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"American Pictures Made by Filipinos": Eddie Romero's Jungle-Horror Exploitation Films

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Over a span of nearly two decades, Eddie Romero served as director, producer, or writer for over twenty low-budget films made in the Philippines for distribution in the U.S. These films ranged from war and action films made in the fifties for general distribution in indoor theaters, to exploitation horror films made in the sixties with drive-ins in mind, to women-in-prison films with blaxploitation elements (notably, Black Mama, White Mama, 1973) in the seventies, as well as occasional forays back to the horror genre. This paper focuses on Romero's horror exploitation fare intended for U.S. distribution in drive-ins and second-rate indoor theaters.

In this study, I situate the low-budget horror output of Eddie Romero (in collaboration with Kane Lynn, John Ashley and Gerry de Leon), made in the Philippines and intended for American distribution, within a matrix of intersecting discourses. In interviews, Romero refuses to characterize his B-film output as Filipino-American co-productions, asserting instead that they are wholly American films (in ethos, in audience address) which happen to be made by Filipinos (who have successfully 'left out' their 'Filipino-ness' during filmmaking). I begin by unpacking the neocolonial underpinnings of Romero's fantasy of making 'American' films in the Philippines, then go on to consider historiographic approaches to the exploitation film.

The texts I explore in this study are the early Terror is a Man (1959), directed by Gerry de Leon for Lynn-Romero Productions in the fifties; and the first two of three Blood Island films produced by Hemisphere Pictures: Brides of Blood (1968) and Mad Doctor of Blood Island (1968), both co-directed by de Leon and Romero, and Beast of Blood (Four Associates/Hemisphere, 1970), written and directed by Romero.

The Blood Island films are strongly indebted to the generic legacy of other jungle-horror films: the colonialist nightmare embodied in the Dr. Moreau narrative; and the beauty-desired-by-the-beast premise of King Kong. Drawing from these two intertextual axes, the Blood Island films figuratively engage anxieties over miscegenation and colonialism, anxieties which are the enduring province of jungle-horror films. The centerpiece of my analysis is a delineation of several recurring motifs of the Blood Island films, themselves longstanding tropes of the genre: in an anonymous jungle island, an interstitial white heroine is menaced by a monstrous, human-but-bestial 'mimic man' created by a mad scientist. Though not every Blood Island film plot hews exactly to this formula, each involves most of these elements to a greater or lesser degree.

My analysis of Romero's B-film work is not confined to narrative analysis. In terms of production decisions, I discuss the role of 'whiteface' in casting, that is, the casting of mestizo Filipino actors to play the recurring role of the monstrous mad scientist. The last sections of the paper also depart from textual analysis and explore the promotional strategies surrounding the films (ranging from print advertising to in-theater gimmicks and film prologues) and the question of exploitation film audiences (from teenagers at drive-ins to the lowbrow rural audiences of what Romero calls the U.S. 'exploitation belt').

1 An earlier version of this paper, entitled "Monstrous Makers, Bestial Brides: Situating Eddie Romero's B-Horror films in an Intricate Web of Histories" was published in the Philippines in the Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature 1.2 (January 1998): 37-61. My thanks to Jason Sanders and Joel David for their invaluable help in tracking down these films and the scant material on them; and for companionably watching these films with me.

2 This excludes the Gerry de Leon vampire films originally made for the Philippines which were then dubbed and distributed in the U.S. years later.

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Adjusting the Frame

Any consideration of Filipino director Eddie Romero's exploitation and B-film output, geared primarily for the U.S. audience, must begin by adjusting the frame: several historical ironies pervade his work, and we must begin by acknowledging them. Perhaps the most obvious irony is the fact that Eddie Romero, a director whose mature work establishes him as a nationalist art filmmaker, also produced American movie fare for drive-ins and rural and second-run theaters, films in which the quality of the direction was not the primary concern (in his war films, location shooting and action rather than dialogue were noted favorably by Variety); in his Blood Island horror films, co-directed with Gerry de Leon, the sensational combination of "blood, beasts, and breasts" called for only perfunctory direction. Romero, recipient of an Urian award for outstanding achievement in film, is hailed by Filipino film historian Agustin Sotto as "a filmmaker of substance," based mostly on his post-World War II work as writer and director (under the mentorship of acclaimed National Artist and film pioneer Gerry de Leon), first for the major Philippine film studio Sampaguita Pictures (1946-1953), and then as an independent.

Romero's work in the American exploitation film industry is far less well-known. Following Romero's initiation into the possibilities of serious filmmaking through a trip to London, Romero's decision to make films on his own as an independent led, by 1957, to his...
"A Film in Pictures Made by Filipinos":

The Broad Island Films

by Eliseo Catalonia

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Romero's work in the American exploitation film industry is far less well-known, following Romero's initiation into the possibilities of serious filmmaking through a trip to London, Romero's decision to make films on his own as an independent led, by 1957, to his thinking, “why can't I make that variety which Republic and Monogram were making... That's easy, that's within my competence. What difference does it make who makes them?” (Romero, 1995, interview).

“What difference does it make who makes them?”

At second glance, the seemingly paradoxical elements of this story can be explained— in an interview, Romero remarks that being a B-film director in America paid better than working for a first-rate Filipino studio. “You think any American director would work for the kind of salary a Filipino director makes?” he asks rhetorically (Romero, 1995, interview). Romero also attributes his decision to work in what Fred Olssen Bay has called the New Poverty Row of the late fifties to the mid-seventies to personal preference.

I would rather make them [the Blood Island films] than the alternative—Filipino films that were hackneyed in that period. Which was very heavy soap...The only way to describe this is that I despised them...It's the kind of melodrama, it's the cultural level you have to work on; it was in my opinion, shameful, for me personally. I'm not patronising the audience. If that's what they like, that's what they like, they have a perfect right. But it wasn't for me. (Romero, 1995, interview).

Wait on closer inspection calls for a complex historical exegesis is not so much the circumstances of the Third world subtext-driven New Poverty Row trick, that is not so much what Romero was doing, but how he understood what he was doing in the U.S. He maintains that the majority of his work, “pictures made-to-order for American distribution prior to production,” could not easily be understood as Philippine-American co-productions (withstanding the fact that he began this work under the aegis of Lyno-Romero productions, named for his American partner and himself). He says of himself: “I think I was the first one who wanted to initiate production here [the Philippines] in association with American groups,” so that “in effect they were American pictures financed, however, financed by Americans, later” (Romero, 1995, interview, emphasis mine). In another interview, Romero remarks, “I was able to break into the American scene by leaving out my Filipinoness—” (quoted in del Mundo #6).

Such statements echo Romero's rhetorical question as he puts it, “what difference does it make” that the people responsible for a set of low-budget American film fare should not be Americans? Romero insists that it makes no difference at all. If Filipino-ness can be put aside.
then national-cultural identity is merely a question of religion: one can decide to put it on or take it off. Romero's casual and unromanticized denial of difference is underscored by his own acknowledgement of the material effects of that difference. Speaking about one of his long-time collaborators in low-budget film production, John Ashley, with whom he parted ways in the seventies, Romero says: "I sensed, this has as far as we can go, we're not really going to get into major film production. Ashley hasn't made it into major film production yet. And until Filipinos can't even have got this far." (Romero 1995, interview, my emphasis).

How is it, then, that despite the very real differences in the conditions of film production between the Philippines and the U.S., Romero could maintain that Filipinos made American films through very themselves were Americans?

Ray, in his book The New Poverty Row: Independent Filmmakers as Distributors, acknowledges the specificity of the Lynn Romero production team that later evolved into Hemisphere New Productions, which made the three blood island films that are the core of this study. Ray writes:

"Hemisphere Pictures, Inc., was a company unlike any of the other companies featured in this book. It was unique in its product, and even in its name, and yet it relied on a solid base connection with a foreign country (the Philippines)." (Ray 82)

The "solid base connection" with the Filipinos which distinguishes Hemisphere Productions from other low-budget production companies, a liaison accomplished through Eddie Romero, is central to these films. Conditions of possibility materialized in the collaboration of Romero with first Kane Lynn, and then actor-turned-producer John Ashley, arise out of a particular insertion into post-colonial history. In most accounts of the story of this Filipino-American collaboration, mention is made of Lynn's past as a rural office stationed in the Philippines, his love of the "warmth and hospitality" of the ex-colonial, a liking shared by Ashley after his first stint as an actor there. The other half of the story rests on the presence of a Filipino who could play the role of a gifted bilingual "native": Eddie Romero had been writing short stories in English from his teens (the P.G. Wodehouse of the Philippines: that wet his ambition) and had continued to write and direct for Filipino film studios in English, with assistants translating his words to the vernacular (Saito 17). My sense is that Eddie Romero was particularly well-suited as the crucial liaison between U.S. independent and the Filipino film scene out of the pitifulness to the mid-seventies. By his own admission, having grown up in the Philippines that had yet to be "granted" independence by America in the 1940s, he possessed the hybridized culture of his milieu to writ, his practice of directing in English, recalling the practices of the earliest American filmmakers in the Philippines, prior to the beginnings of indigenous production" and his familiarity with the themes and preoccupations of American culture, which allowed him to make films for U.S. audiences which were never popular when released in the Philippines because, in his words, "they were not translated for here [the Philippines]. The whole culture of those films was not Filipino... To be as good at giving American audiences what they wanted as any American producer—that was the idea" (Romero 1995, interview).
To his credit, Ronateno exemplifies the self-irony necessary to any effort to unpack the contradictions of postcolonial culture. In “My Work and Myself,” a public address delivered in 1982, he writes:

“I began to dream about making some modest films using some American actors, for American distribution. My hope was that even if I would be obliged to compromise by sacrificing in story, plot, and characters, to make it marketable, I would not be more tense and money to work with a greater opportunity offered thereby to polish what skill I had. Perhaps it was still willing victim of old colonial myths, and hence let us be part of the mainstream of American cinema, to be in face of America. I would have died this time, and I am not sure that I would even now. That was once the boon, and the bane of the pedantic industry of America in the evolution of our young and impressionable national cinema.” (Ronateno 1982: 235-236)

What such a self-reflexive statement as this gestures towards is the insubstantiality of both an accusatory critique directed at Ronateno for the certain objectionable, non-Islamic aspects of the B-films he directed and/or produced and of the pitfalls of an auteuristic approach to this body of films, especially since that would necessarily paper over the ideological differences between his American work and, for example, his highly accomplished “One-Forty-Five,” made in the Philippines at the end of his New Poverty Row days. Ronateno’s first films, particularly Gento Kari, New, Pamayaw Ngayon [This Is the Way We Live... How Do We Do It?], a historical epic made in 1976, have had been called for their contributions to a film discourse of Philippine nationalism. Clearly then the persona of Ronateno serves as an entry point to the films we wish to consider, but we must go further than the movies if we are to forge a nuanced reconsideration of his (Filipino) American exploitation work.

The Exploitation Film and the Perils of Linear and Binarism

The exploitation film takes its name from its exploitation of, first, subjects considered taboo by the mainstream film industry (Schatz 1995: 83); and second, from its exploitation of the taboos of a specialized audience not addressed by Hollywood. A more distinctive critical perspective is the exploitation film, specializing in the “middle ground” between a conservative mainstream and the black province of hardcore pornography (Schatz 1995: 83). The existence of exploitation films is owed to the perception of the industrial mode of film production in America as a powerful mediator that was not one American cinema, one Hollywood product, one master (Larner 1978). Instead, we need to come to terms with a range of modes of film production, a range of contradictory bodies of texts, and diverse and fragmented audiences. Our response, therefore, as film scholars, is to craft an understanding of not a single but many heterogeneous and related film histories.

The recognition of these films’ tendency to exploit both content and audience has led, in both popular and academic accounts to the theme or the exploitation film as Hollywood’s unassailable and diametrically opposed Other. And in the persistent dismissal of these films as exploiting the “lowest common denominator” of viewer tastes, it is the “indecipherable budget” and “unanswerable” premise that has been allowed to stand with wild precision. The reality of budget constraints means that exploitation producers often make use of alternative distribution through the state’s right systems. Since the easy way to make a profit through the state’s right system would be to lower costs as much as possible, exploitation films were characterized by their low production value and the flexibility of their small-scale production outfits (Larner 1989). The absence of exploitation films from archives, film journals, and preservation lists has been attributed to their marginal status in the hierarchy of cultural texts (Larner 1978). Such circumstances make the writing of a history of exploitation films even more difficult from studies on
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do to continue trafficking in
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were characterized by their
outlets (Seale 50, 51 and
197), and preservation lists
of these outlets (Langer 147).
Such
that derived from studies on

better-documented and preserved motion pictures. I have managed to secure only two of the old
island films, Brides of Blood and Mad Doctor of Blood Island. I have attempted to reconstruct a more
complete picture of these films by recourse to reviews, genre encyclopedic entries, promotional
trailers and corps, and by viewing the films immediately proceeding and following the Blood Island
productions (Terror is a Man, Reign of the Naka Moji [Four Associates, 1979], and Twilight People
[Direziona, 1972]). The fact that scholarship on exploitation often has to contend with objects of
study that are no longer available for screening raises the question of writing a history compiled
from the fragments and echoes of the original films, in text and advertising which have already
imposed a frame upon the object of study. I remain convinced, though, that refusing to grapple
with already unsealed areas of research only confines them further to the detriment of the

Whatever motion picture historians do rest their gaze on film independent film practice, some end by unwarrantably
recreating the existing devaluations of the exploitation film. Paul Seale's writing on
Poverty Row produces in the early sound era, conditions about linear historicographic
assumptions because these hinder a nuanced understanding of Poverty Row by further
marginalizing and reducing its historical importance. For instance, a "historiographic"
argument maintains that because Poverty Row filmmakers were "economically marginalized" they
exercised no influence over the big studios and were entirely at the mercy of the majors and the
Hays Code (Seale 67-77). Erich Sasdat has shown that exploitation films exerted as much pressure
on the big mainstream producers as vice-versa, contributing to Hollywood's expulsion of
self-regulation over state censorship, and never completely subduing the code's stipulations.

Linear historicography is evident in studies which approach Poverty Row
independently as a unified entity and posit a reductive one-to-one causality (Poverty Row
is created by the double bill and destroyed by sound). What is needed,
rather, is a scholarly awareness of the
individual characteristics of low-budget independent production outlets. Their heterogeneity
accounts for their resiliency in the face of industry crises on the one hand, and their refusal of
linear paradigms on the other (Seale 77). The heterogeneity is which Seale refers is particularly
prevalent for an analysis of the low-budget American films of Eddie Romero's, which spread
across several production companies and markets, does not fall neatly into generic categories,
and survived due to the producers' flexibility negating the suggestions of exhibitors and current
exploitation trends. Moreover, our conceptualization of exploitation films cannot remain centered
around representation, narrative, and production value; it must also include issues of distribution,
exhibition, and promotion.

The distribution pattern of New Poverty Row films like Romero's output in the 1970's to
the twenties (in second- or third-run theaters, rural venues and drive-ins) can be traced to similar strategies of Poverty Row independents in the studio era (which recalls Romer's comment that he aspired to the work of Monogram or Republic). Whereas major studios' films were distributed through their own vertically-integrated theaters, thus assuring these features of national distribution, Poverty Row films were marketed through the "state's rights" system. 

Having the "advantage of no overhead cost at all," the state's rights system referred to a practice whereby the production company sold "tontorial distribution rights for a film to a number of film exchanges across the country," who took charge of having positive prints made and arranging theatrical releases. Poverty Row films were usually booked into independent theaters, affiliated theaters (in the bottom half of the double bill), and rural move houses where the audience often preferred low-budget fare to polished studio product (Seale 78-9). The distribution and exhibition of Romero's Blood Island films appear to have conformed to these bred patterns. 

As we will see later in this essay, Romero himself was aware of the popularity of his exploitation output with rural American and drive-in audiences who favored films to the sophistication, big-budget movies of the major Hollywood studios.

Recent scholarship has shown that the attempted expulsion of the exploitation film through the Hayes Code (and before that, through the MPAA's "Don'ts and Be Carefuls") was finally unsuccessful. This is because the independents "were out to carve their own niche," and as such had no interest in the infiltration of the Hayes Code at the cost of sacrificing their appeal to their own specialized viewership. Such an account then, renders inaccurate any assumptions that exploitation films were just failed copies of more stylized and expensive Hollywood models; instead, they were created in a completely different direction, and adopted practices which suited that orientation. This is an important consideration in the study of Romero's Blood Island films, which were tailored to the tastes of American drive-in audiences.

Linearity is not the only pitfall to be avoided in writing histories of exploitation films. Jane Gaines writes, "Economically, exploitation has affiliations with two contradictory poles of meaning, one to do with covering achievements and the other with selfish overhearing that often entails the exhaustion of natural resources and labor power (21)." Gaines' veiling insight into the semantic tension between the notion of "exploitation," which suggests a triumphant worthy of acclaim and the verbal form, which compiles an oppressive activity that calls for censure, is useful in unmasking the biases to which criticism of the exploitation film still adheres. The reception of exploitation films, both academic and popular, has been structured around the very economic polarities of which Gaines speaks: either celebrating the exploitative author who did much with little, or denouncing the film for its shameless pursuit of profit at the expense of the audience it corrompts and the film workers it underpays. 

This binary is paralleled by another: the conception of independent exploitation and mainstream Hollywood films as wholly exclusive opposites. Such a perspective can be redisciplined by recognizing the extent to which low-budget independent fare and glossy Hollywood coronations are mutually defining. As often happens when we look into the relation between one object and another, what we find is not complete alterity but a constitutive dependence. For example, in the context of early exploitation history, Schaefer has shown that Hollywood-denounced exploitation films out was crucially dependent on them for constructing its own identity. Indeed, successful exploitation films were widely used for exploitation films were about the visibility, in the twenties and thirties, to differentiate between Poverty Row fakes and major studio features, the makers invented an aggressive moralistic campaign to show their own supposed positive "structures" versus the exploitation films' "negative ones into "sharp relief." 

In another vein, the legacy of low-budget forms of folk entertainment—the circus, the carnivals, and the rodeo—can be traced not only to the exploitation film but to its more frightening counterpart, the big-budget Hollywood film. In the thirties, the exploitation film was linked to the circus via the traveling exhibition whose products banned from legitimate theaters, would be posed on bed alone outside city limits and would be carried to...
from town to town on the route used by road shows (Ray in: Morton 162). Gaisser's work on early exploitation promotion suggests to me that the rhetoric of the circus worker persists in the hyperbole and exaggeration characteristic of the promotion surrounding exploitation film even up to recent decades, while promotional techniques in major studio films took a different turn—testimonials, product placements, and commercial tie-ins. I am not arguing that there are no differences between exploitation films and mainstream motion pictures. I hope merely to show that a history of the exploitation film and its cousin, the low-budget independent B-film, can only be debilitated by linear paradigms and the persistence of binaries which pronounce either total resistance or collusion by overlooking significant similarities as well as contrasts between Hollywood and low-budget independents. As I hope to have demonstrated, a sensitive and subtle understanding of the exploitation film cannot arise out of such frameworks.

Brigitte Bardsley: The Intestinal White Heroine and her "Darkest Leading Man"

Some time in the fifties, Eddie Romero made the acquaintance of Lyne, a former U.S. naval pilot stationed in Southeast Asia who opted to stay on in the Philippines at the close of the war. Lynn-Romero productions began with low-budget war films shot entirely in the Philippines and meant for general distribution in America (The Last Bullets and The Scarecrows). Their first horror film, Terror in a Man, represented an "attempt to bring internationally-known stars to the Philippines to better reach the world marketplace, since their Filipino productions, while doing well in the foreign marketplace, did very poorly in America and other English speaking territories" (Ray 64). It is relevant to note that many of the Filipino actors in the Romero B-films were respected players in the Philippine studio system. Some, like Leopoldo Salcedo, were native stars of legendary stature. That top stars in the Filipino film fiarment would agree to work in low-budget American films attests not only to Romero's considerable influence in the Philippine movie industry but also to the economic inequalities between nations that made U.S. B-film agents an attractive prospect to third world studio stars.

The "internationally known talent" which Terror was meant to showcase turned out to be Frances Lederer, a leading man who had seen more popular days, and Greta Thyssen, "a pina-sap girl." Directed by Gerry de Leon, Romero's mentor and one of Philippines cinema's most respected pioneers, the film, modestly lit and carefully framed, is said to have done very well within its minimal release (Ray 64).

Under the newly-formed Hemisphere Pictures, Lynn, Romero, and Irwin Pizar continued to offer war-action films, and here our historians sources seem to conflict. Ray maintains that these pictures did well abroad but not in the U.S., where some were doing a dismal $35-a-date-booking-return. Hemisphere thus decided to take up distributor Sam Sherman's suggestion that they put aside war films in favor of horror. They re-released Terror as Blood Creature, which paired with a war film with a suitably chilling title, Walls of Hell, supposedly brought Hemisphere their first U.S. dollar profits (Ray 64-65).

Ray's explanation for the company's turn to horror films is discounted by Romero, who points out that "Walls of Hell made more money in Scandinavia than any other war film except The Longest Day. And think of the difference in budget!" (Romero 1995, interview). Romero surmised that the reason for the stress later laid by B-film historians on his horror output rather than on the war films is that the horror films "made a tremendous impression in the exploitation belt, whereas the appeal of the war pictures was spread out" (Romero 1995, interview). A glance at the trade papers of the time would seem to support Romero's insistence that the war films were economically viable—both Walls of Hell and Raiders of Lost Golf were favorably endorsed by Variety for their effective use of location shooting and of action sequences; the only marketing limitation of these films, according to Variety, was their lack of name stars. Terror is paradigmatic of the Blood Island films that were to follow, both in its generic...
and narrative elements, and in its having originated out of the urgings of film distributors and exhibitors (Sam Sherman, and later, for the Blood Island films, Rev. Miller, a Kansas-based drive-in owner; Romero, 1995, interview).

Loosely adapted from H.G. Welles’s The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896), Terror literalizes the perils of scientific hubris. A shipwrecked man finds himself on a tropical island where a European scientist bent on improving upon natural evolution is genetically altering a panther in the hopes of transforming it into a new, superior kind of man. The doctor’s bosom wife, a nurse, is repelled by the ideas of the doctor’s research and feels sympathy for the helpless creature, no longer a beast but yet not wholly human. As expected, the panther-man attacks the scientist and escapes with the lovely wife in tow.

In the film’s closing moments, monster and maker grapple with each other at the edge of a cliff and the beast succeeds in having the doctor to his death. The lovely wife is saved from the panther-man’s clutches by the handsome shipwreck, who shoots the beast. With the help of a native boy, however, the wounded crewman climbs onto a boat and pushes out for the open sea.

The “beast who wants to mate with human women,” a formula “which combines sex and horror into one neat package,” is an established monster film convention (Church 29). In the Romero horror films, this trope persistently recurs, which might be why critics have seen these films as tending “more toward jungle adventure than toward horror science.”

Rhona J. Pererstein, in her insightful study of early thirties jungle films, clarifies the link between the jungle and horror film genres. She writes that, like jungle films, “horror cinema, too, explores the spectacular and terrifying spectacles of physical differences, and exploits the relationship between seeing and not seeing” (Pererstein 310). In jungle movies and horror flicks, physical differences are conceived along the axes of race and gender; then the dressed, otherwise identical black and skin color are alluded to by the figure of the white heroine—in Terror, it is the demented doctor’s comely wife. Pererstein argues that the white jungle heroine serves a contradictory racial function. On the one hand, she is an icon of white womanhood, and, on the other, she is a parasitic, and double for jungle creatures. She invokes, and warns against, the monstrous possibility of miscegenation.

The presence of the inverting white heroine who stands unsteadily at the borders of white civilization and dark bestiality testifies to an anxiety that “white characters may pass as white, but often proves hearts of darkness.” That her whiteness does not preclude an association with the monstrous reveals the constructedness of these ideologically naturalized hierarchies. In order to foreclose against the possibility that prevailing hierarchies of race might finally be destabilized, jungle-horror narratives resort to a denouement in which a white man saves the captive (but complicit) heroine from the clutches of the monster, though such a conclusion never really convincingly allays the anxieties the story has brought up (Pererstein 319-323).
The American heroine of Terror, who is married to the doctor but is desired by the beast, occupies an interstitial position, both civilized (by virtue of her whiteness) and bestial (by virtue of her femininity). The dissolution of racial boundaries is already accomplished in part by her contradictory sujet aligment, making her the beast's companion, even if not its mate. The interstitiality of the white heroine in such monster movies epitomizes what Patrimon Tobing Rome calls "the double-edged representation of the White Woman—she is at once pillar of the white family, superior to non-white indigenous peoples, but also [in] a possibly Savage creature, an American to white men" (Rome 174). To be certain, the white wife/nurse is disfigured and tawdry of the monster to some degree, and is complicit in the scientific/colonizing project that is systematically maiming and exterminating him: the animus at the doctor's servile operations, and entailing the loss of "civilized manners" on the jungle island. Yet she is also tender and apologetic to the panther-man, representing as she does more noble emotional priorities (she is kind and nurturing) over her husband's callously self-serving medical savings. Her knowledge with the (minimal) means from a recognition that they are both trapped and oppressed by the same man in this isolated corner of the world.

The intertextual heritage of Terror and the Blood Island films is not confined to the figure of Dr. Moreau but to the emblematic jungle-horrors motif of beauty (femininity/whiteness) enmeshed by the beast (a non-white, human background), the thematic of King Kong (Cooper and Schoedsack, 1933). According to Rome, the fantasy of miscegenation in King Kong was a function of directorial intent: "As [Merian] Cooper told Fay Wray, he wanted Ann to be a blonde beauty in order to highlight the contrast with Kong (Cooper referred to Kong as the darkest leading man she've ever have"

(Rome 172). In King Kong and many jungle-horror films since, the beast serves as the "blonde beauty's" "darkest leading man", a cipher for a sexually threatening black masculinity that is as powerful as it is inhuman. This coded reference to black masculinity is also present in Terror. In that film, the scientist refers to the mutilated panther as a "black devil," ostensibly referring only to the sleek black coat of the cat that it was.

The narrative treatment of miscegenation in jungle-horror films mobilizes the nearly-human monster as a placeholder for black male threat without ever having to identify that threat. The same ideological limit is at work in King Kong and the Blood Island films: these films thematize a racism which will not speak its name.

The first of the Blood Island films, Brides of Blood returned to the basic outlines of Terror's plot after nearly a decade of war films by Hollywood and some Filipino vampire film imports. The protagonist, portrayed by Ashley, who would become the narrative of the succeeding Romero/de Leon horror films made under varius production companies. Ashley, an AIP beach party kid grown too old for his previous roles, and Maricel Venston, in a part as a Purezas prints the doomsday of the Slaughtered Cuckoos: the richest man in the village, invites three Americans to stay at his home. The villagers soon discover that radioactive mutation does indeed spread on Blood Island, perhaps most spectacularly in a large mutant that feeds on human flesh and waves captive natives around in its branches. But the most menacing mutant of all turns out to be their own host, Stephen Powers mutates into a beast by night and the natives sacrifice naked virgin women to appease him. The doctor's promiscuous wife unwittingly attempts to reduce their beast host, resulting in her ghastly disembowelment. By movie's end nearly all the principals have died, except for a last-minute Ashley, who has successfully saved his native sweetheart from the beast's clutches. The victim perishes by fire in the course of their struggle.

With Brides the scandalous possibility of intercourse between woman and monster has taken center stage, edging out the narrative's concern with scientific overreach (the consequences of atomic radiation are of course a science fiction staple) that was still arguably the
focus of Terror. The narrative's horrific nature is no longer an experiment gone awry; for by the time the story begins, it is a fait accompli; rather, it is the mutated creature's appetite for innocent flesh and the white female protagonist's desire for the monster that the film foregrounds.

In Terror we see young female inlangis tied to stakes, not meant to placate the monstrous creature; leaving nothing to the imagination, the village elders tear off the women's headscarves, and moments later we are treated to shaky camera shots of large, black hairy creatures坐着 upon the topless, hapless women. The narrative exposition that follows, a conversation between the white hero, Jim Farrell (John Ashley), and his native girlfriend, Ana (Eva Darwen), underscores the film's formula of gruesome stimulation:

JIM: Can anyone here be happy, no, okay, even resigned to the idea of bearing his son and his entire family just wiped off the face of the earth?
ANA: They will survive this because it needs only women.
JIM: What do you mean? What are all you mean?
ANA: He does not devour his victims. He merely satisfies himself on them.
JIM: (Shocked) But they get men to Poland.
ANA: It is in way of satisfying himself.

This generic conflation of sexualization and jungle-horror would become the hallmark of the Blood Island films. The mix of horror with softcore pornography may well have been a cautious means of avoiding adult ratings while still titillating teen audiences as drive-ins. As one historian puts it, "the sight of these bare-breasted women would have normally excluded this picture into the "adults only" realm (and it might well get an "X" rating today), but because of its horror themes it was most likely overlooked, if looked at all by the MPAAA (Motion Picture Association of America) ratings board" (Ray 77).

In 1968, Hemipheninen's second Blood Island film, Mad Doctor of Blood Island, featured Ashley again in the starring role of a U.S. government physician, Dr. Bill Foster, investigating allegations that some of the islanders had green blood. Ashley discovers that the culprit, Dr. Lorea, has been treating the islanders with a chlorophyll solution in hopes of gaining a means to eternal youth. Don Ramon, one of his experimental subjects, has become a green-skinned ghoul who goes on a murderous rampage and eventually destroys Dr. Lorea's laboratory.

Foster seeks success in killing Dr. Lorea, but Don Ramon, the green monster, returns in the opening scene of hour of Blood. Don Ramon subdues Ashley's ship and then falls victim to his own hand again. Lorea, who has been survived by a different actor, Eddie Garcia, a new experiment. He now involves human hand transplants using the green-contaminated populaire as subjects. Ashley, who lost his American girlfriend in the last film to Don Ramon's ambush in the beginning of this one, now has to try to save his new girlfriend (Celeste Yarnall) from the clutches of the mad doctor. But it is not Ashley but Don Ramons's dismembered but still-animate corpse that finally destroys the evil doctor once and for all, while Ashley and company make their escape.

Colonial Ambivalence: Manic Men and the Politics of Casting

As was the case in Terror, in these last two Blood Island films the monster is as much the deamon Dr. Lorea as it is the hapless, chlorophyll-disfigured Don Ramon. Much more than the earlier film, these films encourage the viewers' condemnation of the mad scientist figure. The monster-destroy-maker climax shared by Terror, Mad Doctor, and Beat, because, in the last two films, the relieved monster's act of visiting symbolic retribution upon the story's real, and more repulsive, culprit. The figure of the killer-as-monster epitomizes these films' (admittedly caricatural) acknowledgment of the violence entailed by a scientific view of nature as a passive
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resource existing only to be appropriated by man. The parallel of this instrumentalist logic to a
colonialist agenda in which scientific racism played an invaluable role is clear. Of course, the
monstrous scientist whose hubris is matched by knowledge-power is a stock character of science
fiction and art-horror. In the context of the Blood Island films, though, the monstrous maker also
comes to align unsatisfactorily to the colonizer whose attempt to remake the other into an ideal self
is a project as brutal as it is doomed.

The central drama of the mad white scientist's attempt to better nature by creating a
superior race of men from animals and natives is central to both Terror and Mad Doctor. That
animals and natives are interchangeable terms in the generic formula proceeds from the positioning
of the islanders as less human (because not white) than the scientist to begin with. Of course, the
monsters only ever become half-men, half-beast, exemplifying Noel Carroll's definition of the
monster as both "threatening and impure"—inspiring terror at their destructiveness, and disgust
at their interstitiality (they are at once human and bestial).

The monstrous interstitiality of such (un)animals is a fictionalized projection and
placement of the failure of the colonizer's civilizing project, of the attempt to work upon the
"savage" and make him a (white) man. But the savage only ever becomes, in Homi Bhabha's
famous parable, almost, but not quite, white, and is thus capable of turning on his master. The
tragic end of the Dr. Moreau narrative—the
maker overpowered by monstrosity of his
own making—has been called "a perfect
enactment of the colonialist nightmare"
(Rosey 169).

The Dr. Moreau figures of Terror and
Mad Doctor are forging a race of what Bhabha
might call "mimic men." This two/colonial
subjectivity is possessed of a perpetual
longue, an "ambivalence" and "uncertainty" arising from the two antibiological tendencies
to which the mimic man's identity turns:
toward likeness to the white man and
toward the intractable difference of the
Other. "Colonial mimicry," writes Bhabha,
"is the desire for a reformed, recognizable
Other, as a subject of a difference that
is almost the same, but not quite" (66),
"almost the same, but not white" (89). For
Bhabha, the "reformed colonial subjects
envisioned by T. B. Macaulay's "Minute
on education" (1835)—"persons Indian
blood and color, but English in tastes, in
opinions, in morals, and in intellect"—are
"stuck by an indenturary" (Bhabha 66-
87). While "being Anglicized" comes very
close to "being English," this coming-close
of mimicry never succeeds in obliterating
difference entirely (90).

Similarly, the not-quite-human,
not-quite-bestial creatures made by Dr. Moreau figures are man-like but never truly men. It is the
simultaneous failure and success of the syncretic project of mimicry that makes the mad doctor
pervasive and his creation terrifying. The trope of the jungle animal or native islander exacting
vengeance from the westernized scientist (who presumed to "improve" upon a perceived state of

Fig. 4 Beast of Blood (Eddie Romero, Herapim, 1970)

33
"natural inferiority") can be read as the nightmare that discloses the imperialist's uneasy slumber. As fantasies these fictions contain a critique of that colonial project (that is cruel and bound to fail) as well as a rejection of its racist fears and assumptions (the victims are innocent and dangerous). The regime of the 'most demonic science fiction and horror films is shortsighted for these genres' formulaic critique of scientific overreach. The Blood Island films consistently emphasize the perversion of science to irrational ends and the catastrophic effects of western technology on remote third-world locales which become testing-grounds for new weapons. In science fiction, the unforeseen consequences of progress are depicted as life-threatening; in horror rationality is revealed to be inadequate and, in the end, overcome by the forces of superstition and mysticism that modernity was thought to eclipse. But in the Blood Island films, set as they are against the backdrop of a third-world jungle, this science fiction/horror formula is mingled with the racially-charged politics of the jungle film, so that the customary tale of scientific overreaching becomes inflected with racial and messianic overtones, joining its misgivings regarding science to its depiction of imperialist projects that end in ruin.

The colonialist underpinnings of the monstrous-mad-as-mad-scientist is present in Terror, in which the character of the mad white scientist is played by an American actor. Yet in the Blood Island films which followed, perhaps for reasons of thrift, American actors were kept to a maximum of two lead characters: the hero portrayed by Ashley and a blanc hounded, though oto or more bit players might also be American. This meant that the figure of monstrous white privilege would be played by a European-looking Filipino actor: Mario Montenegro as Brides, Norval Kavan in Mal Doctor, and Eddie Garcia in Blood. But only for the first feature did Powers work to make the meldure the monster, Mario Montenegro, pass for an American-scientist, Stephen Powers. Powers was not a mad scientist like the Dr. Lorca figure of the next two Blood Island films. Like them, however, he is a EuroAmerican man of means (full American, half Spanish), the most powerful person on the island who turns out to be a monster and is implicated with science gone awry. In the scene in Brides wherein Powers first introduces himself to the other American characters in the film, he is seated at a piano playing classical music dressed in an immaculate white suit. He greets them with the words, "Hello Americans. I'm Stephen Powers." Immediately, the narrative deploys of colonial mimicry at monstrous is belied by a casting policy premised upon Filipinos' successful impersonation of whiteness.

Did the audiences perceive Stephen Powers and Dr. Lorca to be Filipinos? Americans? Europeans? The practice of casting Filinos to pose as Euro-Americans brings up questions of whiteness in a narrative where race (brown-skinned Southeast Asians) becomes eclipsed with cultural backwardness (primitive islanders). The white male monster as played by a Filipino is placed uniquely within the cultural/racial dichotomies established by these films. The opening shod of Brides and Mal Doctor explicitly position their narrative's inversion of cultural context: a boat bears white doctors to an island where 'natives' in classic Hawaiian by-Hollywood dress ('South Sea Bludgers' in tropical print bandeaux, korongs, and (fast) mold moteness) on the beach, awaiting their arrival. Ashley and his party are borne by the powerful ship on the waves, signifying mobility and modernity; in contrast, the islanders are standing in passive anticipation on the sandy beach, static and bemused. In such a stratifying economy, Stephen Powers and Dr. Lorca are iconoclastic figures of superiority themselves by class privilege, speech (English, gab, multi-tracks, safari wear), and profession, they are alien to the heroic Ashley and his party of 'Fellow Americans', yet by casting and by characterization, these jungle monkeys of Blood Island are also pulled in the direction of the white male doctor, as the subjectivity of the colonial mimetic and the white hermite find their counterpart in the cast of the terrorizing (not-quite) white man.

The Anonymous Jungle Island and the Displacement of Colonial History

That profitable horror scene, is important not only for being the first of the Blood Island trilogy, but also for finally giving the anonymous jungle backdrop (shot on location in the PSG which is the Filipino, in the Filipino, in explicit reference to the Filipinos, he was pen who settled the island in 300s, but especially bound up with his history is that of a wicked mad scientist protagonist of the moral mission of the novel/ The moral penetration of the mix movie, At whose ship, Euro-Americans setting for time, thrown in the
Spring 2002

Made by Filipinos

Philippine's name—BLOOD ISLAND, an appellation derived from its vivid color—a name which evokes a place of dangers gone-on. Nonetheless, the attempt to erase the specificity of the Philippine in order to evoke a generic orientalist landscape is continuously undermined by...
slippage between the two opposed conceptions of the jungle island is accomplished through the monstrous Stephen Power, who toasts an native and does battle with the American power corps representative, but is himself vanquished by the exploration of the alter ego. The scene of the irregular heroine, the monstrosity the monstrous scientist, and the anonymous jungle island together articulate a contradictory stance toward a scientific project embroiled by imperialist aims. On the one hand, the domineer doctor fosters an acknowledgement of historical injustice and irrational domination; on the other, the irrational heroine, the monstrosity, and the anonymous jungle island betray colonialist notions regarding racial and sexual difference, positioning women and non-white natives as needing to be either rescued or contained.

The Genealogy of Exploitation Frenzy

The promotional strategy for Brides aggressively capitalized on the monstrous matrice with women angle of the film. The movie poster foregrounds a tallied blonde woman bound to stakes while stripped black bears are menacingly above her brandishing a tin lunch box (?). The tag line on the upper left shouts, "SACRIFICED TO THE NON-HUMAN CREATURE," offering not only to dishearten but also to smut a tame woman that same deal, so that the caption is an obvious double entendre. The poster continues this reading by continuing with an offer of "FREE BEAUTIFUL RING SET TO EVERY WOMAN ATTENDING THE SHOWING OF THESE TWO ATTRACTIONS," thus protecting the tag's title past the screen, and interpolating the became members of the audience as potential "breeders" of the creature as well.

The poster art for Nightlight, which reveals many of the older film's conventions over a decade later, is far more direct in its declaration of the rules of interaction between white heroine and blackest monster (fig. 2). "AND ALL DESIRES... HUMAN LUST" is the caption for an illustration of a dark bear-man carrying off a scantily-clad and seductively posed white woman on his shoulders. Another doubled emphasis: the tag line refers to both the half-human, half-bestial character of the twilight people and the complicity of the heroine in her abduction—but human lust parallels the animal's desire.

The publicity image for Mad Doctor employs a strikingly garish typographic to accentuate the pitch filmed in "blood-stirring color" (fig. 3). The uppercase try and title fill the top half of the ad, giving the image that the image is blaring. The bottom half depicts a Randolph black woman pinned down from behind by a monster in a severely laboratory gowns. Naked in the foreground, her body is starkly contrasted with the Mad Doctor's disheveled face and hands. The bespectacled su-ch form "(THE DEAD RETURN TO LIFE)" is written on that of exploitation ("LISTING FOR BIZARRE, PLEASURES").

Gaines's study of early promotional practices links modern product tips with stars and film to exploitation publicity gimmicks rooted in racist traditions. The shift to advertising practices across this "continuum" points to a gradual transformation of folk culture (the practical joke, the stunt, and the bow) into urban popculture (the cooperative scene). Her work suggests that the "franchise" of exploitation film is largely because the U.S. film industry is firmly under monopoly hands in the 1930s (Gaines 29-35).

Gaines's analysis helps explain why the rhetoric of "ballyhoo" survives so vauntingly in the promotional copy of New Poverty Row, the bottomless carnival of, while disavowed by the standardized mainstream, continues to be utilized by exploitation films, since they have no such pretensions to periodization. The era of the circus barker is mingled with visual design in the poster for Bats" (fig. 4). Along the right side of the image, a vigorous retval reads "SEE... Human Bats Transplanted/SEE... natives eaten alive by giant bats!". Direct address and emphatic phrasing accomplish a visual evocation of monty ballyhoo.

If film publicists found circus discourse particularly suited to movie advertising because of its capacity to "stimulate and fascinate" the public via a "hyperbolic form of "excess and abandon" (Gaines 39), then did the promotions of Brides and Nightlight. Like the typical circus poster, 36
these print ads are also “grossed with meaning” – note the “screaming typeface” of the text all in uppercase letters in the Brides poster, the virtual impact of “images bulging with connotations,” and the use of line drawings or high contrast photography in order to slide detail and amplify the force of the visual sign. Gaines’ excesses of exploitation hyperbole has demonstrated that the very “clownishness” and “transparency” of hyperbolic rhetoric is wedded to the duplicity of the exaggerated promise (Gaines 35).

In Hemispheres’ horror promotion the element of deception embodied in J.T. Barram’s style hoaxes and上年 since in promotional gimmicks and overtly bombastic claims. To cite the most obvious example, the poster for Brides promises the spectacles of blonde women in captive offerings to the monster, but in the actual film such scenes are not forthcoming; only native island women are sacrificed to the monster. Promotional gags and gimmicks — wrestling rings for women wrestlers and the blood-red haze that off-screen smoke machines produced in the course of the movie — heighten and underscore the film’s capacity to frighten by extending the horror past the off-screen fiction and onto the audience.

This observation also seems borne out by the gimmicks that accompanied the other Romero/de Leon horror films. In Terror, the skull and unexpected ringing of an alarm warned the timid viewer that the scariest part was imminent (fig. 1). One reviewer wrote, “if the climax doesn’t cure your hair the bell will” (Thompson 158). For the last of the Blood Island films, Besti, survival kits containing air sickness bags were distributed to spectators as a kind of mortified warning to the gory events off screen. The warning bell and survival kits are especially reminiscent of the stunts, borrowed from circus routines, of putting an ambience outside the movie theater. This note, widely used in the 1960s in 1972 period, alluded to the possibility that the audience of a horror film might die of fright or that the viewers of a comedy would go to their graves from laughing (Gaines 56).

Whether successful or not, such gimmicks aimed to expand the horrific diegetic experiences of the character outwards to the viewers in the theater hall. This suggestive gesture towards audience participation is also combined with a second use, which hinges on the element of titillating novelty that accompanies the custom of the carnival booth. Like William Castle’s famous array of publicity plays (from Piece O’ Jello to Frenz-O), the plays that distributions thought up for the Romero/de Leon horrors relied on an enticing audience interest in something besides the formulaic story—if the narrative was predictable, the gags were imaginative.

The promotional strategy for Mad Doctor takes a particularly interesting turn: a prologue was appended to the film, inviting audiences to participate in a ritual, “The Oath of Green Blood.” Audience members were asked to shake packets of acid-colored gel (“green blood”) in solidarity with the mutant natives and the Mad Doctor infected (Ray 73-74). In the prologue, the words of the “Oath” roll across the screen while a voice-over reads the words aloud with hyperbolic sermonizing:

NOW
The MAD DOCTOR of BLOOD ISLAND
invites YOU to join him
in taking the
oath of GREEN BLOOD—

37
We see a close shot of a scientist's hand pouring a vial of green liquid into a test tube, then cut to different shots of American teenagers blowing, some lying supine on a bed of hay. To the strains of organ music, the narrator intones: "The green blood potion has been known to passionately affect some people after drinking it; others experience a feeling of the supernatural consciousness entering their beings. Get your samples of the green blood potion ready and recite the spell of Dr. Lorca aloud with me before drinking of the green blood." These directions are accompanied by a close-up of green liquid in test tubes, a medium shot of green liquid in test tubes (five boy-girl couples) being handed vials of green blood, and finally a close-up of a teenage girl's face against the hay, moments before she takes a sip. This last image is frozen as the words of the Oath scroll upwards in the foreground:

1. A living breathing creature of the cosmic entity.
2. Am now ready to merge the realm of the chosen to be allowed to drink of the Mystic Emerald fluids herein offered.
3. I place the vials of green blood with an open mind and through this liquid's powers am now prepared to safely view the unsaturated green-blooded ones without fear of contamination.

The Oath concluded, the image uncreased unaltered. The girl lifts the vial to her lips and drinks, as do several other couples. The voice-over ends on a note of reassurance: "now, drink your sample of green blood and it is guaranteed that you never turn into a green-blooded monster.

This campy and illogical "Oath" sequence is clearly not intended as eliciting a willing suspension of disbelief. The subtitle does not aspire to chilling realism. Rather, the shots of white boys and girls locked in passionate embraces set the stage for another generic expectation: the spectral experience of a horror-film "cum-date movie" at a drive-in. Between the lines, the "Oath of Green Blood" directly acknowledges and acknowledges the expectation that sexual activity among spectators will be tangentially inspired by the horror depicted on screen. This explains why sound-image relations in this prologue are not illustrative of the literal content of the voice-over: when the narrator talks about the "supernatural consciousness" aroused by green blood (as reference to the film's diagrams and generic affect), this dialogue is matched with footage of non-diegetic ideal spectators "making out." Unlike the typical promotional trailer, the "Oath" prologue does not cue spectral expectations regarding the film's footage but rather makes reference to the film-going experience as a possible ground for generic experiences.

The various promotional practices surrounding the Romero/Augero horror films adopt circus ballyhoo and haze to the visual register of film publicity. A central preoccupation of exploitation promotion is the attempt to leap off the page or screen, as it were, in order to forcefully address the viewers. Various prologues and in-theater gimmicks are aimed at closing the gap between text and audiences by integrating the spectator into the concerns of the director or by calling attention to the movie-going experience.

Not A "Neanderthal" Audience

According to Ray, who remembers having seen the Blood Island films as an adolescent in Sarasota, Florida drive-in, the audience of such films were primarily teenagers. Through films like these teenage audiences gained access to the "unrestricted sex and gratuitous violence" which were unnoticed by rating boards because of the film's genre (Ray 71). The Blood Island films were box office successes—drives, which top-billed a Christopher Lee film, Blood Feast (Ray 71, fig. 1), was so profitable that a sub-distributor and drive-in owner from Kansas, Bev-Miller was, in Romero's words, "very, very high on Brides of Blood" and "wanted to make a whole bunch of films like that" (Romero 1995, interview). Miller became associate producer for Mel Brooks, and even played a small role in Blot. Another Christopher Lee film, Blood Demons, originally intended as a single-bill, 3) Beast was garnered a Christmas release.

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In the major re-exhibitions op in which the by the directed of drive-in the indoor theater to agree that reasons—though regular-sized in their reasons in watching film for their preference. In my audience prefer Blood Island U.S.A., drive by was trying to the popular p

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...as a single-ball picture, was released at the lower half of the movie circuit. Mad Doctor (Ray 74, fig. 3). Beast was co-billed with a Filipino import, Gerry de Leon's Corazones de Sangre (fig. 4). Beast garnered a New York release in P.G.O. theaters, and "business went through the roof," but a money dispute led to a parting of ways between Lynis and Primo.

The last issue I would like to discuss in relation to its exploitation promotional strategies has to do with the difficult question of the exploitation film's so-called "low-brow" rural audience, whose specifications are mapped on very not only of class but also of taste and perceived propriety.

Gates' historiography has demonstrated that, prior to World War II, the battle between the independents and the big studios who would finally succeed in consolidating most of the American film industry under their control was a battle waged in advertising—whether in print or in street and theater lobby promotion. By the 1930s, with the establishment of motion picture control by the big production companies, the street stunt had given way to the massmedium tie-up, and exploitation no longer intended to court on style but to celebrity endorsement: Gates asks why the "full-bosomed disrepute of circuses ballroom" would finally prove incompatible with mainstream morality interests. Her work proposes two hypotheses: that, first, the film industry at that point was engaged in a "dissociating itself from all entertainment forms that have been historically popular with working class audiences" in its bid for bourgeois respectability; second, consent by pressure at the twenties may have had a hand in curtailing the movies' earlier立项 miseducation (Cass 32-53).

Seals has also described the twenties as the decade in which the majors, in their effort to solidify their theater affiliations, opted for urban first-run theaters, and passed over the small rural theaters which, in the thirties, lacked the wherewithal to convert to sound. Seals' research indicates that the audiences of many of these rural theaters were the westerns which independents were continuing to produce (Song after the big studios abandoned westerns as "unprofitable" far more than the majors' sound films. One of Seals' sources shows that "by 1931, long after the majors had stopped producing silent prints, there were still almost 6,000 unoperated theaters in the country." Ray Art and other Poverty Row outfits filled those still silent theaters with non-talking westerns. The same Ray Art would be absorbed into Monogram (Seals 90), the studio whose products became, in the fifties, "visted to emulate"

In their focus on higher budget films intended for the movie palaces of large cities the majors relinquished their hold on a segment of the audience for whom such products and exhibition opportunities were less preferable or accessible. In the fifties and sixties, the period in which the birth of cinema B-film was made, this specialized audience was inherited by the new-in-circuit for which Romanesque made most of his horror films. Harry Searight's history of drive-in theaters depicts drive-in audiences as decidedly more low-slow than the viewers at indoor theaters. Market researchers in theaters and newsmen as well as conventional wisdom tended to agree that spectators at the "drive-ins" were less likely to visit indoor movie halls, for various reasons—they were elderly or disabled, had very young children, or did not fit comfortably into regular-sized chairs. When asked, members of this rural blue and pink coalitions admitted that their reasons for preferring drive-ins were the relative inexpensiveness, convenience and privacy of watching films outdoors. The films shown were among the last remants cited by audience members for their preference for drive-ins (Searight 142-147).

...actually what you are researching is Hollywood and the mediocre aspect of American culture. That's what it is and I'm not saying this in a derogatory sense. Neandertal is Neandertal. But it's own areas of wealth, which I've forgotten.
BCL: What do you mean the临界式的极限?  
ER: The primitive. There are American primitives. There are millions of them. That is a substitute.  
And there are subcultures and subcultures. The primitives of that are not that close to the  
primitives of Appalachia.  
BCL: Can you elaborate? Do you mean in terms of audience taste, the narratives they go for, the  
style?  
ER: All those things are manifestations of a more basic culture. But of course what is basic? Blood, violence,  
sex, or primitive lines. None of the films of George Cloce. Get close to those tricks like Kim Basinger.  
And then of course America has all that. There it is a bastardized strain in the Hollywood strain but  
like that. So when you go there that, you have to look at all these together. (Romero 1995, interview)  

Certainly, as Romero suggests, genre's formula (themes, styles, and tropes) and the presence  
of such genre's specific audiences need to be considered in tandem. Less instructive, though, is  
Romero's unambiguously patronizing portrayal of the very audience that so many of his films  
so successfully addressed. Such a view is problematic because it equates box-office receipts with  
the viewers' acceptance of the political and "primitive" strains of what they watch. Moreover,  
a stereotypical understanding of rural Americans as "N末端ized" is doubtless at work in such  
remarks, pointing to an unquestioning acceptance of the cultural hierarchies Hollywood  
worked to perpetuate via the category of B-films, for example (Jacobs 12).  

Given mainstream cinema's attempts to address all classes with the values of only one class,  
making its bid for generalized receptivity while hoping to keep a mass appeal, exploitation films  
provide alternative fare for a specialized audience which exists in parallel to mainstream viewing.  
The exploitation film caters to the heterogeneous tastes of a market which the more expensive and  
polite mainstream film shirked in its drive towards lucrative homogeneity.  

Rather than a Conclusion  

This study has taken the persona of director Eddie Romero as the contradictory every-  
person to American low-budget horror films made in collaboration with Filipinos. The ironic  
circumstances which constitute this persona (a Filipino author turned American B-film hack)  
are linked to a history of neocolonial relations that persist between the two nations. But a  
historiographic account of Romero's exploitation films must necessarily go beyond the figure of  
the director-producer to include a dense web of other issues. Rather than exploring the conventional  
linear and unarticulated biographical narratives that have been used to dismiss exploitation  
films as unoriginal and superficial, I have attempted to unpack the underdetermined relations  
between production, distribution, exhibition, reception and representation. From Terror to Twilight, a series of  
narrative tropes, borrowed from jungle, science fiction, and horror films: the interstitial white  
hermeneutic and the black human/white human mixture bring up issues of race and sex/symbolic  
meaning, and colonial ambivalence, the mad scientist foregrounds the dehumanizing aspects of  
scientific overreaching, and the anonymous jungle setting. Blood Island, links the mad scientist to  
a colorist/techno science fiction project, a fictionalized recording which both critiques and reinscribes  
the assumptions of that endeavor. Yet viewing in the Blood Island films extends beyond the frame:  
the politics of casting as well as promotional strategies for the Rogers jungle horror pictures add  
another dimension to the audience's experience of these films. The lower-brow audience for whom  
these exploitation films were intended must be understood as specialized audiences whose very  
existence belies mainstream cinema's attempt at a standardized universal appeal to a supposedly  
homogeneous public.  

As I hope I have shown, no one thread of argument is sufficient to consider the various  
aspects of the films that were the object of this study. An orchestrated conversation between
That's a subculture, not that close to the
times they go for the
base? Blood, violence, ads like Kim Beinger's (Harvard culture, Jan 1986, interview)
and the preferences
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of conversation between

autest, narrative, publicity, exhibition, distribution, and audience is one way to begin a scholarly
consideration of Romero's profitable and provocative horror films.

Author's note:

Since the writing of the first version of this paper in 1995 and its Philippine publication in the
Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature in 1998, scholarly discourse on what I fondly
refer to as "cinema derived"--culturally disparate film genres and audience practices which
exemplify distinct but collocated elements of camp, cult, and trash spectrality--has changed a
dead deal. The key authors I cite in my paper have since published important books on classical
exploitation, classical horror, and film censorship. In addition, the last few years have witnessed
sustained and vigorous research on film cultures which explicate what Scott Caress called "a good
taste of bad taste"); "connoisseurs of trash" which uphold, redeem, or re-read critically disparate
films, and the so-called reading protocol Jeremy Scriven has dubbed "paracinematic." Thus,
since the early 1980's when I first began research into Eddie Romero's American B-films, the
disciplinary context for such a study has improved immeasurably.

The publication of Eric Schaefer's groundbreaking and painstakingly researched study of
classical exploitation films, Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959,
has done a great deal to redress the dearth of historiographic resources on the exploitation film.
Schaefer points out that the term exploitation film has itself undergone a historical shift from
pertaining to "coarsely made pictures" on forbidden topics "distributed by roadshowmen...or
states' righters" from the 1920s to the 1950s, the term later acquired a wider meaning, including
drive-in movies, teempics, and B-films. In its original form, my paper does not distinguish
between exploitation in the classical and post-classical sense; it remains for others to tease out
the continuities and discontinuities between Romero's B-film output and the heritage of classical
exploitation cinema to which I think it is nonetheless indebted, especially in the area of exploitation
promotion.

In brief, this essay is possessed of several shortcomings, due in part to the scant resources
available at the time of writing. No doubt other scholars writing on Romero will improve upon
my conclusions here. If I support its reprinting it is only because there is still, to my knowledge,
no published scholarly study in the U.S. on Romero's American film output, a situation which I
hope the republication of this essay will help to amend, and more crucially, because this study
emphasizes the dovetailing of postcolonial concerns and B-horror film scholarship, a critical
intervention which continues to be premature and which this subset of Romero's oeuvre--"American
pictures made by Filipinos"--remains perfectly positioned to provoke. Exploitation films and B-
pictures, shadowy counterparts to Hollywood hegemony, are usually the province of Americanists
and genre specialists; but in the context of Spectator's special issue on Asian Cinema, the peculiar
transnational, postcolonial exigencies of Romero's Philippine productions, made explicitly for
release in the U.S. market, can be brought into conversation with scholarship on Asian national
and transnational cinemas. A last caveat at the time when I conducted this research, none of the
Blood Island films were available for viewing, even by videocassette. However, late last year two
of the Blood Island films came into my hands, thanks to the impressive sleuthing of the media
Staff at UC "Tvron" both were imported by Midnight Video. The only major content revisions I've
made to this essay are those which incorporate my recent viewing of the two films, Brides of Blood
(1968) and Mad Doctor of Blood Island (1969), which has altered somewhat my understanding of
two motifs--the interstitial heroine and the monstrous maker--and has allowed me to evaluate the
promotional strategy for Mad Doctor (The "Oath of Green Blood" prologue) firsthand.

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Endnotes

1. An earlier version of this paper entitled “Mestizagem Modern: Spatial Borders Shifting: Eddie Romero’s B-llow films and an Invisible Web of Histories” was published in the Philippines in the Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature 1:3 (January 1998): 57-61. My thanks to Jason Sanders and Joel David for their invaluable help in tracking down these films and the scant material on them; and for companionably watching these films with me.

2. This excludes the Gerry de Leon verset films originally made in the Philippines which were then dubbed and distributed in the U.S. years later.

3. In the review for Intramuros (1960), the setting—the historic Filipino fort—is considered “the film’s greatest asset and its greatest economy.” Writing (29 July 1960): 8. The only review I’ve come across which comments positively on direction in the cow films is for Raiders of Leyte Gulf, which is “nicely tailored for the action program” (28 August 1961): 6. Mero Wilk Cooper, an action adventure film, received the most searing criticism—it was described as “lower class in every department. For lowbrow discriminating tastes only.” Variety, (2 December 1964): 6.

4. His father had just been appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James during Romero’s stay in London he met the Miss of David Lean and Roberto Rossellini, and viewed Battleship Potemkin for the first time. (Scholes 130).


6. Romero writes: “Bailing out of an 18/2 from one of the Visayan islands in the center of our archipelago I was the only few words in Tagalog, now called Filipino, the language spoken in the films I was making. I wrote my scripts in English, trusted my assistants for the accuracy and dramatic effectiveness of their translations, and directed by ear. Fortunately there had been some precedent for this particular anomaly, in a number of films, notably American, had directed Filipino films before me, and most of the people in the industry did speak English, but I was probably the first native to fall into such an embarrassing predicament.” See Romero 2015: 222.


9. The imagery of death of Blood, which I have been unable to screen, is based on The Phimostic Encyclopedia of Film, ed. Michael Walden (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980). In the other films, I consulted various in the following for sources: Fred Pohl Ray’s in The Poverty Row, The Overlook Encyclopedia of Horror, ed. Pohl Hardy (New York: Overlook Press, 1986), and the Phimostic Encyclopedia of Film.

10. Eric Scholes 1994: 294 and 300. Scholes’s work complements Scholes’s views, Scale summarises the idea promoted by received histories, that the double bill, adopted by the majors as “a loss to Depression audiences,” made it possible for Poverty Row independents to survive. Instead, Scale asserts that the double bill, already a pervasive practice by 1927, originated in the theatres, when previous team Poverty Row producers offering paired features to exhibitors compiled the majors to adopt the double bill out of competitiveness. See Scale: 79.

11. Scholes 1994: 300. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association’s (MPDPA) list of “Duds and Be Careful” (1927) preceded the Production Code (1930), also known as the Hays Code, newly.
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For the other films, I consulted
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for William Hoyis, whose office oversaw the Code.

12. For example, of these biennials in approaching the work of Roger Corman, see Patrick Goldstein, "Roger to Rock '60s: Make It Cheap." American Film (June-Sept 1985), 26-43, for a positive appraisal; for a negative one, see William Chafe, "The New World of Roger Corman," Film Comment 18.5 (March-April 1982), 26-32.

13. Schaefer 1994: 293-294. Schaefer points out that the profit motive, tor which exploitation films have been denounced in reference to their formulaic narratives and skimped production costs, is the sole reason that underlies the major self-righteous condemnation of Poverty Row. By the twenties, the industry was concerned to cast the battle with the independents in the form of moral high-mindedness as opposed to commercialism, when in fact neither could be attributed reliably to either side. It has been shown that the industry's preference for self-regulation over state censorship, under the leadership of WB Hoyts, had less to do with moral conviction than with a desire to avoid costly customized prints for state censorship boards, and to preserve a universal audience appeal.

14. Geller 3.7. Geller's discussion of exploitation film promotion's debt to the façade also invites comparisons between Gunning's "cinema of attractions" and exploitation films. In Gunning's (personal essay on the "cinema of attractions," film's "historical note" in the foreground being to mind not the exploitation promotion of the low-budget film, but the avant-garde's modernist utilization of "exhibitionist confrontation rather than disruptive appropriation." These themes of attractions, which is characterized by its "silent solicitation of the viewer, "offering pleasure through spectacle, and concentrating on stimulation rather than narrative interest, it itself takes its name from the attractions of the foreground—the circus, the amusement park, and vaudeville. Gunning links this midshow orientation to the hope, in modernist art, of constructing the passive absorption of the spectator in the interest of effecting more active engagement with films. That the legacy of the terminal infrared both the exploitation film and the modernist art film illustrates both teleological and serial "linear" image, since no one-to-one relationship can be found between the influence of the foreground to other high-or low-art forms. See Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," Early Cinema: Space-Time-Narrative, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 58-60.


27. The ambiguous positioning of women and men in the horror cinema has been argued convincingly among different laws, as Linda Williams. "The whole look (in the horror film) expresses conventional feet of that which differs from itself. The female look—a look given premenstrual position in the horror film—shares the same line of the monsters' freakishness, but also recognizes the sense in which this freakishness is in her case different. "Linda Williams, 169.

28. Renoirs's Twilight People is yet another adaptation of The Island of Dr. Moreau. The most interesting part of this otherwise tedious film finds Niva, the mad scientist's daughter, alone with the animal-people. She is attempting to lead them to freedom. She is clearly both sympathetic towards and frightened by her mobile Motorcycle. At one point, one of the chimpanzees tries to ravish her, and it takes some time before the other creatures decide to fight her aid. The moment is a tense one, because Ashley (the film's hero) is far off, watching her at their rendezvous, so no help is forthcoming from anyone but these little people.

Neva's hybridized positioning, aligned on the one hand to Ashby and her father, and on the other, to the creatures which she feels responsible for and akin to, makes her perhaps the most multiply invested of all to Renoirs's Jean low earning heroines. Given her discovery that her father has turned her mother into a most-woman (her mother did not die, as her father claimed, but vegetated, she is alienated via patriarchal systems to humanity, and, via maternal ones, to monstrosity.

29. This is reminiscent of P. T. Barnum's exhibition of William Henry Johnson, an African American man suffering from microcephaly, under the title, "What Is It?" a reference to the performer's possible status as a "missing link" between men and apes. Though the exhibit clearly aligned blackness with overly primitive humanity, the themes of race/taxonomy which underpinning Johnson's exhibition were never explicitly acknowledged. Instead, Barnum called Johnson a "monstrosity." James Cook prefers an acme monstrosity of the science around racializing the other: rather than remonstrating the word "Negro," butch rectified to a categorial stand-in: a racially undefined person that included clear physical signifiers of blackness.
for allowed public discussion of this "Blackness" to take place in a kind of abstract, liminal space...(By positioning his dark-skinned Mimesis character as "monstrosity" rather than "Negro," Bernstein provided white 19th-century New Yorkers with an arena in which to talk openly about black people, often as brutally dehumanizing ways... without ever acknowledging who, exactly, they were talking about" (Cook 149-69).

10. Namely, The Blood-Drenched Vampire Pages (1966), etc. Gericke de Leon for Circuito San Pedro Laboratories and Cars of the Vampire Creatures of Evil (1970), directed by Gerry de Leon for Sampaguita Industries. Both films were made with an all-Filipino cast for Philippine distribution, and were later dubbed in English and picked up by the American market.

21. This theme of the scientist as monster (or more precisely, as the monster's double) is clearly a staple of this particular horror formula, most noticeably in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), whose title refers both to the monster/wild/界 evil.

22. For a discussion of intersectionality and boundary-crossing as the kernel of the horror, see Noel Carroll, Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradigms of the Horror (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 28-32.

Author's Note Endnotes

1. While sharing an emphasis on creative spectacles, these three films diverge in important ways. My students and I explored this pointed confluence and prepared in my course "Christmas Detours: Camp, Cult, Trash," which I taught in Fall 2001 at the University of California, Irvine, Program in Film Studies.


7. Schenker 2:5.


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tract, liminal space...[By legend,] Barman provided the scenes, often in brutality...about) (Cook 148-149).

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