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True Fictions, Women's Narratives, and Historical Trauma

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In this anthology of essays about Philippine cinema, geopolitics takes off from the post-World War II détente foreign policy of the United States to illuminate issues of transparency of power and power relations. It lays bare the geopolitics of the visible in order to render the almost invisible working operation that make both visibility and invisibility possible. Geopolitics then refers to a transnational cultural politics that effects the implementation of globalizing forces in the local national landscape, and demonstrates how the local might become a trope for situating past and ongoing globalization drives.

GEOPOLITICS OF THE VISIBLE

Some of the questions this anthology seeks to answer are the following: How has the visible image been constructed such that it implicates issues of colonial, imperial, and nationalist representations and discourses? How might we begin to understand the notion of "geopolitics" in order to track down the discourses of the visible? How has geopolitics, the mobilization of a global discourse of capital, liberal democracy and modernity, been rendered in the Philippines? These questions necessarily involve a dialectics of the global and the local, looking at both globalization of the local and localization of the global.

...

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TOLENTINO



GEOPOLITICS OF THE VISIBLE

ESSAYS ON PHILIPPINE FILM CULTURES

Edited by ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO



ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Contents

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Introduction

ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO

vii

I. MAPPING THE GEOPOLITICAL TERRAIN

Philippine Film History as Postcolonial Discourse
JOEL DAVID

3

Orapronobis Against Philippine Totalitarianism (2000)
JONATHAN L. BELLER

13

The Filipino Presence in Hollywood's *Bataan* Films
JEAN VENGUA GIER

35

II. CONSTESTABLE IMAGERIES AND IMAGINARIES

The Noranian Imaginary
NEFERTI X. M. TADIAR

61

The Dissemination of Nora Aunor
PATRICK D. FLORES

77

Nardong Putik in the Genealogy of Tagalog Folk Heroes
FRANCIS A. GEALOGO

96

The Filipina OCW In Extremis
ALICE G. GUILLERMO

106

Historico-Geographical Imaginations
in Ishmael Bernal's *Nunal sa Tubig*
EULALIO R. GUIEB III

125

III. REPRESENTATIONS OF IMPERIAL AND STATE VIOLENCE

True Fictions, Women's Narratives, and Historical Trauma BLISS CUA LIM	145
Pax Americana and the Pacific Theater SHARON DELMENDO	162
RAM and the Filipino Action Film ALFRED W. MCCOY	194
The Criminal State and the Chinese in Post-1986 Philippines Caroline S. Hau	217

IV. GEOPOLITICAL CINEMA AND IDENTITY FORMATION

"Art Naïf" and the Admixture of Worlds FREDRIC JAMESON	245
Cinema of the "Naïve" Subaltern in Search of an Audience E. SAN JUAN, JR.	264
<i>Aliwan Paradise</i> and the Work of Satire in the Age of Geopolitical Entertainment ROBERT SILBERMAN	277
Goodbye America (<i>The Bride Is Walking . . .</i>) CAMILLA BENOLIRAO GRIGGERS	290
Notes	319
References	353
About the Contributors	370
Index of Films Cited	372
Index of Personal and Place Names	374
Subject Index	379

Introduction

ROLANDO B. TOLENTINO

Geopolitics refers to the Cold War praxis of placing everything under close scrutiny of partisanship, the transparency of locating democratic and communistic domains, no matter how disjunctured they are. What it does not overtly state is the literal and epistemic violence inflicted in demarcating and implementing the proper domain of individual, collective, and national beings and territories. The covert operations of the primal Cold War organizations—the Central Intelligence Agency, the US State Department, the military-industrial complex, and even the United Nations—became architects of reconceptualizing and monitoring postwar national development and citizenry. In institutionalizing a new world order, the Cold War infrastructures engendered covert operations—performed through the retechnologization and dissemination of information primarily for military use—that resulted in literal and epistemic effects, especially in and among the postcolonial states. The covert operations manifested themselves through visible effects, oftentimes mere traces of a massive logistical offensive.

In this anthology of essays about Philippine cinema, geopolitics takes off from the post-World War II detente foreign policy of the United States to illuminate issues of transparency of power and power relations. It lays bare the geopolitics of the visible in order to render the almost invisible working operation that make both visibility and invisibility possible. Geopolitics then refers to a transnational cultural politics that effects the implementation of globalizing forces in the local national landscape, and demonstrates how the local might become a trope for situating past and ongoing globalization drives.

The visible—whether as a whole or through ruptures—invokes a codification of the Real as experienced in the triple dialectics of history, geography, and modernity. To render the visible as real is to contextualize the visible in the invisible. The invisible—both psychical and global capital drives—materializes the visible. Both visible and invisible, however, are always already encoded in the geopolitical machine of both global and local orders.

True Fictions, Women's Narratives, and Historical Trauma

BLISS CUA LIM

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True Fictions

Trinh T. Minh-Ha has noted,

When history separated itself from story, it started indulging in accumulation and facts. Or it thought it could... Story-writing becomes history-writing, and history quickly sets itself apart, consigning story to the realm of tale, legend, myth, fiction, literature. Then, since fictional and factual have come to a point where they mutually exclude each other, fiction, not infrequently, means lies, and fact, truth...

Literature and history once were/still are stories: this does not necessarily mean that the space they form is undifferentiated, but that this space can articulate on a different set of principles, one which may be said to stand outside the hierarchical realm of facts. On the one hand, each society has its own politics of truth; on the other hand, being truthful is being in the in-between of all regimes of truth.¹

Poised precariously on the knife-edge between documentary evidence and fictional license, true fictions foreground the instability of generic boundaries that rest on the notion of "truth." But generic classification based on the veridical character of narratives says little about the inherent truth or falsity of a text. A "true story" is a story to which a particular audience attributes truth: the events that it relates are held to have occurred. Conversely, an "untrue story" is one that is not believed to have really transpired. The terms *true story* and *untrue story* are thus a kind of shorthand for the issue of belief, but this terminology pulls in the other direction toward an unquestioned distinction between actuality and falsehood, history and fiction. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha's provocative remarks suggest, generic distinctions between story and history, the fictional and the factual, are less a function of inherent truth-value than an indication of the importance and authority attributed to certain texts by a community of readers.

Any schema of narratives that rests on truth and belief must be read against the historical horizon of power.

A fictionalized true story is interesting precisely because it mobilizes generic expectations across this fictional/factual divide. The docudrama, for example, asks viewers to attribute a *degree* of veracity to the narrative. At the same time, its representation of real historical events is always subtended by a kind of disclaimer, a reminder that the truth has been “fictionalized” for dramatic purposes, that the characters in the narrative, for example, are not nonactors but film stars.

This essay considers *The Fatima Buen Story* (Mario O’Hara 1994) in relation to the larger question of how fictional narratives that purport to represent the real function as a collective, public response to traumatic historical events.² Through a close analysis of the film, this essay explores the implications of this “fiction based on real events” for the moviegoing audience’s confrontation with history, for the narrativization of traumatic memory, and for the relation of a fictional “true story” to the social world of “real events.”



Lead character (Kris Aquino) writhes in pain in *The Fatima Buen Story*.

Fatima Buen belongs to a cycle of “true stories” centered on women’s lives that emerged in popular Philippine cinema in the nineties. The first half of the 1990s saw a seeming deluge of highly profitable docudramas about the turbulent lives of “deviant” Filipino women. Women with AIDS, overseas contract workers accused of murder, and victims of gruesome sex crimes became particularly visible in film genres that claimed to faithfully recount their life stories. While clearly akin to earlier biopics centering upon men, the women-centered film biographies epitomized by *Fatima Buen* represent a significant departure from their predecessors. By thematizing the violent and deeply traumatic experiences of women under duress, these true fictions graft social and national anxieties onto a gendered body subjected to sexual violence.

The opening intertitles of *Fatima Buen* begin thus: “This film is based on real events, gleaned from accounts given by Ms. Fatima Buen, newspaper coverage,

and other sources.”³ Along with the film’s title, the prescriptive prologue situates *Fatima Buen* generically as a “film bio,” claiming some adherence to autobiographical expression. The prologue also trumpets the film’s supposed commitment to journalistic impartiality and the public good: “The primary objective of this film is to truthfully promote law and justice in Philippine society without partiality to the interests of any individual or group.” In keeping with the sober, high-minded tone of many of the films in this cycle, the intertitles make no mention of Regal films’ commercial interest in purchasing the rights to a sensational tabloid story.⁴

A “fiction based on real events” diverges significantly from the referential claims of other kinds of fiction. On the one hand, the hybridized “true story” contains references to the real that are not quite those of a journalistic report; on the other, its references are somewhat stricter than they would be if this were Darna’s story, not Fatima Buen’s.⁵ As a fictionalized account, the film entails our recognition that its knowledge about the world cannot be verified the way that nonfictional propositions are.⁶ Yet, at the same time, the social and historical world remains the receding horizon of its expression.

What Derek Paget has called “the promise of fact” in popular British and American true stories underscores the market value of truth, an appeal to the consumer to buy (and experience through buying) “what really happened.”⁷ The commodification of factuality coincides with a pervasive cynicism about the very possibility of objective information.⁸ The history of censorship battles in the Philippines suggests that both the public and the authorities are well aware of the political valence of historical reenactments. It is widely recognized that a true-to-life story can become a means of proffering a politically interested account of history as history itself.⁹ Moreover, in the context of increasing skepticism about the news media’s claim to impartiality, the true fiction’s simultaneous adherence to journalistic record and fictional license does not so much reinforce these generic boundaries as confirm the suspicion that such distinctions are impossible to uphold.¹⁰

By reenacting a series of horrendous events in the life of a criminalized woman, *Fatima Buen* falls within the parameters of what the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* calls a “true-to-life film biography.”¹¹ This reenactment is only one of many such films produced for Filipino moviegoers who, from 1993 to about 1995, showed themselves to be particularly receptive to film biographies of suffering women and to a new cycle of “fictional true stories” about women whose deaths involved bloodcurdling acts of sexual violence. The commercially successful “massacre film” cycle appears to have taken its name from the motion picture *Vizconde Massacre Story, God Help Us!* (Carlo J. Caparas 1993), which retells the story of the ghastly triple murder of a young girl, her sister, and her mother by the girl’s spurned suitor.¹² Both the massacre film and the woman’s biopic are characterized by referential claims, a focus on female suffering, and an emphasis on sex and violence.¹³ They depict real crimes against

women that involve rape, mutilation, and murder. In terms of genre, these films are an admixture of the melodrama and the action flick and, like the docudrama, combine feature film practice and journalistic news reportage. Significantly, these films often articulate radical social critique within the terms of patriarchal voyeurism. Though fixed upon the spectacle of women done to death by eroticized violence, they also frame these tragedies as stories of social injustice, since the perpetrators are often political authorities or the elite.¹⁴

Like the massacre film and other recent film biographies of suffering women, *Fatima Buen* recounts the true story of a victim rather than a hero. Its recreation of a woman's life story relies on a retrospective gaze at gruesome events and a search for a moral in the telling. In contrast to the hagiographic film biographies of (mostly male) nationalist heroes, the woman's film biography elaborates on the heroine's victimization, often in the vocabulary of soft-core pomography. The contemporaneousness of films about raped women or exploited domestic workers makes these films crucially vulnerable to charges of influence-peddling by implicated parties and of exploiting their subjects, whose real lives can be adversely affected by film biography.¹⁵

Familiar Horrors

Seth Feldman has observed that

The act of seeing the re-creation after being taught the history, reading the news, or living through the period is essentially narcissistic; we are looking at something that is already part of ourselves. Further satisfaction is derived from the communal sharing of an event and the mass catharsis inherent in jointly exposing social anxieties, experiencing the retelling of a familiar horror.¹⁶

His cogent observation on the "narcissistic" and "communal" satisfaction of watching our own history reenacted on film presupposes that one of the most potent collective responses to the "familiar horror" of historical violence is to "retell" it. The question, at its core, thus becomes the possibility of confronting history via aesthetic representation.

I would argue that *Fatima Buen* and similar film biographies of victimized women can be read as social responses to lived violence. In the face of events so inordinate as to exceed understanding, the filmic recounting of historical violence constitutes a prevalent means of responding to and experiencing traumatic occurrences in the public sphere. That this response should take the form of a filmic fictional narrative raises several questions. What does the cinematic representation of traumatic events tell us, by analogy, about any possibility of our confrontation with history? What happens to the remembered accounts of the survivor once they are narrativized into a film "based on her life

story"? How do we, as readers, puzzle out the links between this fictional film, "based on real events," to our "world" of "real events"? And how can we understand the social ramifications of a personal experience of overwhelming violence, the social dimension of a text that testifies to trauma, the cultural assumptions put into play when we attempt to give expression to incomprehensible events in narrative form?

Trauma and the Negativity of Reference

The notion of trauma alerts us to the duality of injury: it is both a wound to the body, the moment of the blow, *and* its internalized reception. Trauma is the state, psychological or behavioral, that results from such a hurt. Its symptoms are widely acknowledged to be twofold: first, a propensity to relive the traumatic experience via "repetitive, intrusive recollections or recurrent dreams of the event," and second, a "numbing or reduced responsiveness to the outside world."¹⁷ Much can be learned from this preliminary description. For one, the traumatized person is subject to the *intrusion of the past into the present*, simultaneous with an inability to adequately cope with that present. The symptomology of the disorder likewise situates the root of the indisposition not in the moment of the trauma but *after the fact*. Cathy Caruth writes that the "pathology" of trauma derives from the "*structures of its experience or reception*: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event."¹⁸

Cathy Caruth has thus provocatively theorized the traumatic disorder as a "symptom" of an "impossible history," a history which one experiences incompletely in its "immediacy," precisely because of its inordinateness, its unthinkableness, but which haunts one insistently and, more importantly, "belatedly." For Caruth to argue then that the experience of trauma is analogous to the experience of history is to assert that like trauma, history cannot be fully and adequately known in the proximity of its presence. The historical event, like the moment of injury, grows in significance with the passing of time, and thus eludes our simultaneous apprehension, attesting thereby to the "inherent latency of the event."¹⁹

The body of work on trauma by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman has attempted to bring trauma theory into conversation with cultural theory, framing, via analogy, a discussion around the negativity of reference in aesthetic representation.²⁰ Geoffrey Hartman submits that trauma theory "recasts, in effect, an older question: what kind of knowledge is art, or what kind of knowledge does it foster?"²¹ How do we represent a history whose truth is always only incompletely known? Insisting on the negativity of aesthetic reference means, to my mind, foregrounding the "aboutness" of films which claim to be

about the real. Trinh T. Minh-Ha has persuasively assailed the documentary's claim to have overcome the distance between representation and truth:

Truth, even when "caught on the run," does not yield itself either in names or in filmic frames; and meaning should be prevented from coming to closure at either what is said or what is shown. Truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning. And what persists between the meaning of something and its truth is the interval, a break without which meaning would be fixed and truth congealed.²²

The biopic attempts to disavow the interval, the aboutness of aesthetic referentiality, in order to present meaning as truth. This disavowal can be denaturalized as a set of generic conventions, a code implicitly shared by producers and audiences as to what constitutes being "true" to the eponymous life that is the "source" of the film. The biographical film's claim to be "about" real historical subjects is characteristic of a certain regime of truth, a referential promise that signifies a paradoxical proximity and distance from that which it attempts to retell.

The negativity of aesthetic reference has been seen as analogous to the experience of trauma precisely because the incompletely registered event, and its belated, repetitive memory, point to the interval between the unthinkable event and the effort to think through it via narrative. Hartman suggests that the interval between traumatic experience and narrative memory is analogous to the gap between experience (what is not fully thinkable) and knowledge (experience made meaningful) which figurative discourse epitomizes. For Hartman, trauma, like aesthetic representation, "relates to the negative moment in experience, to what in experience has not been, or cannot be, adequately experienced."²³

To my mind, the emergence of women-centered true fictions in nineties Philippine cinema is tied to the national public's need to work through contemporary historical events that cannot be adequately experienced or understood without shattering prevailing assumptive schemes. The audiences of films like *Fatima Buen* watched films about crimes and criminals whose stories were yet ongoing at the time of the screenings. In many cases, the legal suits involved in the actual circumstances had not yet reached their conclusion when the films were made. There is a way, then, in which the initial viewers of such films can be said to have been possessed by a recollection of heinous occurrences which had yet to be fully understood or avenged. The realization that the events had been only partially comprehended in no way precluded cultural practices which sought to testify to the violence of those recent events. Clearly, an element of commercial exploitation is entailed; film producers are keen to

release a film while the events which it recounts are still fresh in the public mind. At the same time, the box-office appeal of nineties true fiction films about women suggests that moviegoers were, in fact, vitally interested in seeing sensational events dramatized even before the meanings of these stories had been officially fixed via judicial resolutions.



Batman guns down several people in a confidence scam gone wrong.

Indeed, implicit in my argument thus far is an assumption that the violence endured by the individual, once it has been made public, becomes a collective social experience. The public outcry over the exploitation of women overseas contract workers (OCWs) in recent years is only one very powerful example of the way in which the struggles of particular women can be experienced collectively, and symbolically, as an intensely felt figuration of a gendered national predicament. *The Flor Contemplacion Story* (Joel Lamangan 1995), for example, details the execution of a Filipino contract worker in Singapore for a murder it is widely believed she did not commit. This film, and other OCW docudramas, can be read as public expressions of outrage over the Philippine government's indifferent collusion with wealthier nations where Filipinos suffer indignities that too often culminate in violent death. The fact that news media and film producers have cynically and profitably capitalized on the plight of Filipina OCWs suggests that national feeling can often be experienced as spectatorship. Filipinos are willing to pay to watch and thus participate in the spectacle of their own fraught and painful history.

If personal narratives of trauma are to be understood as resonating with the collective concerns of a film public, then we must expand our conception of the individual experience of suffering in order to acknowledge the felt injury of a community. Kai Erikson proposes that we distinguish between the victim's "individual trauma" and the "collective trauma" felt by the community:

By *collective trauma*...I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the pre-

vailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with "trauma." But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists ... and that an important part of self has disappeared.²⁴

Clinical psychologists have also asserted that the loved ones who survive the injured person, though accorded no legal recognition as victims, also partake of the "burdens of victimization." Bard, Arnone, and Nemiroff have used the term "survivor-victims" to designate those members of the community who outlive the slain, thus highlighting for us the social aspect of trauma.²⁵ As Cathy Caruth has pointed out, there are really two stories involved in any recollection of traumatic violence: "the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival."²⁶

Given the voyeuristic aspects of fiction films which reenact the sexual violence to which actual women have been subjected, a certain degree of spectatorial pleasure is doubtless available to some viewers. Nonetheless, a not negligible amount of fellow-feeling with the victims is shared by the audience that outlives them, especially in massacre films in which the protagonists are almost always portrayed in a sympathetic light. Like other contemporary true-to-life stories, *Fatima Buen* recounts a historical moment that the spectator has also just lived through, thus achieving a sense of felt immediacy. Of course, the bind is that an individual account does not go seamlessly into the public memory without first being fundamentally transformed. The demands of narrative are social demands, and it is to this that I wish now to turn.

Narration as a Social Act

Roberta Culbertson writes,

To return fully to the self as socially defined, to establish a relationship again with the world, the survivor must tell what happened... In so doing it becomes possible to return the self to its legitimate social status as something separate, something that tells, that recounts its own biography, undoing the grasp of the perpetrator and reestablishing the social dimension of the self lost in the midst of violation...

What we normally call memory is not the remembered at all of course, but a socially accepted fabrication. Memory is always in the end subjected to those conventions which define the believable.²⁷

A film based on a life story implicitly postulates the life story as somehow authentic, whereas in truth the story of any life is in a crucial sense a textual con-

coction, constrained by narrative expectations like linearity and causality to produce experience as meaningful. The recital of a life history is proof of having assimilated overwhelming occurrences. In the story we tell ourselves and others about our life, an assumptive schema has somehow succeeded in translating the inordinate quality of experience into something that can be grasped. As Culbertson points out, the trauma survivor does not so much live to tell the tale; rather, she is only able to go on with life insofar as she can bring herself to tell it.

The prologue of *Fatima Buen* claims that the film is based on both Ms. Buen's personal accounts and media coverage about her. Yet this assertion of accuracy is complicated by Buen's denunciation of the film. Buen refused to attend the press conference for the film and charged that in hiring Frank Rivera, a scriptwriter she had never met, Regal Films had reneged on its promise to use the script she authorized. Her lawyer, Lorenzo Sanchez, was instructed to file a temporary restraining order in order to prevent the film's imminent release.²⁸

This is not to say, however, that a cinematic account authorized by Buen herself would necessarily guarantee freedom from distortion. The story of Fatima Buen is, like all other life stories, highly textualized material—tabloid coverage in Tony Calvento's column, "Hotline," had codified her experience into a web of familiar tropes even prior to the film's exhibition. In Calvento's popular column, Buen was depicted as a promiscuous, materialistic femme fatale who managed to escape imprisonment in the Manila City Jail (where she was held on charges of illegal recruitment and qualified theft) with the help of a prison guard, Guard Officer 1 Ramil Quisi-Quisi, who had fallen prey to her charms.²⁹ In a two-part article entitled "Fatima Buen: All in the Name of Love," published a month before the film's release in 1994, Calvento recounted events that took place the prior year in present tense, thus mimicking the effect of cliff-hanger endings associated with serialized novels. Calvento's sensationalized reportage framed the prison break as an ongoing, morally charged drama involving adultery, government corruption, and injustice. In his column, the prison guard, Quisi-Quisi, is a man so blinded by Buen's charms that he stands to lose everything he has—family, occupation, social standing—all in the name of love.³⁰ In the second installment of the article, Calvento recounts his interview with Buen upon her arrest and return to the Manila City Jail:

I asked her, if it was really true that she was not guilty of the crime of illegal recruitment and that she was ready to answer all the counts leveled against her in court, why then did she escape [from] the Manila City Jail?

She flashed another smile and candidly replied, "Gaya ng title ng article sa column mo tungkol sa akin, [Like the title of your column about me,] it was ALL IN THE NAME OF LOVE."

Fatima Buen stood up and left the room, leaving me staring ahead silently with a million and one things up [*sic*] my mind.³¹

On one level, Calvento's memory of the interview is consistent with his self-serving assertion that his column influenced the decisions of the very social actors involved in the unfolding events. On another level, his account of the interview may be read as indexing Buen's own canny awareness of the reductive terms in which her experiences were being cast in the public eye. Ironically, her decision to adhere to Calvento's stereotypical frame leads Calvento himself to feel dissatisfied with the limits of her abridged, obliging account. By the end of the interview, Calvento finds himself pining inquisitively for all that his own narrative has rendered unsayable.

Fatima's Story

In the film, Fatima's story is retrospectively related by her mother, a wise and well-meaning woman who has inherited the gift of divination from the matriarchs of her family. This maternal narration portrays Fatima as headstrong, sexually promiscuous, and given to misdeeds. Fatima shares her mother's gifts of divination, and dreams repeatedly of a grim funeral procession in which a statue of the Virgin Mary figures prominently. This dream will recur throughout the film, progressing in length until we fully fathom the meaning of the saintly/funereal train.



Police interrogates Fatima.

Eventually Fatima leaves the country to work in a restaurant in Japan. There, filmed in extreme long shot and back lit so that we can see nothing of their expressions, Fatima's employer gives her a prolonged beating. Despite this visual representation of abuse, the scene solicits little reproof for the employer's actions. Together with the use of extreme long shot, the disjunction between sound and image in this sequence distances the viewer from Fatima's suffering

and displaces blame onto the victim. The mother's voice-over narration explains that Fatima has always been too eager to get ahead at other people's expense, and that this has been the recurring cause of her undoing: "She didn't like being inferior to anyone ... she wanted to be the first, to get ahead, to win an advantage. That's why she was always getting into trouble. Always being accused of one thing or another, often being injured. She was difficult to get to know, and even harder to understand."

The mother's gesture of acknowledging her daughter's victimization, only to displace the blame on Fatima's own willfulness rather than on the social dynamics of domination, is our first taste of the film's moral and political stance toward Fatima's traumatic experiences. Despite its affinities to the OCW docudrama and the massacre film, *Fatima Buen* does not represent its protagonist as innocent of the indignities she must endure. The first time a man in power lays a hand on her, in Japan, the distancing camerawork and the mother's moralizing narration cue the reader to put assumptions concerning well-deserved punishment into play, rather than the more commonly troped righteous anger Filipinos feel when they hear of workers being abused overseas.

Fatima marries and bears a son to whom she is deeply attached (her maternal devotion is important, as it will become her redeeming virtue), but her marriage goes awry. Her descent into corruption begins when she and her husband set up an illegal recruitment agency for Filipinos wanting to work abroad. Her husband abandons her, leaving her to take the fall when the government investigates their illegal business, and Fatima is sent to jail. Once incarcerated, Fatima's lot grows steadily worse: she loses custody of her two young children to her abusive mother-in-law; and she participates in a prison break with a lesbian cellmate, Batman, and a handsome prison guard, Oscar, both of whom are smitten with her. Despite their budding romance, Oscar betrays Fatima to the authorities, and she is recaptured. Batman, on the other hand, is able to elude the authorities, but she is raped by local hoodlums while in hiding.

Incarcerated once again and heartbroken by her lover's treachery, Fatima, pregnant with Oscar's child, is cruelly beaten by hired thugs and suffers a miscarriage. Fatima believes this to be further evidence of Oscar's malice, but the narrative proceeds to show that this was the doing of Fatima's spumed lesbian cellmate, Batman. Eventually Fatima escapes from prison once more, only to witness Oscar gunned down by another prison guard, Leslie, who is also enamoured of Fatima. Grief-stricken, Fatima seeks Batman out and continues the life of a fugitive from the law. But Batman grows increasingly violent and Fatima, repulsed, decides to turn herself in to the authorities and regain some semblance of a normal life with her children. Her decision to make a new start by surrendering herself to the law shatters Batman's dreams of a life with Fatima. Enraged, Batman chases Fatima into a church belfry and rabidly confesses that

she had Fatima beaten up in prison. In this hysterical homophobic denouement, the narration constructs Batman as a butch lesbian crazed with penis envy. Firing a bullet into Fatima, Batman launches into a demented monologue in which she posits her gun as her more potent phallus. The film's moral economy is restored when Batman backs up into a live wire and is electrocuted.

Alone and bleeding to death, Fatima looks up into the church spire and begs for God's mercy: in the film's final dream, the spire is lit with a celestial light and Fatima, her face ethereally illuminated, understands she has been granted salvation. The film closes with Leslie and Fatima, both injured, meeting again in a hospital. Fatima, in a wheelchair, goes down a corridor as iron bars swing shut. Her mother intones that in truth Fatima's life has only just begun, because she has finally found true freedom in repenting of her life of sin.

Narrating/Forgetting

While this summary of the film's key events may suggest a seemingly endless inventory of the violence upon violence, woe upon woe, which one poor girl manages to survive, it is important to realize that *Fatima Buen* is not a disconnected list of traumata but a socially meaningful narrative appropriation of them. Fatima's mother, the embodiment of the narration through her voice of sage remembrance, provides for us, through the narrative anachronies of both analepsis and prolepsis, recapitulation and foreshadowing, a complexly structured story which is both a personal flashback and a "plot of predestination."³²

Indeed, as Gerard Genette so persuasively demonstrated in his analysis of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, "recalls" in a story work to retrospectively change our apprehension of an event, compelling us to revise at some later point in the narrative the expectations and evaluations we formed in the beginning. Seemingly unimportant details gain in value and random occurrences are revealed as related in vital ways. In *Fatima Buen* the mother frequently recapitulates dreams in which she and her daughter see into the future, thus combining both retrospection and anticipation. These flashbacks and flashforwards establish what Genette calls the "omnitemporality" of the narration, the narration's convincing display of its capacity to "hold all of its threads simultaneously, to apprehend simultaneously all of its places and all of its moments, to be capable of establishing a multitude of 'telescopic' relationships amongst them: a ubiquity that is spatial but also temporal."³³

This last point is especially important because Fatima's mother doubles for us as simultaneously a figure of omniscient narration and a character in the story. As a character of limited knowledge, the mother, like Fatima, is confronted by such a host of traumata that the reasons for her daughter's ordeals are fundamentally an enigma, impenetrable to both mother and daughter. In the

immediacy of experience, the harrowing events of Fatima's life can only be registered as unreasoning pain. By the time of the mother's retrospective narration, however, a time when the trauma can be told, the mother's narration boasts the omniscience and omnitemporality which are the province of narrative. Such mastery, however, is afforded only by a belated reevaluation of the experience of trauma.

Ultimately of course, a narrative is experienced both collectively, by the society in which it circulates, and personally, in the "perceptual labor" of its reader. The social and individual aspects of narrative are distinctions that we can perhaps make only heuristically. In practice, the assumptions which a solitary reader brings to bear in puzzling out the probabilities of events in a story are cultural and communal. What one deciphers when one makes sense of a narrative is not merely a chain of causes and effects. To perceive a story is to perceive transformations within an overall pattern, aided by the reader's assessment of the probabilities of what might lie ahead and how the significance of the story's events might finally cohere. This decipherment of overall patterns is made possible by one's familiarity with narrative schemas, which cue one to expect equilibrium, conflict, goals and countergoals, a reinstatement of equilibrium, a moral lesson, and a narration that justifies the way the narrative has chosen to tell the story and demonstrates why the events are worthy of one's attention. As readers, our sense of what is probable in a fiction owe something to our beliefs concerning what can be expected in the world outside the margins of screen or page; our ability to make sense of a story is itself determined by prevailing views of the world.³⁴ If narrative, then, is a perceptual process which is concerned with figuring out what is probable, then its function as a collective response to trauma lies in working out, in socially acceptable ways, a framework in which the unthinkable nature of historical violence becomes expected, or at the very least explained. Edward Branigan writes, "Narrative schema[s]...are a way of working through cultural assumptions and values. Thus, 'causes and effects' emerge, as it were, after the fact as explanatory labels for a sequence of actions viewed under a particular schematic description."³⁵

In retrospect, once we have come to the end of *Fatima Buen* and have, after "revising" our understandings and expectations, "forgotten" the tentative conclusions at which we had previously arrived, the film can be read as a series of transformations in Fatima which make possible the reinstatement of maternal harmony between mother and daughter, and the redemption of Fatima's "venal" soul.³⁶ The narration makes the gamut of Fatima's misfortunes not only plausible but also inevitable by citing sociocultural beliefs regarding the self-destructiveness of the problem-child, who must first suffer the consequences of her own vanity, self-absorption, and obstinacy before she learns to value her mother's loving advice and returns grateful and humbled to the parental fold. The narra-

tive also maintains that the law and the penal system successfully reform the corrupt criminal, despite all evidence to the contrary.

Fatima Buen manages, with some difficulty, to subsume all other generic schemas within the privileged interpretive level: the Christian allegory's salvational vision.³⁷ In contrast to the Christian telos of redemption, the exploitation film's view of prison life radically contests the ideal of reform by depicting the abuses of prison officials, the amorality of government personages, and the coercive character of the law. The audience brings expectations of political critique to the massacre film and the women-in-prison film, and fears of the supernatural to gothic horror.³⁸ This mingling of journalistic exposé and gothic fiction's oneiric discourse is most apparent in scenes that portray the bond of clairvoyance between Fatima and her mother. In such scenes, the audience's knowledge of Fatima's suffering is focalized through her mother, so that her mother's look at behind-the-scenes abuse becomes our own. Ironically, however, it is the mother's narration that ensures that other generic expectations—indignation and horror—are slowly abandoned in favor of a reassuring Catholic schema in which repentance is key. Generic tensions are resolved insidiously, in large part via the wise maternal narration, which helps us to “revise and forget” our shock and indignation over the many forms of violence (against workers, prisoners, lesbians, wives, and mothers) which Fatima has either witnessed or endured.

Unlike most OCW docudramas and massacre films which make a point of underscoring the unspeakable horrors to which the women characters have been subjected, *Fatima Buen* leaves one not aghast but reassured that all that happened was necessary for things to have come out right in the end. Without retrospective knowledge of the film's consoling resolution, the viewer gets to know Fatima as a battered employee, a woman whose children were stolen from her, and an inmate in the Manila City Jail who was assaulted so mercilessly that she suffered a miscarriage. Yet increasingly as the story unfolds, the spectator is encouraged to forget the enormity and offensiveness-to-thought of the heroine's victimization. By the film's end, the ideal spectator has mobilized expectations concerning criminal deviance and the possibility of Fatima's renunciation of wickedness.

The film's climactic turning point is the shouting match between Fatima and her spurned lesbian suitor, Batman. Their exchange establishes the reasons for Fatima's decision to surrender herself to the authorities, to start over by facing the consequences of her wrongdoing. But it also gestures suggestively toward the other meanings that Fatima's life story might have produced within a different narrative schema:

Fatima: I'm giving myself up.

Batman: That's why you left me.

Fatima: I don't want to be like you. I have my children to consider!

Batman: Do you really believe they'll let you off? You'll rot in jail!

Fatima: I want to be free. I didn't do anything wrong.

Batman: You're leaving me.

Fatima: We're different.

Batman: And I'm evil? Is that it? I'm rotten? Yes, I'm evil. Yes, I'm rotten. Are you clean? Are these people clean? What do you think? What is “clean” to you? Is the government clean? Are the police clean? The military? Are the churchgoers clean? Fuck, we're all rotten! All rotten like me!

Fatima: Batman, we're different.

This stunning altercation, punctuated by Fatima's self-righteous refrain, “We're different,” and Batman's thunderous, leveling retort that everyone, not only the criminal, is rotten, is the moment at which the film works hardest to contain Batman's radical critique of social hypocrisy. In the face of overwhelming narrative evidence that government authorities and police officers are corrupt, and the legal and penal systems a sham, Fatima manages to assert sympathetically that the law must be obeyed. Batman tries raucously to contest the displacement of blame upon the social deviant, maintaining that no one is clean, that church, state, and military are all implicated and immoral. In the end, Fatima's version wins the day—she is not like Batman, who is figured as the more fundamentally “other” of the two. In the film's heteronormative Catholic schema, Fatima's redemption is made possible only by sacrificing the lesbian; for only by using the murderous Batman as foil can Fatima, a criminal and a fallen woman, appear worthy of redemption.

Within this schema, Fatima's fears of Death (the grim carriage driver), which culminate in the full-length final funeral dream, in which one of the coffins opens to reveal Fatima inside, are understood as symbolic of her thirst for salvation. Christian repentance is the only true guarantee against death; sex can deny but not forestall the grave. Leslie Baron, the uncouth and unpalatable prison guard, is actually the good lover (she learns from Oscar that appearances deceive); and Batman, the girlfriend who seems to act only out of genuine friendship, cannot, in these narrative terms, be anything but a sick homosexual tormented by her hatred of men, her consistent gestures of selflessness notwithstanding. Finally, all the sinister Christian imagery in the film, from the Marian procession that doubles as a funeral march, to the icon of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that jams the church door Fatima is trying to shut in Batman's murderous face, are revealed, upon hindsight, to have been omens, not of Fatima's undoing, but of her predestined rendezvous with God. The prologue's goal of serving justice is thus belied by the film's espousal of a Christian fable of prodi-

gality and eventual forgiveness. The film's lessons and exhortations are not so much civic as religious.

Flashbacks and the Story-Cure

In *Flashbacks in Film*, Maureen Turim argues that the flashback as a narrative device combines subjective recollection with larger social history, representing collective concerns as personal memories. This focalization of public experience through individual consciousness is not without politically inflected truth-effects: "One of the ideological implications of this narration of history through a subjective focalization is to create history as an essentially individual and emotional experience." According to Turim, the flashback espouses a "logic of inevitability," inasmuch as "certain types of events are shown to have certain types of results without ever allowing for other outcomes than the one given in advance." Turim concludes that the flashback is characteristically "fatalistic," propounding a "didactic history containing moral lessons."³⁹

Within the moralistic fatalism of the film's maternal narration, the experiences of a promiscuous prison inmate who has also been an abused overseas worker and a battered mother are recast as a tale of preordained spiritual rebirth. Narrative has restored the tissues of our prior belief systems by showing that unthinkable violence can be situated causally within a life-story, thereby acquiring the significance in the "total picture" which it lacked when the trauma was seen in isolation as random and inexplicable, an arbitrary terror which one could not predict and thus could not guard against in the future. In *Fatima Buen* the operation of "behavioral self-blame" in the story allows the fictional characters as well as actual viewers who are in agreement with the terms of the narration to locate the origin of excessive maltreatment in Fatima's own immoral attitudes and actions.⁴⁰ Hence, if Fatima turns over a new leaf, she can put prior feelings of humiliation behind her and rest easy knowing she should be safe in years to come. The film has conferred meaning upon and control over the senseless and deeply frightening heap of traumata which Fatima survived, by recasting them as stages which brought her closer to self-realization. We viewers are thus encouraged to connect what we learned from fiction to what we know of the world, in the form of a reassurance that our sense of "symbolic immortality" does not need to be abandoned.⁴¹

Fatima Buen's politics of reassurance is even more insidious because the film, by virtue of its collocation with the OCW docudrama and the massacre film, on some level proffers the life history of its heroine as a figuration of a gendered national predicament. Where OCW docudramas like *Flor Contemplacion* present the heroine's experiences as placeholders for the Filipina immigrant worker's experience of being feminized, brutalized, and exploited in her engagement with global capitalism, *Fatima Buen* recalls such narratives only to displace their

political critique onto questions of personal redemption. *Fatima Buen* alludes to contemporary social anxieties over the fate of Filipino migrant workers, the vulnerability of marginalized women in a patriarchal society, and the bleak prospects for social justice, but occludes these concerns via a retrospective narration which assimilates social trauma to Catholic notions of sin and repentance.

Fatima Buen, a film which purports to realistically testify to historical violence, also works therapeutically to blur the outlines of its offensiveness, weakening the force of its intolerability by exorcising horrific events within a narrative of reassurance. Remembering narratively, one is required to selectively forget. The film's narration places the blame on victims, obscuring any critique of a society that depends on routine violence against, among others, workers, "deviants," and women, to keep the cogs of the system turning. If indeed a fictional film like *Fatima Buen* can be read as a response to lived violence, then the crucial issue for analysis is the way in which events that constitute an affront to existing belief systems are integrated into these same prior assumptive schemes. If the film succeeds in rendering the complexities of history as a coherent narrative, this is only achieved at the cost of muting the traumatic wisdom to which it might have borne eloquent witness.

7. Ibid.
8. Daniel Bromley, "Property Rights as Authority Systems: The Role of Rules in Resource Management," *Emerging Issues in Forest Policy*, ed. Peter N. Nemetz (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 453-70.
9. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass. Basil Blackwell, 1984).
10. Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 105.
11. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 107.
12. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 289.
13. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 124.
14. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 143.
15. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 178-83.
16. I have derived this statement from Lefebvre's "Along with God, nature is dying," from his book *The Production of Space*, 71.
17. Caroline Mills, "Myths and Meanings of Gentrification," in James Duncan and David Ley, eds. *Place/Culture/Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 150.
18. See Lefebvre's chapter on "Contradictory space," 292-451.
19. Ibid.
20. Mario Hernando, s.v. "Ishmael Bernal" and "Nunal sa Tubig," *Focus on Filipino Films: A Sampling, 1951-1982*. 68 p. (Manila: Information Group for the Metropolitan Manila Commission, 1982).
21. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 394.

Notes to Bliss Cua Lim, True Fictions, "Women's Narratives and Historical Trauma," pages 145-161

1. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 119-21.
2. *The Fatima Buen Story*, directed by Mario O'Hara, written by Frank Rivera, performed by Kris Aquino, Perla Bautista, Zoren Legaspi, Janice de Belen, John Regala, and Gina Pareño (Regal Films, 1994).
3. All translations of Filipino dialogue and intertitles are my own.
4. By the nineties, Regal Films' virtual monopoly of the film industry in the prior decade has grown less pronounced; at the same time, however, the company has diversified through the studio's purchase of other production outfits and the establishment of ancillary markets in television.
5. Darna is a legendary superheroine of Philippine folklore and the subject of many popular films.
6. According to Edward Branigan, fiction does enable us to learn something about experience—not by "derivation and confirmation" but rather via "presupposition" and "prior belief." Fictional texts do connect to knowledge of the real world but not by straightforwardly reflecting experience. Rather, the referents of fictional texts are, as Branigan puts it, only "partially determined," requiring us to do the interpretive work of figuring out exactly how the text relates to our (extratextual) experience. *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 195-96.
7. Derek Paget writes, "This promise illustrates how 'the facts' have become a fetish in the twentieth century, and not only in the world of entertainment; it is usually thought that whenever they are produced, they will virtually compel belief. The power of the Fact has been, as it were, leased out to the drama." *True Stories? Documentary Drama on Radio, Screen and Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 3.

8. Linda Williams has written incisively on the paradoxical coexistence of a postmodern "loss of faith in the objectivity of the image" and a "hunger for documentary images of the real" in American popular culture. She notes that "violent trauma has become the emblem of the real in the new vérité genre of the independent amateur video." Her remark brings to mind, in the Filipino context, the generic formula of the massacre film of the early nineties, in which the "real" being represented referred to violent crimes against women. See Linda Williams, "Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46,3 (1993): 10.

9. For example, *Ang Manananggol ni Ruben (Ruben's Defense Attorney)* (1963) was briefly pulled from exhibition due to its controversial adjudication between guilt and innocence in the notorious "rape-slay" case of Annabelle Huggins. See "Censorship," *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson et al., vol. 8: *Philippine Film* (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas [Cultural Center of the Philippines], 1994), 104.

10. The pervasive cynicism regarding claims to journalistic objectivity derives both from the overblown rhetoric of tabloids and the well-known control and ownership of "serious" newspapers by various political personalities.

11. Interestingly enough, the *CCP Encyclopedia* draws a distinction between films based on "history" and those based on "true-to-life stories." For instance, the first Filipino feature films on the national hero, *La Vida de Dr. Jose Rizal* (produced by Edward M. Gross, 1912) and *El Fusilamiento de Doctor Jose Rizal* (produced by Albert Yearsley, 1912), are considered "historical." In contrast, "true-to-life" films recount the lives of notorious, rather than strictly heroic, protagonists. This dubious distinction between "historical" and "true-to-life" films appears to rest on a privileging of official culture over popular forms, since the historical film is based on biographies of national heroes, whereas the true-to-life story draws materials from sensationalistic journalism. See "Sources and Influences," *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* 8:68-70.

12. This is not to say that film biographies of women are new to Philippine cinema—the biopic of a strong woman struggling against great odds, for example, is a melodramatic staple. Rather, 1993 signals the year in which films based on true stories about female victims of sexualized violence came to prominence in the massacre film cycle. Important precursors to the emergence of the massacre film and of film biographies on suffering women in 1993 surfaced in 1991 and 1992: *Emma Salazar Case* (Joey Reyes, 1991), about a domestic helper raped by her employer, and *Magdalena S. Palacol Story* (Jun Cabreira 1991), about a frustrated woman who goes on a killing rampage. Some examples of the massacre film are *Myrna Diones Story, God Have Mercy* (Carlo J. Caparas 1993), *Elsa Castillo Story...Ang Katotohanan (The Truth)* (Laurice Guillen 1994), *The Maggie de la Riva Story: God Why Me?* (Carlo J. Caparas 1994), *Massacre Files* (Joey Romero 1994), and *Marita Gonzaga Rape-Slay* (Carlo J. Caparas 1996).

13. Some of the women-centered film biographies I have in mind include *Dahil Mahal Kita (Because I Love You)*, *The Dolzura Cortez Story* (Laurice Guillen 1993), *Maricris Sison, Japayuki (Sex-worker in Japan)* (Joey Romero 1993), *Comfort Women: A Cry for Justice* (Celso Ad. Castillo, 1994), *The Secrets of Sarah Jane Salazar* (Maryo J. de los Reyes 1994), *The Flor Contemplacion Story* (Joel Lamangan, 1995), *Ipaglaban Mo: Kapag May Katwiran (Fight On, Your Cause Is Just)* (Marilou Diaz-Abaya 1995), and *Victim No. 1: The Delia Maga Story* (Carlo J. Caparas 1995).

14. *Fatima Buen* is collocated with the massacre film for yet another reason: the star persona of Kris Aquino, the daughter of former Philippine President, Corazon Aquino. The casting of Kris Aquino as Fatima Buen, to my mind, alludes intertextually to the many massacre films in 1993 and 1994 in which she played the lead. Kris Aquino's star persona in this period is particularly interesting, because she is a former president's daughter cast as a rape victim in voyeuristic massacre films and a licentious woman repeatedly

brutalized in *Fatima Buen*. In reading her star text, one can entertain several contradictory speculations: first, some part of her appeal in these sordid narratives might have to do with the public's fascination and crossclass identification with an elite actress from two politically powerful families cast, paradoxically, as vulnerable and abject. Second, her marketability might arise from a cynical audience's perverse fascination with seeing a public figure associated with political oligarchy humiliated and violated. Or, conversely, the humanity and liberalism of the Aquino family and political regime (1987-1992) might seem to be confirmed by Kris Aquino's willingness to cross the divide in portraying politically, economically, and sexually disenfranchised characters. This third hypothesis could explain why the President supported her daughter's decision to star in these sexually explicit films. I submit that all three elements, though in tension with one another, were present in Kris Aquino's star persona in this period.

15. The controversy around *Alyas Baby Tsina (Alias: China Baby)* (Marilou Diaz-Abaya 1984) is an older example of this phenomenon.

16. Seth Feldman, "Footnote to Fact: The Docudrama," *Film Genre Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 349.

17. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, "The Aftermath of Victimization: Rebuilding Shattered Assumptions," *Trauma and Its Wake: The Study and Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, ed. Charles R. Figley (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985), 16-17.

18. Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," *American Imago*, 48, 1 (1991): 3.

19. *Ibid.*, 3-8.

20. See Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," *American Imago*, 48, 1 (1991): 13-73; and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

21. Geoffrey H. Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," *New Literary History* 26.3 (Summer 1995): 537.

22. Trinh T. Minh Ha, "Documentary Is/Not a Name," *October* 52 (Spring 1990), 77.

23. Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge," 540.

24. Kai Erikson, *Everything in Its Path* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 154, quoted in Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," *American Imago* 48, 4 (1991): 460.

25. Morton Bard, Harriet C. Amone, and David Nemiroff, "Contextual Influences on the Post-Traumatic Stress Adaptation of Homicide Survivor-Victims," in *Trauma and Its Wake*, ed. Charles R. Figley, vol. 2: *Traumatic Stress Theory, Research, and Intervention* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1986), 293.

26. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

27. Roberta Culbertson, "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Re-counting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self," *New Literary History* 26, 1 (Winter 1995): 179.

28. Tony Calvento, "Fatima: Exploiter or Just a Victim?" *People's Journal*, 21 July 1994, 5.

29. For the purposes of this essay, I refer to three of Calvento's articles in his column "Hotline": "Fatima Buen: All in the Name of Love," *People's Journal*, 2 June 1994, 6; "All in the Name of Love, Part 2," *People's Journal*, 6 June 1994, 8-9; and "Fatima: Exploiter or Just a Victim," cited above.

30. Calvento, "All in the Name of Love," 6.

31. Calvento, "Part 2," 9.

32. Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 40, 67, 69.

33. *Ibid.*, 56, 78.

34. Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, 15-27.
35. *Ibid.*, 29.
36. Branigan explains the process of revising and forgetting in perceiving a story: "As a spectator engages the procedures which yield a story world, something extraordinary occurs: his or her memory of the actual images, words, and sounds is *erased* by the acts of comprehension that they require. Comprehension proceeds by cancelling and discarding data actually present, by revising and remaking what is given" (*Narrative Comprehension and Film*, 83).
37. *Fatima Buen's* evocation of Christian themes is hardly new—a glance at the titles of many early massacre films confirms that mention of God's saving mercy is a staple of certain film biographies.
38. The film's use of figurative, oneiric discourse represents a departure from the strict verisimilitude of other films about overseas contract workers and rape victims. *Fatima Buen* makes use of prophetic dreams that serve a metaphoric function in the narrative. The dark symbolism of the funeral procession and the religious imagery in the film owe more to the Gothic *mise-en-scène* of horror than to the gritty realism of the massacre film cycle.
39. Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 17-18.
40. Janoff-Bulman defines "behavioral self-blame" as "blaming one's own behavior." This "adaptive"-strategy allows people to "believe in the future avoidability of the victimization," to regain a sense of "control" and "relative invulnerability" by supposing that a change in their own behavior can safeguard them from "future victimizations." Apart from restoring prior beliefs in "personal invulnerability" and "positive self-perceptions," behavioral self-blame "provides the victim with a means of making sense of the event...[It] appears to explain why the event happened to the victim in particular—because of something he or she did or failed to do" (Janoff-Bulman, "The Aftermath," 29-30).
41. "In [R.J.] Lifton's concept [he worked with survivors of war and environmental disasters], it is the loss of symbolic immortality caused by the life-threatening experience which wipes out most of the symbolic forms that give life a sense of meaning and continuity with the world and living humans" (James L. Titchener, "Post-Traumatic Decline: A Consequence of Unresolved Destructive Drives," *Trauma and Its Wake*, vol. 2, ed. Charles Figley, 13).

Notes to Sharon Delmendo, "Pax Americana and the Pacific Theater," pages 162-193

1. Nor were contemporary reviewers unaware of the symbiotic relationship between the entertainment and military "theatres." In a 29 May 1945 review Milton Livingston praised *Back to Bataan* as a history of the Philippine military campaign despite his own categorization of the film as a "melodrama." "[P]acked with action thrills and excitement," Livingston wrote, *Back to Bataan* "enjoys the added advantage of reading the screen at a time when our interest is concentrated on that theatre of war." Milton Livingston, "Back to Bataan." Film review in the *Motion Picture Daily*, 5/29/45. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Margaret Herrick Library (henceforth cited as AMPAS) *Back to Bataan* Review File.
2. Made with "the cooperation of the US Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines," *Back to Bataan* was a governmental joint venture.
3. Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. (NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 314.
4. In 1898 the United States claimed the Philippines as a conquest of the Spanish-American War, despite the fact that Filipinos had to a large extent won their war for liberation against the Spanish colonizers they had initiated in 1896. The Treaty of Paris