Mainstream Care Work Films: A New Filipino Genre as an Assertion of Contemporary History

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The paper proposes a postmodernist framework that can be used to analyze the development not only of care work films that emerged from the Filipinos' role in the global care work chain and their increasing power to sustain the Philippine film industry but also of other social phenomena that arise from mass production and mass consumption dynamics. The framework derives from theories of Bakhtinian "dialogism," Foucauldian "discourse," Gramscian "hegemony," and Gladwellian "tipping point" and an assertion that care work films, taken as a "new" film genre, is a valid starting point in the study of contemporary Filipino history shaped by globalization.

***Keywords**: care work films, film genre, production, consumption, meanings, history*

In 1988 Corazon Aquino declared in Hong Kong that the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are the "new heroes" of the Philippines, in recognition of their contribution to the nation's economy. Six year later, Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic, was hanged in Singapore after its court found her guilty of killing a fellow Filipina domestic, Delia Maga, and the latter's young ward. Despite the questions about the merits of that judgment that still remain in many Filipinos' minds, the number of Filipino care workers abroad has continued to increase mostly in North America (United States and Canada), Central Asia (Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and Europe (United Kingdom and Italy), according to Department of Labor and Employment and the Statistics page of the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency website (2007), and now constitutes the largest and fastest growing portion of the country's labor exports.

Canada alone declared the Philippines in 2011 as its top source of immigrants, many of whom arrive as care workers. It is no surprise, then, that Filipinos have become "hypervisible" (Coloma, 2012) and stereotyped as

such. In 2009, 11 years after Contemplacion's death, the fight for legitimacy of Filipino care workers in Canada has led to a change in its labor policy, such that the law became known as the Juana Tejada Law—named after the Filipino care worker who fought for her right until her death to be a permanent resident, despite her initial rejection because of her having been diagnosed with cancer.

Between the deaths of Contemplacion and Tejada, Filipino film superstars took on care worker roles in mainstream films beginning with Joel Lamangan's *The Flor Contemplacion Story* (1995), followed by Rory Quintos' *Anak* [The Child] (2000), Pablo Biglang-awa and Veronica Velasco's *Inang Yaya* [Mother Nanny] (2006), and Chito Roño's *Caregiver* (2008). Care workers have also become a staple in the works of new-breed independent filmmakers since 1995 (when the indie Contemplacion film *Bagong Bayani* [New Hero] was released in the Cinemanila Film Festival). Because care work has become a significant discourse in Filipino films, I posit that they must be seen as constituting a genre worth studying and reflective of contemporary Filipino milieu.

A new Filipino film genre?

The Philippines, despite its robust film production until Martial Law, has not produced anything quite similar to India's Bollywood—a category drawing affinity to the fantasy factory of Hollywood yet completely in a league of its own. Since the birth of filmmaking in the country, Filipinos have only, more or less, watched and followed what Europeans and Americans produced. Between 1897, when the first four 60mm films were screened at the Salon de Pertierra in Escolta, and 1972, when Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in the Philippines, Filipino movies were primarily modeled after conventions of and developments in the West. Eventually, the Philippine movie industry became more like America's profit-motivated Hollywood (Ek-Ek, 2007). This model of filmmaking came to be known as the "First cinema" ("Third Cinema," n.d.).

It was only in 1982 that venues open for film innovation were encouraged by the Marcos government. The films in the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines echoed the spirit of Second and Third cinemas—the former focused on "challenging social constraints" and the latter on "fighting the (first cinema) system" ("Third Cinema," n.d.). These two alternative cinematic paradigms were not mutually exclusive, but evaded Hollywood conventions and refused to be considered aligning with a single type of film aesthetic or discourse. They refused to be enclosed in any box, including the construct of the genre. This meant that any film following a formula would emerge least likely in the Second or Third cinema, and most likely flourish in the

First or mainstream cinema. It is in this context that I argue that genre, as a concept, is most meaningful in commercial film production.

Hence, I assert that care work films, to be considered a genre, must arise from the production and consumption dynamics inherent in mainstream (for profit) filmmaking, and not in convention-breaking alternative, experimental, or independent cinematic pursuits. Assuming such to be the foundation of my thesis, how are we to understand the birth of this "new" film genre constituted by care work films? Such a question is a historical inquiry that requires an analytical framework. Freedman and Medway (1994) echoed Miller (1984) by positing that "the number of genres in any society…depends on the complexity and diversity of society" (p. 36)—a claim that aligns with the postmodernism that characterizes contemporary life. If so, how do we account for that complexity or diversity in the development of this genre?

Clarifying "Genre"

The French word *genre* means "kind" or "class" (Neale, 2000) in Latin. In many disciplines, including "rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics," according to Chandler (2000), it refers to "a distinctive type of 'text.'" For the most part, it has been used for the purpose of taxonomic classification (Allen, 1989). Contemporary media genres tend to refer to the more common types in film and television. However, Fowler (1989) and Wales (1989) insist that there remain many unnamed genres and sub-genres. As such, a genre is a construct that is made to correspond with what objectively exists in the world (Feuer, 1992). As a construct, however, it is far from universal and the standards used to classify anything as being part of a genre depends on a variety of references (Bordwell, 1989; Stam, 2000). Hence, to ascribe to a singular classification reference poses problems from a cultural standpoint, and runs the risk of committing cultural marginalization.

Chandler (2000) argued that the use of the word "genre" has always been problematic. He cited Stam (2000) who argued that generic labels in the context of films fail because they imply no clear cut boundaries that define the breadth or narrowness of each category (extension), assume preconceptions of qualifying standards (normativism), suggest sweeping traits of exclusivity (monolithism), and indicate undue simplification to essences that evolve within a standard life span (biologism). In short, a genre is frequently considered a box in which films are forced to fit in, even if a particular film may, in fact, belong to more than one genre, or satisfy only some, and not all, genre criteria. Outside of theoretical classifications, hybrid genres occur.

And while "rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion" (Gledhill, 1985, p. 60) cannot be applied because "genres… are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items" (p. 64), in reality, *de facto* genres arise from producers and consumers of media products (Chandler, 2000), as a result, most likely, of perceived relatedness and resemblances, or similarities with a prototype (Swales, 1990). As such, *de facto* genres serve as "fuzzy categories which cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions" (Chandler, 2000, n.p.) that some theorists look for.

Chandler suggested that genre is ultimately a construct that must be defined in accordance to one's purpose. As such, it functions most effectively like a provisional label that is dependent on a "discourse community's nomenclature" (Swales, 1990, p. 54) that requires "further validation" (p. 58) by a collective. In the words of Hodge and Kress (as cited in Chandler, 2000), "genres only exist in so far as a social group declares and enforces the rules that constitute them" (p. 7) explicitly or tacitly.

Because of the variability of its meaning, Buckingham (as cited in Chandler, 2000) noted that genre is "in a constant process of negotiation and change" (p. 137). As boundaries between genres shift and overlap (Abercrombie as cited in Chandler, 2000) their relationships are redefined as well through time. As a result of "each genre shift, new genres and sub-genres emerge and others are 'discontinued'" (Abercrombie, 1996, p. 45). Each new addition to a genre that tends to come up with something new contributes to the expansion of the characteristics of the body of work that constitute the genre (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske as cited in Chandler, 2000). While these changes are inevitable in a genre, partly because of the experimentation inherent in authorship (Chandler, 2000), if not for the real inability of the writer (Foucault, 1969) to reflect his/her "unfinalizable" (Holquist & Liapunov, 1993) dialectical experiences in his writings, it is further guaranteed by the economic imperative.

Neale (as cited in Chandler, 2000) noted that "difference is absolutely essential to the economy of genre" since repetition produces predictability and boredom, which drive away audiences. Furthermore, because "the interaction between genres and media…seen as one of the forces which contribute to changing genres" (Neale, 1980, p. 50) is unavoidable, genres can never acquire absolute parameters and will always be bound to subvert the social constructs that attempt to limit them. Hence, new genres are likely to be constructed by social groups that see value in them.

For Negus (1998), one such group is the corporation. "The corporation is able to practice its own creativity by configuring the perimeters of 'genres' where artistic and readership creativity is made to happen" (Bantugan, 2010, p. 33). Within those perimeters, genre worlds are created—"domains where

creativity is practiced using familiar codes and formulations that induce audience expectations and produce deviations that counter predictability" (p. 33)—and, as Neale (as cited in Negus, 1998) explained, default readership habits constituting a genre culture associated with "systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject" (Neale, 1980, p. 363) are propagated. In this context, genres should be seen as "mediatic spaces" (Arvidsson, 2005) that are "able to shape the boundaries within which their audiences create meanings" (Bantugan, 2010, p. 34). Thus, genres must be seen as guiding tools for interpretation that provide an immediate hook, via familiar codes, and satisfy default expectations that result in distinct cognitive responses in audiences. As a result, movie choices were found to be determined by genre (Austin & Gordon, 1987; Desai and Basuroy, 2005), particularly as it helps differentiate products (Langford, 2005).

Contextualizing genre

Because of the changeability of genres, Neale (1995) posited that constructs that clarify genre "are always historically relative, and therefore historically specific" (p. 464). Tomashevsky (as cited in Bordwell, 1989) suggested that the boundaries of genres are "always historical, that is to say,… correct only for a specific moment of history" (p. 147). Chandler (2000) wrote that "genres need to be studied as historical phenomena" (n.p.) and each moment in history, a context for each genre, is shaped by its "original producers and consumers" (n.p.). As such, Chandler added, changes in genres could be seen as reflective of political, social, and economic conditions. Every genre, consisting of (Bakhtinian) "'ordinary' time-space where…producers and consumers engage in conversation" (n.p.) is an opportunity to create (Foucauldian) discourse and achieve (Gramscian) hegemony (Bantugan, 2010). Thus, I posit hereon that care work films are to be considered part of a new genre not so much because of characteristics or traits that these films possess in themselves but because of the economic relations that push the production and consumption of such in response to the needs of new global audiences (shared meaning communities) with ever-increasing economic power.

Critical in understanding genre as traces of history is grasping the role of important players—its producers and consumers. This is consistent with Tolson's (1996) redefinition of genre as "a category which mediates between industry and audience" (p. 92). Set in the context of the culture of production and the production of culture, producers and consumers of genres are in a constant struggle for dominance. The state of dominance of one way of life and concept of reality is made through "taste, morality, customs, religious

and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation" (Louw, 2001, p. 106).

Taking the political economy perspective, this context is constituted by "inwardly directed" and "externally directed" (Louw, 2001, p. 110) discourses, "'discursive closure' or the termination or devaluation of views oppositional to the dominant discourse in order to maintain positions of power" (Bantugan, 2010, p. 25) in the hegemonic relations, and shifts in discourse toward the protection of the dominant paradigm (Bantugan, 2010). These elements produce a "perpetually shifting struggle" (Louw, 2001, p. 28) for meaning-producers using the symbolic capital or meanings drawn by audiences from their experiences to produce a new potentially popular content, and consumers deriving personally relevant meaning from media products—"leading to ever-new sets of contradictions" (p. 28).

Evolutions in genres over time happen because of cumulative innovations impacting resilient formulas, and resulting in differentiated sub-genres, may be deemed to reflect "a moral and social world" (Chandler, 2000, n.p.), "the ideological climate of the time" (Hayward, 1996, p. 50), and "social and cultural concerns" of audiences (Hayward, 1996, p. 162). Thwaites, Davis, and Mules (as cited in Chandler, 2000) suggest that while "a genre develops according to social conditions, transformations in genre and texts can influence and reinforce social conditions" (p. 100). Newcombe and Hirsch (as cited in Feuer, 1992) noted that as a "cultural forum", a genre becomes the venue where "industry and audience negotiate shared beliefs and values, helping to maintain the social order and assisting it in adapting to change" (p. 145). Clearly, studying the history of any genre must include an analysis of the role of its producers and consumers. In the same manner, I assert that the study of producers and consumers of cultural products should be seen as a source of insight into the study of history of a genre or of any other social phenomenon fuelled by their complex relations.

Genre and History

According to Novack (2002), "the sense of history is a precondition for a science of history" (p. 59). The sense of history emerges when social change stands out sharply from the background of nature or when conditions and experiences of the present generation are perceived as radically distinct from those of the previous. Hence, it is a phenomenon related to disruption. Novack further wrote that "The need for theorizing about history or the nature of society does not arise until civilization is well-advanced and sudden, violent, and far-reaching upheavals in social relations take place during the lifetime of individuals or within the memories of their elders" (p. 61). It is associated with great shifts (epochal, technological, economic,

paradigmatic, cultural, and the like). The study of history arising from an interest in these changes has grown to become a pursuit of their causes and the true nature of social relations that facilitate them.

It is in this context that I propose that the care work film genre be understood as a historical category—based not on shared objective traits perceived to be found in its constituent films but on the specific social relation that fuels their production and consumption. The global care chain that encouraged, if not forced, Filipinos to become care workers of all types, it seems, is now a rich source of Filipinos' experiences resulting in or coming with a shared economic role and identity in richer spaces (inside and outside the country). These experiences become film narratives that carry historical discourses—assertions of power over life conditions that are in many ways so different from previous eras—reflecting the "sense of history" that makes possible the "science of history."

In the film production and consumption environment, this sense of history is also brought about by the shift in commercial film consumers' psycho- and demo-graphics, now largely people related to care workers and the care workers themselves. With disposable income becoming more and more available to such a community of audiences, producers' eyes are focused on care workers and their significant relationships, ushering the emergence of a new economic class with very distinct needs and aspirations, a class probably not far from the gravely distressed proletariat during the early industrialization years. As such, we can consider care work films as assertions of power by the film producers over the new film market and by the new collective of film consumers over non-material film production processes. Thus, the dialectic that exists between film production and consumption can be discussed as a discursive process where each player seeks to win over each other in the ways of a hegemony that has become more associated with critical Marxist theorizing. Here in this paper I use hegemony outside the enclosure of Marxist ideology to explain discursive closures that make the circulation of meanings possible within the non-material production and consumption of care work films.

Mainstream films exist in the context of the production of culture within a culture of production. Louw (2001) asserted that this context is a site of power struggle set in a "meaning environment" (p. 2). The power struggle lies in the struggle for meaning. Critical scholars either take the viewpoint of political economy to investigate the arena of power or cultural studies to pursue meanings. Often these two schools of thought exist independent of each other. However, in the production-consumption paradigm, both power and meanings have to be accounted for. In general, a framework must be able to integrate these two to explain more fully the dynamics that allow

for the production and consumption of popular films (Bantugan, 2012). Louw's discussion of cultural production suggesting a consideration of the continually shifting dialectic between producers and consumers (2001, p. 25) is appropriate.

Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogism

The notion of the dialectic between two opposing and yet collaborative players in the mainstream film industry can be explained by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism." Dialogism is fuelled by three principal realities. First, Bakhtin (1981, p. 66) posited that the self never reaches finality – hence, the principle of "unfinalizability." It cannot be fully comprehended, apprehended, or captured into any category because of its propensity to change (Bantugan, 2012). However, many think otherwise or believe that it can still be understood to some degree. Second, Bakhtin (as cited in Holquist, 1981) notes that the relationship between the self and others is instrumental in understanding one's self because it is only through other entities external to the self ["heteroglossia" or "another's speech in another's language" (p. 40)] that one is able to perceive his or her wholeness. Third, he suggested that "the truth about anything is made of various and contradictory assertions made on something" (Bantugan, 2012, p. 54). These assertions constitute what Bakhtin called "polyphony" or "many-voicedness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428). These three realities make possible a "prosaic" or the "ordinary" time-space where producers and consumers of film engage in meaningful conversation. This exchange is never-ending because speakers are only able to partly know what one another means (Folch-Serra, 1990). This inability to arrive at a complete interface of meanings between producers and consumers induces a perennial dialogism.

As cited in Throsby (1999), Bakhtin's prosaic expression is rich with cultural capital or things (such as symbolic capital) that acquire value (cultural value with corresponding economic value) when shared, and are able to relate with the experiences of others. For Louw (2001), cultural capital is circulated within a consumer culture where producers attempt to gain control over symbols (or symbolic capital) held by consumers or the ethical surplus (or a social relation, shared meaning, or an emotional involvement) that they create in relation to products. In return, within a post-Fordist production era, the constant meaning-creation process of consumers, a non-material labor that they engage in—becomes a key ingredient in producers' decision-making process (Arvidsson, 2005). The producers' attempts at managing the consumers' meanings that become attached to and generate surplus value for products is called brand management. A genre, rich in symbolic capital, is a site for brand management for producers, and a tool

that facilitates the creation of ethical surplus among consumers. The self-serving intentionalities of producers and consumers that oppose each other constitute the Bakhtinian "centripetal" forces, while those that allow for the continuous collaboration are called "centrifugal" forces. Such forces drive the continuous dialogism between producers and consumers.

Michel Foucault's Discourse

This dialogism is also manifested in the author's attempts at "capturing what is truly evasive… [and] making sense of what cannot be fully comprehended" (Bantugan, 2010, p. 96). According to Foucault (1969, n.d.), the process of writing is discursive. Discourse is a mode of writing that does not fully capture the writer or the phenomenon which he or she hopes to re-present. The diversity of discourses or truth claims helps fill in the gaps that one writer cannot sufficiently cover. Discourse is an attempt to triumph over reality that seems to constantly evade comprehension. For the writer, knowledge is built on "discursive practice" which "refers to a historically and culturally specific set of rules for organizing and producing different forms of knowledge" (Foucault, 1969, n.p.) Discourse, being a subject's assertion of power, and its knowledge constructions or discursive formations, constitute the experiences that emerge from specific times and spaces—hence, they are located in moments in history. As such, history is nothing but a sequence of dialectical discourses that attempts "discursive closure."

Cultural production is consistent with Foucault's assumptions in that it is a dialectical power assertion between producers and consumers. Producers, drawing out experiences and meanings (discursive formations) from consumers, and consumers drawing experiences and creating meanings out of products discursive practice create moments in history (discursive closure) that reproduces the cycle of production and consumption. Each discursive closure reveals an intent and an attempt to rule over each other's discursive formations. When each player devalues and marginalizes the others' truth claims, discursive closure is not likely, if not never going, to occur. By helping zone into one another's subjectivity, each player is drawn even closer to a greater comprehension of his or her realities—the writer in each subject gains a greater sense of being able to seize more substantially what is essentially evasive. Within the context of Bakhtin's dialogism, discourses are what make up and fuel the centripetal and centrifugal forces of each prosaic (1984, p. 39). By completely ignoring the superiority of one discourse over others, Foucault practically annihilated the weight of ideology in a postmodern prosaic (1969, n.p.). In this paper, I subscribe to Foucault's discourse, and yet, still abide by the validity of hegemony in a discursive context, as extensively propounded by Antonio Gramsci (1971).

Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci (1971) highlights the will to power and the means to attaining it by one social player over another. Although Gramsci echoes the demonification of the rich ruling class and the glorification of the working class which the former oppresses via its ideology, Gramsci's concept of hegemony remains suitable in the context of Foucault's discourse. He underscores the subjective power struggle at the level of institutions and political structures, and brings to the fore the surrender of power of one social player to the other which results in hegemony. This hegemony parallels discursive closure. However, Gramsci takes hegemony to the realm of institutional structures and practices within a Bakhtinian prosaic that is not captured in Foucault's more general assertions.

Gramsci rose to recognition at a time in history when political thinkers critiqued oppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie—the capitalists. Producers can easily be looked at as one of the bigger capitalists now, and deemed as the ruling class by Marxist standards. While it could be argued true, the rule of discourse over ideology mandates that consumers be seen as equally powerful, discourse-wise, as the producers. In fact, without the consumers' ethical surplus integrated into the production process and the actual products, the producers have not as much power as many would like to think. Nevertheless, capitalist discourse needs to gain discursive closure and Gramsci considers this point of collusion as hegemony. Gramsci's hegemony, however, is founded on the assumption that much of it is achieved not through violent means but via subliminal tools, with the help of intellectuals and people in media. In fact, hegemony may be achieved through genre. McQuail (1987) wrote that a genre "can be considered a mechanism for ordering the relations between two main parties to mass communication" (p. 200).

Gramsci's (as cited in Litowitz, 2000) hegemony "involves subduing and co-opting dissenting voices through subtle dissemination of the dominant group's perspective as universal and natural, to the point where the dominant beliefs and practices become an intractable component of common sense" (p. 515). This subtlety figures well in the discursive practices of producers and consumers. It is precisely this discursive subtlety that disables anyone to identify exactly or isolate media's culpability in many social problems. One should note, too, that while producers are subtle, consumers' discursive practices have become even more subtle in that producers do not see the use of their ethical surplus as threatening at all. In this clear relational dialectic, both producers and consumers consent to each other's discourses without necessarily completely surrendering each other's power and capacity to withdraw from the cycle of production and consumption, at any time. After

all, a genre resists finality as much as the act of discursive practice resists the "universal form of subject" (Foucault, 1984, p. 452).

Malcolm Gladwell's Tipping Point

How hegemony between discourses is achieved in the detail is best explained by Malcolm Gladwell's "tipping point," that time-space or moment in history when change from one direction to the other is rendered inevitable, or "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point" (Gladwell, 2000, p. 12), reveals that instant of Foucault's discursive closure in the manner of Gramsci's hegemony. Genre, taken as a moment of hegemony, must, then, consist of media content that draws from experiences and meanings that are relevant to both producers and consumers. For Gladwell, such content, growing as an epidemic, is ruled by three principles—the "law of the few," the "power of context," and the "stickiness factor."

The law of the few is anchored on the fact that there are very few effective transmitters that facilitate epidemic change—the connectors, mavens and salesmen. Connectors are social hubs. Mavens are experts. Salesmen are decision-clinchers. In the case of genres, the superstar is a connector, a maven, or a salesman, or various combinations of the three. The power of context is that which is revealed by the environment, the conditions and circumstances that shape tipping points. They may be "social, economic, technological, competitive and regulatory forces" (Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley, & Rudelius, 1992, p. 57). For films, the historical milieu governing the lives of people may serve as the powerful context. Meanwhile, the stickiness factor refers to the power of an idea or the message itself to stick to memory. Gladwell (2000) clarifies, however, that it is not so much the kind of content but the manner in which any content is delivered that makes any message sticky. The persistence of drama films, in the Philippines, for example, when compared to other types of movies, would allow one to believe that drama is what creates the stickiness for a narrative that is already too familiar to many.

Theoretical Integration

I have called the integration of the ideas of the four theorists "creative opposition." This paper pushes the said idea to the study of history of a media artifact, at the very least. The framework that I constructed illustrates how the centrifugal and centripetal forces governing a prosaic, where the care work film is situated, emerge from dialectical discourses of producers (left helix strand) and consumers (right helix strand), and result in a series of films revolving around superstars, care work, and drama (constituting the new genre). In the model (Figure 1), I used the figure of the helix to

illustrate the constantly attracting and repelling forces that maintain a creative distance. The helix calls to mind the structure of the DNA that is the genetic structure that guarantees replication of traits across generations which I would like to echo in the “creative opposition” model. However, the structure, governed by discourses that constantly change, is far from being a mere reproduction or repetition of past discursive formations—thus, I chose to present it as an imperfect helical form. The figure below shows in detail the operation of the four theories that were put together to account for the critical role of subjectivities in the production and consumption of care work films.

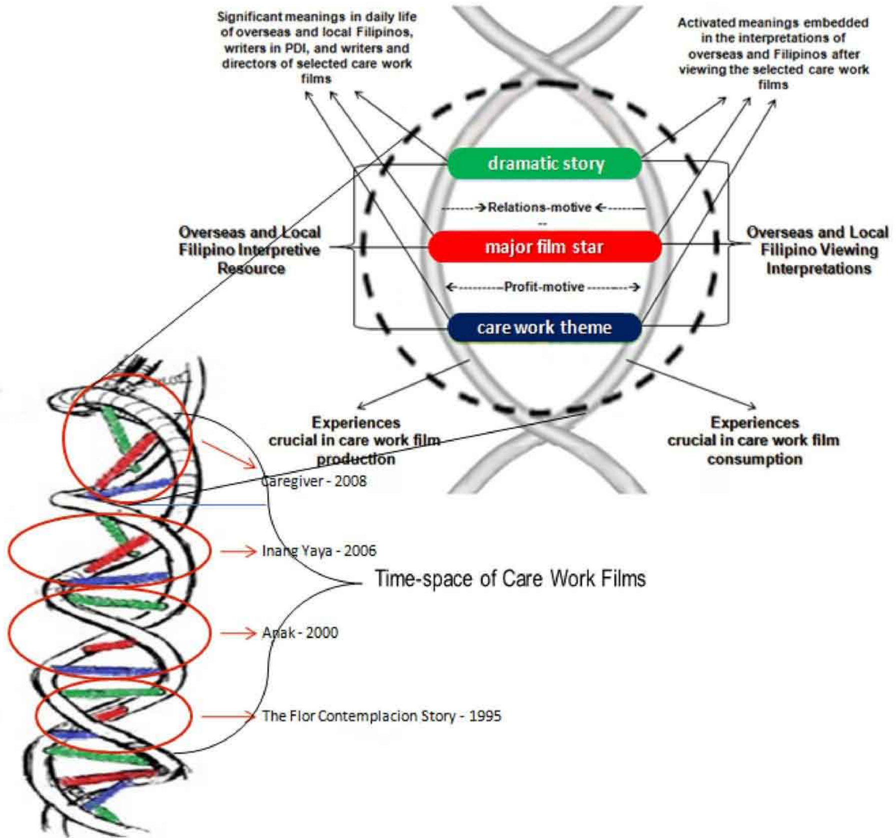

Figure 1. Model of Creative Opposition for the Study of the History of a New Film Genre. (Source?)

The subjectivities or discursive formations (experiences and meanings) considered for care work films are those of care work film producers (screenwriters and directors with a direct impact on the content of the

films) and their consumers (care workers, overseas Filipino workers, and overseas Filipino care workers upon whose experiences care work films are established). Producers and consumers are kept together by a need to constantly relate to each other (relations motive) and kept apart by a tendency to preserve their autonomy (profit motive). Each care work film is an instance of hegemony and the series of care work films from 1995 to 2008 constitute a section of the history of care work culture of Filipinos, from which the global economy and the film industry benefits. The model, as a consequence, accounts for a time in Filipino history that is embodied by a new film genre.

Conclusion: Continuum of Genre Tipping Points as an Assertion of History

The series of care work films that tipped at various points in the time-space domain of Philippine popular culture manifests the continuing dialogue between the mainstream film industry and the growing and yet globally marginalized section of Philippine society that is hardly captured by historians at large, and media and culture researchers in many academic institutions. When the word "history" is mentioned, the ideas that immediately come to mind are key players in events that are deemed significant in a milieu or the collective that gives rise to them, which Novack (2002) refers to as the "great man theory" and "best people theory" respectively. Today, after having seen how a focus on personalities in more traditional approaches in the study of history has muted the communities they represent, which are equally important players in the creation of historical moments, there is a leaning within critical schools, particularly the Marxist leaning, toward the collective's narratives. It is likely that this general trend in the study of history will shape the study of history in specific disciplines, including media, now and in the future. One has yet to present a new direction, and this framework is a step towards that path.

The dialogue between producers and consumers that tips over to become popular or mainstream care work films points to a subtle social power struggle that is hardly ever written about and made manifest in popular discourse. I suspect that because these instances of hegemony do not point to actual historical figures or dramatic life-changing events, as we traditionally understand them, this attempt will be taken as pseudo-history at best. I will argue, however, that to resort to judging this approach as unacceptable simply because of its lack of actual historical figures, such as actual powerful leaders or revolutionaries, is a clear step back in the study of history as it begs the personality-centric tradition that silences the voices and struggles of the collective. In the same manner, to dismiss it on the basis

of its inability to manifest a deliberate social movement is a clear denial of the stories of personal and collective struggle on which much of the narratives of care work films are based. It is quite clear that the rise of care workers marks a historical shift in the role of Filipinos in the global economy and that films that represent them—surface discourses that often stay invisible in Hollywood. This sense of history brought about by Filipino mainstream filmmaking puts care work films at the center stage of the contemporary study of recent history.

This framework is significant because it enables scholars to analyze history not as a distant past but as a near past using ubiquitous media artifacts and seemingly mundane narratives as starting points. Given that the discourses behind each narrative are taken as valid assertions of subjectivities of consumers whose prosaic constitutes the film narratives, and each subjectivity is a personality with a truth claim over social realities that is as valid as anybody else's, the usual personalities—media's producers and their superstars—are downgraded from their prominence so that both consumers and producers are equally privileged in the construction of a common history. With care work films as starting points in the construction of a history of a collective, the framework extends the sources of historical studies beyond accounts of the economically, intellectually, and media-privileged class. It forces scholars to seek popular discourses, fiction included, to reveal symbolic and cultural capitals that constitute subtle social struggles, and keep a nation and a globally marginalized society and industry afloat.

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