu largo*. This can vary from paying homage to (source) “target” texts to ridiculing them as in satire. These effects hinge on the concept of *irony*, a rhetorical trope common to both parody and satire and which is brought about by two things: (1) the clash in meanings between old and new in the recontextualization and (2) the “corrective” evaluation or “judgement” of the “target texts” that the satires and parodies bring to the fore (pp. 52-55). Nonetheless, irony works differently in parody and satire; parody is *unmarked* (precisely because it has that range of pragmatic effects), whereas satire is marked by the ethos of mockery, scorn, and ridicule (as normally understood). In parody, the appropriation of a past text into another work is an acknowledgement of that source (and therefore motivated by the previous authority of the older text). Paradoxically, it is the recognition of this same authority that parody subverts or inverts (p. 74). In other words, in parody, a critical, “self-reflexive,” ironic distancing is achieved. The resulting text is “double-voiced,” for it repeats the old but with a new and different meaning.

This paper discusses the characteristics of mimicry and parody in the musical score of *Ibong Adarna*, one of the four extant pre-World War II Filipino films. Released in 1941, *Ibong Adarna* is a production of LVN Pictures owned by Narcisa Buencamino vda de Leon or Doña Sisang (1877-1966), a woman-entrepreneur who ventured into making films beyond the age of 60 yet made a tremendous impact on the history of the Philippine film industry, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. The film is credited as the first locally made film in the Philippines that garnered a million pesos in revenue and the first to introduce color technology. *Ibong Adarna* was also one of the first spectacular costume epics that benchmarked LVN Pictures as a mill producing film from history and folklore in the 1950s. It was directed by Vicente Salumbides, trained in Hollywood during the 1920s, with assistant Manuel Conde (1915-1985), now National Artist for Film. The film had Richard Abelardo (1902-1993) as cinematographer, who painted the sceneries as well. Richard Abelardo also trained in Hollywood and was a first-degree cousin of modernist composer Nicanor Abelardo (1893-1934), after whose name the University of the Philippines (UP) College of Music building is named. The film's music was composed by Francisco Buencamino Sr. (1883-1952) from San Miguel, Bulacan, who was assisted by his junior son in "scoring" (by which is meant doing incidental music and orchestration).

In the film, Buencamino's music mimics and parodies Spanish, American, and local Filipino expressions. Because the parody is "double-voiced" in the sense that the scorer borrows from other musical genres but mixes them to produce new meanings in the film medium, the epithet above by Hutcheon will, as shall be shown, be proven true—that is, *parody is necessarily about hybridity* insofar as there is an incorporation of the old to constitute another newer expression.<sup>3</sup> However, not all hybridity is parodic.

As a concept, cultural hybridity or transculturation—a mixing of elements from various cultures—is a characteristic of cultures in "contact zones." In particular, hybridity is conducive to grow in colonial historical

contexts where cultural differences are bound to confront each other, hence intercultural negotiations ensue (Loomba 1998, p. 62). Setting aside the issue of the erasure of subordinated culture (owing to outright cultural domination in colonial/neocolonial/imperial contexts), cultures in contact more importantly lead to the two-way process of intercultural exchanges so that the incorporation of the cultural otherness into the receiving host culture produces an unstable, ambivalent mix, a *mestizaje* or creolization, so to speak (Gruzinski 2002; Hannerz 1987). Bhabha labels this act of cultural assimilation as “mimicry” but counterintuitively and “playfully” celebrates it because the desire to “imitate” or “mimic” the colonial language only produces a distance, a liminality or ambivalence that differs from and therefore destabilizes the dominant language (as cited in Loomba 1998, p. 78). In the context of this paper, *Ibong Adarna* is only half-Hollywood and perhaps should be described as “Hollywoodish” for in borrowing from Hollywood, the copy is not faithful. Obviously, *Ibong Adarna* displays the characteristic conventions of *comedia* from its narrative structure to its musical setting. Conversely, it is not “comedia” because the film medium is evidently Euro-American or, better yet, American Hollywood. The trappings of the American spectacle in the film are quite evident.

What Bhabha calls “mimicry” is what Hutcheon calls “parody.” According to Hutcheon (2000), “mimicry” denotes “imitation,” foregrounding more similarity between the copy and its backgrounded text. Mimicry therefore does not emphasize “difference” in its repetition. Yet because Bhabha meant that “mimicry” is not mere “imitation” (for subalterns do inject their own cultural resources to create hybrid texts), it would then be wise to stick to and use Hutcheon’s broadly encompassing term “parody” because in her terminology there is a clear conceptual distinction between parody and mimicry.

To understand the nature of the relationship between parody and hybridity, it will be necessary to discuss the different musical genres that Buencamino appropriates in the film and situate these in relation to the

film's narrative. As we shall see, each of the borrowed musics functions differently within the various episodes of the film's narrative structure. This suggests that the inferred intention of the act of borrowing is important to consider because, via this, a distinction between mimicry and parody is clarified. In this paper, I place all of these types of borrowing in a continuum between "imitative" (or mimicry) on one end and "parodic" on the other end. I will also discuss the performativity of this hybridity by exploring the agency that Buencamino, as "external film music narrator," demonstrated.<sup>4</sup> If parody is overtly "double-voiced," then to interpret this enunciation in relation to the postcolonial, transcultural context becomes an interesting issue. Parodic hybridity can give us insights into how an asymmetrical colonial encounter—in this case, Filipinos and Americans—confronted and negotiated the difference of each "local culture" be that of the colonists or their subordinate subjects. Due to limited space, however, the paper cannot go in-depth into the political and historical context of this parody as this article is primarily a film music criticism.

At the outset, the film *Ibong Adarna* adapts the story of a well-known *korido* (metrical romance written in monorhyming, octosyllabic quatrain). This myth was supposedly written by an anonymous author during the mid-1800s, from a folktale that might still be existing in the Tagalog-speaking areas. The content of *korido* is akin to the theme of traditional hagiographic epics among present-day indigenous peoples in the Philippines as well as to the non-realist stylistic conventions of traditional theater *comedia*, *korido*'s nearest artistic cousin. *Korido* and *comedia* were very popular as secular entertainments in Spanish Philippine colony from the 18th to the 19th centuries. By the time the dominant European and then Hollywood film industry invaded the Philippine Islands from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, *comedia* was already a thing of the past, at least in the capital city of Manila. Thus it is interesting to reflect on the resiliency of the archaic *korido* or *comedia* idiom when it was inserted, quoted, or parodied in the American medium as late as 1940. Other theater genres, such as the European-derived musical theater

*sarsuwela* (also waning at that time), the lowbrow *bodabil* with high entertainment value, and even soupy melodramatic plays seen on stage and heard on another medium, the radio, were also mimicked. Radio culture was only a decade old when *Ibong Adarna* was produced.

The plethora of mimicked genres in the film reminds us of Bakhtin's concept of unconscious organic hybridity, which is the dominant characteristic type of hybridity exhibited in the film music score being considered (Bakhtin 1981, p. 358). Buencamino as a "bricoleur" scorer worked, in fact, like an organic hybridist who incorporated diverse styles at his disposal without problematizing the incongruities such juxtapositions created as a result. However, a close examination of this aspect would disclose that there are also appropriations made by Buencamino that go beyond mimicries or imitations in the film. The borrowings that I will be dealing with closely in this paper can therefore be considered parodies as defined above, for they mark an ironic difference that critically distances the performative recontextualization from their "target texts"—in this case, from the *comedia*. It shall be shown that these parodic borrowings function to enunciate the message of the narrative, thereby elucidating its importance.

A highlight of this paper thus deals with the parody of the *dicho* (archaic) speech style from *comedia* in *Ibong Adarna*. This is found in only two scenes of the film. An important question thus comes about: what motivated the film music narrator to "stage" the speaking by the bird and the *Negritos* using the then quite old *dicho* speech style in the said scenes? The parody of *comedia* speech in these films therefore articulates a difference—a rupturing, intentional hybridity (to recall Bakhtin's term that contrasted with the unmarked "organic" hybridity). This goes beyond the organicist cultural hybridity that Buencamino projected overall in the film. On this note, it behooves me to introduce at this point that Buencamino was not trained in Hollywood (unlike cinematographer Richard Abelardo or director Salumbides) but in the world of local band and church music and in the musical theater *sarsuwela* in Manila (Manuel

1995, pp. 106-115). He was “homegrown” (although he studied with Filipino composer Marcelo Adonay and Spanish peninsular Oscar Camps in Manila) and had direct immersive experience setting music during his early exposure to the musical art of sarsuwela (he was at one time an actor of this genre) and as a piano player in silent films. He was in many ways like a folk artist who appropriated existing genres familiar to his art world. Yet in the two parodic articulations in the film *Ibong Adarna*, a rupture ensues; he seems conscious of what he was aiming in those passages, having had some kind of a “homage” parodic intentionality—inferring what Hutcheon (2000) called the “knowing smile” (p. 63)—in the use of the archaic material in the said important moments of the film.

### **Sources of *Ibong Adarna* and the contexts of their production**

The original source of the *Ibong Adarna* narrative is shrouded in mist. Believed to have been written and printed by an anonymous author sometime in the 1860s, the more popular source from the 20th century, particularly the version that came out in 1900 and which Eugenio consulted, is probably extant. While I was not able to consult this exemplar, the versions that I happened to come across in the main library of the UP Diliman were later versions, particularly from the 1940s. These are the sources of texts that are currently in use for literature subjects in high schools in the Philippines. The proliferation of *Ibong Adarna* versions today attests to its continuing popularity, and this may have stemmed from folklore studies initiated since the last half of the 19th century by the Spanish journalist Jose del Pan. Indeed, *Ibong Adarna* has seen many adaptations in film, the first of which was made in 1941, which is the material I am basing my analysis on. LVN remade another version in 1955 with a different set of actors and bent the plot to suit the audience's taste of that decade.<sup>5</sup> The *Ibong Adarna* version of the 1970s also reflected the ethos of its time, a matter that we cannot go into here.

Examining the themes of this tale, Eugenio (1987, p. 166) observed that they combine three stories in a series: (1) the search for the golden bird; (2) the descent into the well and finding the captive princesses; and (3) the winning of the swan maiden, the ensuing obstacle flight, and the forgotten fiancée. I have marked these episodes in Table 1, which outlines its plot. Comparing these themes to the catalogs of stories collected around the world, folkloristic studies by Fansler (1916, p. 205), Villa (1952, p. 248), and later Eugenio have indicated that these are not unique to the Philippines but were borrowed from European metrical romances. With hindsight, there is something dubious about this comparativism. As we shall see later on, the issue of comparing the local Philippine version to its sources around the world is inconsequential because what is important to appreciate is how the sources have been thoroughly indigenized, a pattern that has been confirmed to operate in many Filipino mestizaje expressions.

The concatenation of different stories into a synthetic story thus manifests the orality of transmitting *Ibong Adarna* in the past, particularly in Tagalog-speaking areas. There is a strong possibility that the impetus to *write or versify* it into the korido form during the last half of 19th century was motivated by (1) the author's encounter with books on metrical romances from Spain, although the issue does not end there, and (2) the availability of print technology that fostered an incipient public sphere by mid-19th century. These 19th-century cultural developments were a part of the growing secularization in outlook of Spanish Philippine colonial citizens and thus representations of secular subjects that went beyond or were outside the control of religious institutions.

The eminent historian and critic of Philippine literature Bienvenido Lumbera (1967) had examined korido and *awit* in the Tagalog region,<sup>6</sup> particularly discussing the interest that Tagalog poets showed in refining indigenous poetry since the late 18th century. Lumbera considered these as imitations of the verse style of ancient Spanish metrical romance, couching them as “refinements” that were seen in the local works by Jose de la Cruz (1746-1829) and Francisco Baltazar (1788-1862). Lumbera

implies that these would not have been disseminated without the technology of print culture mentioned above. Perhaps, the term imitation would be relevant to speak about the act of appropriation that local poets made vis-à-vis imported expressions at that time. These “refined” works were meant mainly to be read, as Vicente Rafael argued in his book *The Promise of the Foreign*. No *Ibong Adarna* comedia exists. Nevertheless, the characteristics of korido—stories culled from historical legends and folktale; set in kingdoms, exotic places, and sacred mountains; and displaying the poetic conventions of metrical romance genre—resemble those of the most popular 19th-century theater genre, comedia, which was patronized by grassroots Philippine society. As mentioned already, this theater genre was the parallel of literary korido. Comedia, however, was to be supplanted later on by the European operetta *zarzuela* at the turn of that century. And this, in turn, waned when American film was introduced to Filipinos during the 1930s. All these genres are a part of experiencing modernity in colonial Philippines. At the time, it spells out a public culture that took reading as an important leisure-time activity and a cosmopolitanism outlook that was to blossom into the Hispanic literary movement during the first half of the 20th century. It seemed to me that the maturity of Spanish writings during the early 20th century was some kind of a cultural capital defense of the elites as the linguistic domination of English slowly crept into the colony or metropolis. It is interesting to note that the producer of *Ibong Adarna*—Doña Sisang—was herself a Spanish-speaking landed aristocrat (from nearby rice-growing Bulacan province adjacent to Manila) who refused to speak English during her time. Publishing abounded during the period, and most of the materials had Filipiniana element to them. This humanistic interest in local things spilled over and is manifest in the composed and harmonized 19th-century Tagalog song, *kundiman*, whose status was elevated to art during the 1930s in the works of Francisco Santiago, Antonio Molina, and Nicanor Abelardo.

The introduction of the American film industry, particularly the talkies during the 1930s, thus provided another medium for transcontextualizing

what was already familiar in print, the *korido*. Because *comedia* was by then an archaic performance genre,<sup>7</sup> it can be surmised that giving life to it through the medium of early Hollywood cinema was not consciously aimed at imitation of the foreign per se—that is, felicitous resemblance to Hollywood was the goal but something parodic because *comedia* (the target text) was, after all, almost going to oblivion, thanks to the “mimetically capacious” technology of mechanical reproduction that the Americans brought in and that extended its life. The pragmatic effect or sense of parody in this case is not mocking or ridiculing it, for it can almost be ascertained that this was of the homage parody that Hutcheon eloquently argues in her book. I will argue in this paper that mimicking Hollywood was practical to the extent that the producers wanted only to approximate its technique. The content was entirely different because the recontextualization of tradition was locally motivated. By then, *comedia* would have already assumed the status as a symbol of tradition. This paper thus considers an *unsettling hybridity* that resulted from a parodic recontextualization of a traditional Filipiniana material into the American medium.

### **The Narrative of *Ibong Adarna***

*Ibong Adarna* is set in a fantastic, exotic place in the Orient called Berbania. This is an Islamic kingdom ruled by a king who got ill after dreaming of social disharmony (symbolized by the eldest son plotting to kill the youngest, who, in Philippine society, is the pampered and the favorite).<sup>8</sup> Parallel to epic poetry in hinterland Philippines (even biography of charismatic indigenous artists), the narrative is about the quest for a wife that has to materialize so the kingdom can reproduce itself. The search for the mythical bird is a symbol for this search for the kingdom’s posterity; the bird’s enchanting song is said to cure the king. It was the king’s youngest son, the humble and honest Juan, who captures the bird because Juan’s generosity equipped him with luck; he met the wise mountain sage who advised him that the pleasure of the bird song is attainable only when one undergoes pain and sacrifice to counteract the effect of pleasure. This

ethos is unmistakably indigenous Filipino. In contrast, his two brothers turned to stone, succumbing to sleep or forgetfulness, because they were not advised on the principle of balancing pain and pleasure.<sup>9</sup> For the king, however, the bird song was health, but no song emitted from the bird because it was first handed down, back home, by the treacherous oldest brother Pedro who tried to kill Juan, his brother. Pedro lied to the king, his father, that he himself was the one who captured the bird. When Juan returned to the kingdom, the bird broke its silence and disclosed the truth. It sang for the king *in the presence of Juan*, his beloved son.

This newfound happiness did not last, of course, because evil crept once more in Pedro's mind. Pedro freed the caged bird while Juan was sleeping. This led to Juan's second journey in search of the bird again. This time though, Juan did not meet the bird<sup>10</sup> but found a well that led him to the underworld. There he met a beautiful maiden named Leonora who was kept imprisoned by a giant.<sup>11</sup> Juan killed this giant and liberated Leonora. But parallel to the first journey, Pedro was there to complicate the story again for it was he who got Leonora in turn, literally abducting her for himself. Upon reaching the kingdom, however, Leonora promised to the king that she would keep a vow until Juan's return. This act bespeaks another salient Filipino worldview called *panata*, a promise to one's self in upholding human relations, despite odds. This devotional cultural practice is a ubiquitous and characteristic institution, relating to religion, family, and society in the Philippines.

Juan then goes to his third journey, flying with his brother Diego, clutching at the feet of a mysterious giant bird that brought them to the Kingdom of Crystals. Here, Juan met the bewitching Maria, a half-supernatural beautiful creature who did magic so as to save her beloved Juan from the wrath of her father. Like an enchantress from Philippine mythology, Maria drastically fell in love with Juan at first sight. Maria loves Juan, a human being, more than her father, and she eloped and escaped with Juan back to the Kingdom of Berbania. This angered Maria's father so much that he cursed her daughter she'll be forgotten by Juan one

Table 1. Plot outline of *Ibong Adarna*

Subject	Related object	State of the object	Salient performative
Episode 1: Juan's first journey to quest for the mythical bird →	bird (on a tree in Mt. Tabor) →	loss on the way home (due to Pedro's envy) →	presence of Juan to his father: bird song and dicho speech style
		loss of bird from the kingdom (due to Pedro's envy) ↙	
Episode 2: Juan's second journey or the quest for the mythical bird once more, descent into the well, and finding the captive princesses →	bird but Leonora is found (underworld) →	loss of Leonora (due to Pedro's covetousness) →	absence of Juan in the kingdom: Leonora's panata or song of vow
		giant bird appears ↙	
Episode 3: Juan's third journey or winning of the swan maiden, the obstacle flight, and the forgotten fiancée →	no specific object, but Maria is found in the Kingdom of Crystals ↓		
		Juan undergoes trials before Maria's father who wanted to kill him. Maria's magic saves them as they flee the Kingdom of Crystals. ↓	
		loss of Maria (due to her father's curse) →	Maria punishes Juan for forgetting: dance music and dicho style
		Resolution: coupling Juan to Maria and Pedro to Leonora ↙	

day. This indeed happened as predicted. Juan left Maria in an inn, and he returned to his natal kingdom. There Juan immediately forgot Maria when he met the faithful Leonora, both deciding to marry each other. When Maria heard about this plan of marriage, she went to the palace during the wedding day of Juan and Leonora. In front of wedding guests, Maria magically presented a dance meant to reawaken Juan's memory of his relationship to her. This allegorical dance led to the rematching of Leonora to Pedro and Juan to Maria.

In terms of narrative structure, *Ibong Adarna* exhibits the salient characteristic of folk epic in that it is cyclical—that is, episodes return to or repeat from the beginning due to a non-personally motivated loss (as fate or destiny is so construed). Thus, the narrative is epic-like and contrastive to the modernist overarching linear development of plot that is dependent upon characters' psychological involvements. This non-epic development leads to a climax and denouement that is characteristic of another genre, the novel. I outline the plot in Table 1, labeling the three-episode schema that folklorist Eugenio had observed. Columns 2 and 3 detail the reasons for the main protagonist's journeying. Column 4 provides the performative that arises from the loss of the desired object. In this table, one can appreciate the symmetry of the plot with its simple alternation of presence and absence.

### **The music of *Ibong Adarna***

The music of *Ibong Adarna* is heteroglossic. The juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous musics can be categorized into the following: (1) *picturesque music*, which creates the characteristic atmosphere of the scene being visually projected; (2) *action music*, which underscores tension generated by a physical action; (3) diverse genres of *production numbers*, which exaggerate the states and emotions of characters and are used mostly to heighten—as in a Hollywood musical—the spectacular aspect of the film; and (4) *melodramatic music*, which accompanies certain romantic dialogues of the film, simulating the Tagalog “soap operas” heard over the radio.

In concordance with the non-realist approach to the narrative, the music is “flat” or formulaic. Except for the production numbers in which the main characters display their emotions as indicative of their predicaments, musics in this film are generally matched to visuals mechanically. This is strongly evident in the picturesque and action music categories, both of which I classify as Group 1 in the continuum diagram (see figure below) that I will discuss shortly.

Palace music are of two types: (1) Berbania (home of the main protagonists) is stereotypically depicted with heroic music such as grandiose fanfare, chorus, and tenor solo intoning marchlike music (see music transcription), whereas the (2) Kingdom of Crystals (home of magic and mystery) is depicted by a long, drawn-out melancholic oboe passage with that characteristic exoticism of minor and augmented seconds (see music transcription). Both are in minor mode and are accompanied by drone-like sound or *ostinati*. In contrast, the equally distant Mount Tabor, where the mythical bird is found and caught, is depicted with a diatonic pastorale music in A major with a characteristic serene rhythm in even eight notes (see music transcription).

In between these places (palace and mountain) are various action musics that are also applied formulaically. Aside from the short fanfare of palace scenes, action musics are walking-outdoor music that uses an Arabic-sounding minor mode set to an *ostinato* or drone-like rhythm (quarter, eighth, eighth). (see music transcription). Vertical movements (like passages in and out of the well and the underworld, and the flight on the giant bird) utilize chromatic descending scale pattern played by string tremolos and drum rolls. Catching and stealing the bird is represented by *pizzicato* strings. These are all conventions of *comedia* theater, and they also draw an aesthetic affinity to the musics used in accompanying silent movies, where a piano player does not compose but merely uses preexisting musical passages to depict a wide range of visuals and actions from a list. In both, tried and tested formulaic musical passages are matched, recipe-like, to tableau-like scenes.

Analytical category	Musical style	Main function	Parodied genre
<b>I. Picturesque music</b>			
a) Palace	Exoticizing	creates appropriate atmosphere to painted visuals	comedia
b) Fanfare	loud and sharp brass music	transition in palace scenes	comedia
c) Mountain	pastorale in A major with contrasting section in E major	creates appropriate atmosphere to painted visuals	comedia
<b>II. Action music</b>			
a) Walking on the fields	exotic: use of bass ostinato/ drone with repetitive melodic kernel utilizing minor second and minor third	transition	comedia
b) Ascent/descent	descending chromatic scale	creates tension	comedia
c) Meandering horizontal movement of objects	up and down scalar motion (similar to Smetana's water music)	iconic depiction of movement	comedia
d) Stealth walking	soft pizzicato strings	creates tension	silent movie
e) Escape	appropriated score using Rossini's "William Tell Overture"	heightens action	silent movie
<b>III. Production numbers</b>			
a) Opening and closing credits	male chorus and male tenor solo singing a heroic march	framing device that sets the overall mood and theme of the film	Hollywood talkie
b) Bird song	coloratura soprano music	diegetic (or source) music	sarsuwela

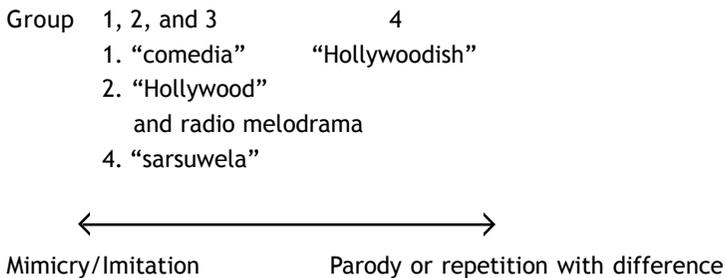
Analytical category	Musical style	Main function	Parodied genre
	in G and C major; use of runs and arpeggios, non-texted.		
c) Harem chorus	three-voice female chorus in parallel tertial harmony (reminiscent of church cantora singing)	heightens spectacle	Hollywood musical
d) Dance of veils	driven by rhythmic pattern reminiscent of darbuka ostinato	diegetic music that heightens spectacle	Hollywood musical
e) Leonora's song (nondiegetic)		heightens spectacle by non-realistic portrayal of emotion	Hollywood musical or Spanish-derived sarsuwela
f) Juan and Leonora's sung duet (nondiegetic)	two-sectioned bimodality (minor- major shift)	heightens spectacle by non-realistic portrayal of emotion	kundiman in sarsuwela
g) Jesters' mime	appropriated score using recorded music of Brahms' "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5" and Rossini's "William Tell Overture"	heightens spectacle by non-realistic portrayal of comical action	vaudeville or slapstick comedy of Charlie Chaplin as in pie-throwing
h) Negrito and Negrita dance	piano roll music in various style (rag to primitivist)	diegetic (or source) music	vaudeville or carnival (Black minstrel Show)
<b>IV. Melodrama</b>			
	appropriated score using recorded light classical music that feels like Russian ballet music	creates romantic mood	stage or radio drama



associated with local *sarsuwela*—than quintessentially American. We see these in the song and dance numbers such as (1) bird song, (2) Leonora’s devotional song, and (3) Juan and Leonora’s sung duet, which is in the *kundiman* style.

Another group, numbered 4 in the diagram below, is the production numbers that lie between the continuum imitation-parody. This last group can be termed “Hollywoodish” because they mimic Hollywood musical not quite totally because there is a hint of the local that marks them as different. These are (1) the Harem chorus, which is reminiscent of Hollywood musical, except that the parallel tertial harmony is reminiscent of the group singing of Philippine Catholic *cantoras*; and (2) the Dance of Veils, which seems to combine African dancing gestures (shoulder movement) with a floor pattern choreography reminiscent of the Philippine May *santacruzán* festivals.

To summarize, we can plot the four groups of music numbers in the continuum below:



### **Parodic difference’s interruption and composer’s reflexivity**

In two production numbers—notably bird song and *Negritos*’ dances—the interposition of the *dicho* speech style, between the musical/dance passages, creates a stronger form of marked imitation (compared to

Group 4 discussed above) so that in these numbers we enter the realm of parody as this is properly understood. Dicho speech style is characteristic of *comedia*, and its imposition in the bird song (which is soprano coloratura music associated with *sarsuwela*) and in the Negritos' dance (which is vaudeville or perhaps is modeled after a Black minstrelsy dance number, which was then certainly known in Manila) creates a sheer incongruity that is difficult to analytically interpret. This speech style is incongruous because *sarsuwela* is inimical to the archaic speech style of *comedia*. Thus, this parody is so collage-like. In the first, the clash between old and new musical theater is manifest. In the second, a clash between American vaudeville and *comedia* because the Negrito characters speak rhetorically in ancient style. Unlike the mimicries described above that simulate the styles of source musics, an answer to the question as to why difference was injected in these scenes must therefore be sought elsewhere, and it can be argued that this has to do with the shape of the narrative structure, an interpretive hazard that I now go into.

The difference the *dicho* style of speaking makes in the musical parodies can be inferred in terms of the anomalous subjects who speak in those scenes: a humanoid bird in the first, and black "beings" in the second. In such case, the archaic *dicho* speech style can be construed as a "foreign untranslatable" element that affords the focusing of the scenes by marking the imitation of *sarsuwela* and vaudeville expressions, respectively. The interpolation of these elements thus creates an uncanny effect. If one examines the narrative context in which the archaic speech is embedded, then one realizes the crucial roles these scenes play in articulating the overall theme or message of the whole story. Thus, when the bird speaks or the Negritos dance, the speech brings the viewer into a heightened mode of attention so as not to miss the importance of the message being conveyed. Let us go deeper and situate this to the structure of the narrative.

In the figure below, I made a schema so that the important scenes can be understood in the overall shape of the film narrative. Juan's relationship to his father is one of presence—read life and song—and the importance of this paternalistic filiation is underscored by the fact that the



Juan's real father; Juan's future father-in-law so hated Juan that he wanted him killed had it not been for his enchantress daughter Maria's intervention. When they eloped, Juan's father-in-law cursed them so Juan can forget his affiliation with Maria. By putting this dance scene enacted by beings of alterity, the author of the myth thus highlights the importance of the message. The highlighting of the message is marked by alterity in visual form (black little people *Negritos*) and in sound, thus the *dicho* style.

In this film, music does indeed play an important role in delineating the narrative structure, and the one who is responsible for it is generally the "external film music narrator" who is none other than Francisco Buencamino Sr. Unlike classic Hollywood, *Ibong Adarna* is a folk film, given its epic nature, and we can see the characteristic emphasis in the plot on it so that music for such film genre is articulated by the "external film music narrator" who stages the sound and visual in a static, tableau-like presentation.

Moreover, we can also appreciate how the film music composer is deeply versed in the myth, one that is locally constructed and not imported. Leonora, who is also in love with Juan, makes a *panata* (done in secret) not to forget Juan. Leonora expresses this devotion or *panata* with a song, which is performed with a visual intercut: Juan flies off to the faraway Kingdom of Crystals. In the segment, the syntagmatic contiguity of devotional song to Juan's flying off into the distant place, clutching at the giant bird's feet, is obvious.

That being said, we thus see in this film production the importance of the external film narrator—in our case, the film music composer—in highlighting scenes that give shape to the message of the film. A composer who is not Filipino would approach it differently based on his or her background knowledge of what is important to emphasize. But since it was composed by someone who had lived in Manila during the American colonial period, then it drew on the cultural resources that were familiar to that composer's experience of place and time. Buencamino grew up from a musical family who served the Spanish colonial plaza complex—

that is, inside and outside the church. Yet when he worked as a professional musician in Manila, he was introduced to the glittering and glamorous public secular entertainments that flourished during the American colonial period. By then, local *sarsuwelas* (a carryover of late Spanish entertainment) were in vogue (and Buencamino was one-time an actor for this stage). Later, he learned of the newly competing American medium, the silent film. Buencamino himself was a piano player. He must surely have been tickled by the sights and sounds of vaudevilles and carnivals, as well the talkies in movie houses.

In short, he was quite familiar with plethora of musical conventions of his times, and it is only understandable that he would use these, as a folk artist rooted to his colonial culture would do, to enter modernity (to use Canclini's [1995] felicitous phrase). By composing for film, he entered the global market, so to speak, hybridizing organically these idioms that ironically transgressed the canon of Hollywood classics. Buencamino was no Wagner who pretended to idealize the union of music and poetry as an ideological construct of 19th century's "art for art's sake," yet one who commoditized his works in Bayreuth Festivals.<sup>13</sup> That belonged to another world. Buencamino was a musician who worked in a folklike milieu, negotiating the available idioms that range from mimicry to parody, the latter of which created a critical distancing, thanks to the rhetorical strategy of irony that enabled the parodist to encode a highly valued Filipino experience: human relationships. It takes a lot of phenomenological depth to discern which values as Filipinos need to be foregrounded, and Buencamino certainly hit the right music for the right scenes. In other words, he transcontextualized *comedia* into a homage parody using the American medium. This process brought the composer's enunciation of the message into more intelligibility.

## Conclusion

This paper explores hybridity in a film musical expression produced by a Filipino at the end of the American colonial period in the Philippines. This historicized film music criticism paper may be new in Philippine Studies, but the subject of asymmetrical cross-cultural engagement between dominant Spanish/American *colonial* and *local* Philippine cultures is not. While there have been numerous studies on the vernacularization of Western musical genres and their assimilation into Philippine local musical idioms,<sup>14</sup> what is often missed out in what may be called colonial “top-down” representations of cultural exchange is the attention to the creative agency of Philippine local culture bearers as they appropriate or “translate” borrowed outsider cultures into ones that wholly fit their local aesthetic sensibilities. This paper shows the postulate working in another form of Philippine cultural expression—that is, film—particularly among social agents who are located in a different social stratum (here among the middle class). I hope this paper is useful in that regard for it examines another postcolonial subjectivity.

In summary, the inscription of the traditional, epic-like 19th-century Philippine narrative *Ibong Adarna* in korido style into the American film medium in 1941 (LVN Pictures, Inc.) is of interest. An investigation into the music for the film by Francisco Buencamino Sr. and his son Francisco Buencamino Jr. reveals *diverse forms of musical appropriations* of conventional music genres that saturated cosmopolitan Manila at that time. These were connected to theater genres such as comedia, vernacularized European operetta sarsuwela, lowbrow entertainment bodabil, and even hyper-emotional stage/radio melodramas. These borrowings ranged *from mimicries to parodies*, describing on one hand the mimicries in terms of the heteroglossic, pastiche-like juxtaposition of borrowed musical numbers to Bakhtin’s concept of unconscious organic and, on the other hand, the parodic recontextualization of tradition that betrayed rupturing, intentional hybridity that conveyed the important didactic value in a heightened mode of expression, thanks to the rhetorical strategy of irony that marked the parody.

In the film music, Buencamino negotiated what is Hollywoodically conventional to this new, modern electricity-driven medium catering the market by creating a music that helped shaped the myth's narrative into an idiom that was familiar to entertainment fantasy that the *Ibong Adarna* must have meant to readers and viewers since the 19th century. As “external film music narrator,” composer Buencamino ruthlessly appropriated local and important musical resources but bent these to articulate an unmistakably Filipino representation of one's own cultural value. To reiterate, this manifests in two important scenes of the narrative: (1) Spanish coloratura song (qua the voice of the mythical bird) and (2) American dance music (qua dance of Negrito couple in the final wedding scene). Both mix archaic dicho speech style associated with comedia with contemporary musical sonorities. While incongruous, the intrusion of the foreign element in the familiar genres, however, has a sense, especially when seen in the context of its parodic recontextualization. They enable Buencamino to *mark the imitated musical styles with a difference*—that is, with Bakhtinian conscious intentional hybridity. I argued that the dicho style affords the highlighting of the speaking subjects of alterity and their messages so that, in the process, a clear Filipino ideology of presence is articulated. This cultural construction of presence is so enduring for I have found this in Agusan Manobo possession ritual, and it is also evident in this film. Its resilience can be accounted for by the constant rearticulation and maintenance of the said ideology in many local Philippine media—from bodies to electronica. The cultural value for devotion and remembering of self-and-related-other relationships is as clear in *Ibong Adarna*.

Looking back, the adaptation (or transmediatization) of the Tagalog narrative into film (an American medium) in 1941, some 80 years after it first appeared in print (presumably in 1860s), is of interest because the film version reproduces a parallel form of Philippine local creative hybridity. Just as the local print culture during the 19th century parodied ancient European metrical romances, 20th-century arts also parodied old things, as the new American electric medium of film did for *Ibong Adarna*. This is 20th century's marvel for, thanks to the inventor of moving images,

the ability to quote and see cultural value is repeatedly operationalized, although in a twisted hybrid recontextualized form.

Some cultural critics, however, were not happy with these borrowings since they always measure the local against external standards, such as comparing *comedia* with live performance by opera and operetta companies from Europe or violently forcing the local *comedia* to the poetic styles of imported *libros de cavellerias* (books of chivalry), which became readily available after the globalized traffic between metropole and colony increased with the advent of the opening of Suez Canal. For example, during the late 19th century, Spanish cultural critic Vicente Barrantes derided the Philippine *comedia* as inferior and derivative of European performances. He negatively opined that the locally transformed source texts are inferior because he misses precisely the point that although it seems that borrowing entailed homage to its sources, the resultant hybrid form is unique, for local sensibility is always a tendency in acts of parodic incorporation. These hybrid texts are therefore incomparable to that hypothetical standard or ideal, which is always already external to that hybridity. Recent journalistic criticism often repeats what Barrantes had said. The same negative reading of Philippine expression is resonated in a review of the music of *Ibong Adarna* in which Gidds Cadiz said that “the glorious music of Francisco Buencamino Sr. and Jr. *has warped considerably*” (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 9, 2005). What makes such a remark untenable is that Cadiz compared hybridized expression with its source in Hollywood. Again, standards are external to the indigenous arts’ aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> For truly, one does not do justice to a hybrid text because it is already a recontextualized expression.

In this paper, I highlighted the nature of this recontextualization as more fundamental to understanding the music hybridity of *Ibong Adarna*. At a superficial level, the resultant hybrid expression can be said to be a *reflection* of the composer’s self. Indeed, this is true because Buencamino was quite familiar with coexisting genres heard in the milieu where he lived, from church and plaza of late Spanish period to the disembodied music of the age of mechanical reproduction in the early American colonial

period—that is, when listening to radio and watching films began to be a colonial habitus for urban Filipinos. At deeper level, however, it seemed as if composing for these “mimetically capacious” machines had touched Buencamino’s inner ear, for it did not matter to him to mix archaic speech style with contemporary popular Philippine music. In a way, his act of recontextualizing the familiar via the strange utterance of the “untranslatable” (the archaic element), producing a hybridity, brought about a difference to the parody and thus affording the body to see the enduring Philippine cultural value for presence.

An eminent literary theorist during the 1920s, Eufronio Alip had said that *Ibong Adarna* borrowed only the form of metrical romance; in substance, the myth expresses Filipino soul (1935, p. 15). If this is right, then it seems that by parodic hybridity, Buencamino reflexively saw his own self in the two important scenes. Through the ironic mixing of the strange, uncanny speech of bygone comedia into the familiar idioms of Hispanized Philippine sarsuwela and Americanized Philippine bodabil, he effectively expressed the reconstrual of the familiar. This ironic distancing reflects the content of the myth itself: the enigma of why the Adarna bird of unknown origin has a meaning to the Kingdom of Bernadia and why beings of alterity—the Negritos—had to dance in concluding the narrative. These strange things are necessary for, as technology of remembering, they facilitate the recognition of relationships. The presence/absence of the mythic bird in the story is a catalyst for realizing the imagination of a kingdom as an entity larger than the self (society), while the dance of the Negritos allegory reconstitutes self-other relationships that must be constantly upheld via discipline. Perhaps more than a “rhetorical strategy” then, irony (which is common to both mimicry and parody) can also be seen as a prosthetic device for clarifying the familiar via the strange. As a tool, it can even be made of use by producers and viewers consensually to *conjure up things* that have not yet come.

## MUSIC TRANSCRIPTIONS (EXCERPTS ONLY)

Berbania Palace music: Fanfare and March music

The first excerpt consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a fanfare-like melody with eighth-note patterns and a final half-note. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a simple harmonic accompaniment with whole notes and eighth-note patterns.

The second excerpt consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a simple melody with quarter and eighth notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Kingdom of Crystals

The first excerpt consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and features a complex melody with various time signatures (3/4, 5/4, 3/4, 5/4) and a key signature of two flats. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a simple accompaniment with whole notes and rests.

The second excerpt consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and features a complex melody with various time signatures (5/4, 3/4, 5/4, 3/4) and a key signature of two flats. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a simple accompaniment with eighth-note patterns and rests.



## Introduction to Bird song

The musical score for 'Introduction to Bird song' is written in 6/8 time and consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a chordal accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece concludes with a short melodic phrase in the treble staff and a whole rest in the bass staff.

## Bird song

The musical score for 'Bird song' is written in 3/4 time and consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a chordal accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece concludes with a short melodic phrase in the treble staff and a whole rest in the bass staff.

## First dance of the Negritos

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). It begins with a series of eighth-note chords, followed by a measure of a full chord, and then continues with eighth-note chords. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

The second system continues the piece. The upper staff features a measure with a four-measure rest, followed by eighth-note chords and a final measure with a half note. The lower staff continues with eighth-note accompaniment, including a measure with a four-measure rest.

The third system shows more complex rhythmic patterns. The upper staff includes sixteenth-note runs and a measure with a four-measure rest. The lower staff continues with eighth-note accompaniment, also featuring a measure with a four-measure rest.

The fourth system concludes the piece. The upper staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with a melody of quarter notes and a final half note. The lower staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat, with a bass line of quarter notes and a final half note.

Second dance of the Negritos

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in 4/4 time. The treble staff contains a sequence of chords and melodic fragments, including eighth-note patterns and sixteenth-note runs. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line and chords. The second system also consists of two staves, continuing the piece with a few final chords in both the treble and bass staves.

## Notes

- 1 Paper presented in the panel “Cultural Hybridity of the Philippines” convened by Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes in the Second Philippine Studies Conference of Japan, November 14, 2010. Original version was presented in Dr. Christi-Anne Castro’s panel on “Performing Tradition and Hybridity in Southeast Asia” in the conference of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, October 22, 2010.
- 2 This common meaning of parody derives from its etymology, *parodia*, in Greek, “counter song” (or para + odos). Another meaning of “para-” is “beside,” and Hutcheon (2000) emphasizes this in the context of her argument that parody is “double-voiced” (p. 32).
- 3 To some scholars, particularly those who do not recognize the “worldliness” of parody, hybridity cannot be imputed. But examining parody in the context of postcolonialism, the two concepts are naturally linked. Also, not all hybridity is parodic.
- 4 Levinson (2006) distinguishes this from “internal cinematic narrator” (following Chatman’s), which music can assume to be its agent. The “external film narrator” is the director of the film. The “internal cinematic narrator” is construable to the “narrator” that the narrative itself provides, whose agency is on the level of the fictional world that the “internal narrator” is narrating.
- 5 To explore the difference, the 1955 film version changes the villain from Pedro to his mother, who is construed as a witch, an outsider to the kingdom. The sibling rivalry would have been contradictory to the moral of the story, although the mother hating her children would have the same effect. Nonetheless, as the mother is an outsider to the kingdom, LVN in 1955 must have thought that this is a better solution than sibling rivalry.
- 6 Awit is also formal poetry, but it differs principally from korido by its dodecasyllabic lines.
- 7 For example, writing during the 1910s, Severino Reyes (or “Lola Basyang”) wrote negatively against comedia, praising the aesthetics of sarsuwela.
- 8 The 1955 LVN remake of the film changes the plot to the stepmother, who was a witch plotting to kill her son.
- 9 In my summary, I will skip mentioning Diego, the second son, because he does not play a crucial role in the main structure of the story.
- 10 And the story leaves the reader with no clue as to where the bird really went from then on.
- 11 In the 1941 film, Leonora was alone, but in the printed korido, she was with a sister.
- 12 The bird in earlier scenes of the film also sings to Juan in the mountain and also to Diego (Juan’s older brother but who is lesser evil), but never to Pedro who embodies the dark side of humanity.

- 13 On this issue, see Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song* (2009).
- 14 The latest and most comprehensive treatment on this topic can be found in the book by David Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Another study is by Christi-Anne Castro on the Philippine *mestizaje*. The themed issue on music hybridity of *Humanities Diliman* (vol. 7, no. 1 [2010]) is also useful.
- 15 In this review, many aspects of the 1941 film—from costuming and sets to cinematography—are compared with their Hollywood counterparts; it therefore seems an anachronistic reading of a hybrid text that demands a counter reading.

## References

- Alip, E. M. (1935). *The "Ibong Adarna": A Filipino metrical romance*. *Unitas* (August 1935): 87-102.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. M. Holquist, (Ed.). Austin: University of Texas.
- Canclini, N. G. (1995). *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for entering and leaving modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Castro, C. A. (2010). Subjectivity and hybridity in the age of interactive internet media: The musical performances of Charice Pempengco and Arnel Pineda. *Humanities Diliman* 7(1): 1-23.
- Eugenio, D. L. (1987). *Awit and corrido: Philippine metrical romances*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- Fansler, D. S. (1916). Metrical romances in the Philippines. *Journal of American Folklore*, 29 (112), 203-234.
- Gruzinski, S. (2002). *The mestizo mind: The intellectual dynamics of colonization and globalization*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Hannerz, U. (1987). The world in creolization. *Africa*, 57 (4), 546-559.
- Hutcheon, L. (2000). *A theory of parody: The teaching of twentieth-century art forms*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Irving, D. (2010). *Colonial counterpoint: Music in early modern Manila*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, J. (2006). *Contemplating art: Essays on aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Lumbera, B. (1967). Florante at Laura and the formalization of tradition in Tagalog poetry. *Philippine Studies*, 15 (4), 545-575.
- Manuel, E. A. (1995). *Dictionary of Philippine biography*. Vol. 4. Quezon City: Filipiniana Publications.
- Rafael, V. (2006). *The promise of the foreign: Nationalism and the technics of translation in the Spanish Philippines*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc.
- Tomlinson, G. (2009). *Metaphysical song*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Villa, L. (1952). Romance and corrido: A comparison of some folk tale motifs in English and Philippine metrical romances. *Social Science and Humanities Review*, 17 (8), 8-20.