

Á

PRAISE FOR QUEER FILM CLASSICS

“Each of these wonderful books has much to teach us, not only about the art of film but also the queer ways in which films can transmit meaning to audiences.” —*Cineaste*

A Queer Film Classic on Ishmael Bernal’s 1980 film that follows a dozen characters, all denizens of Manila’s sordid yet exuberant underworld, as they pursue life, love, and pleasure. Bernal cited Robert Altman’s *Nashville* as one of the influences on his epic, multi-narrative approach to cinema, and *Manila by Night* ultimately won the Best Picture award from the Filipino film critics. But upon completion, the film was banned in the Philippines by the tyrannical Marcos regime for its “unsavory” depiction of life in the Philippine capital. The work endured an arduous journey through repression and censorship before finally being released by the government as proof of its more tolerant policies on the eve of the “People’s Power” uprising of 1986.

David’s book explores the political, cultural, and historical ramifications of this important film.



Entertainment (Film) | LGBT Studies
ISBN 978-1-55152-707-9
\$17.95 USA / \$18.95 Canada
ARSENAL PULP PRESS
arsenalpulp.com

Joel David

MANILA BY NIGHT

MANILA BY NIGHT

JOEL DAVID



A QUEER FILM CLASSIC

MANILA BY NIGHT

*MANILA
BY NIGHT*

A QUEER FILM CLASSIC

JOEL DAVID

Arsenal Pulp Press | Vancouver



For Ishmael Bernal
(1938-96)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Profuse thanks to Patricio N. Abinales, Thelma E. Arambulo, Tina Baluyut, Joey Baquiran, Vicky Belarmino, Bernardo Bernardo, Pete Bilderback, Karen Blackstein, Marivic Buquis-Tjardes, Flor Caagusan, Patrick F. Campos, Veronica Caparas, Robert Cerda, Mel Chionglo, Leloy Claudio, Sylvia Estrada Claudio, Divine Go David, Gigi Felix-Velarde David, Jek Josue David, Nestor de Guzman, Nicolo del Castillo, Archie del Mundo, Lizbeth de Padua, Jojo Devera, Cynthia Estrada, Patrick D. Flores, Peque Gallaga, Alfredo Garcia, Melanie Joy C. Garduño, Paul Grant, Ju-Yong Ha, Maurine Haver, J. Pilapil Jacobo, Marne Kilates, Ricardo Lee, Bliss Cua Lim, Sergio Lobo, Jo-Ann Maglipon, Juan Miguel Manansala, Gina Marchetti, Ibarra Mateo, Joe McElhaney, Toby Miller, Carla Montemayor, Roselle Monteverde, Jude Ortega, Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, Ellen J. Paglinauan, Vanessa Pallarco, Haesuk Park, Inkyu Park, Shin-gu Park, Sybil Jade Peña, Elwood Perez, Theo Tisado Pie, Benjamin Pimentel, Ethel Pineda, Jane Po, Rowena Raganit, Winston Raval, Lore Reyes, Ramon Reyes, Roselle Leah K. Rivera, Ninotchka Rosca, Filomeno S. Sta. Ana III, Angela Stuart Santiago, Aida Santos, Bayani Santos Jr., Teresita Santos, Ophelia Miller Segovia, Vincenz Serrano, Minsun Shim, Irene Balucos Sia, Boemshik Son, Robert Sklar, Francis Sollano, Robert Stam, Lauren Steimer, Chris Straayer, Lulu Torres-Reyes, Mauro

Feria Tumbocon Jr., Violeda A. Umali, Charmian Uy, JC Velasquez, Taeyun Yu, Jovy Zarate, and Zhang Zhen.

I've been fortunate to work with some outstanding editors in the past, but with Matthew Hays and Thomas Waugh, I saw my early manuscript shape-shift in ways I couldn't often anticipate, with the revised version always a new text whose acquaintance I was happy to make. They've been at this task for nearly a decade without any remuneration, so while I imagine that the impending end of the Queer Film Classics series may be a relief of sorts, it would also open up a gap that other people ought to consider filling. Publishers Brian Lam and Robert Ballantyne, editors Susan Safyan and Tara Nykyforiak, and designer Oliver McPartlin are also part of the series, and while I interact mainly with professors Waugh and Hays, I occasionally correspond with the other participants in the project; as the book begins to take final form, I can only be grateful that their commitment is just as complete and indispensable. (Portions of this manuscript have appeared in my articles in *Kritika Kultura* and *Plaridel*.)

SYNOPSIS

The interwoven stories of *Manila by Night* include those of Virgie, who tries to maintain a decent middle-class lifestyle despite reminders of her background as a sex worker; her son, Alex, who gets lured into the urban underworld via drugs and sexual promiscuity; Kano, the lesbian drug pusher who supplies Alex and his friends and remains true to her love for Bea, whom she nevertheless pimps to Alex; Bea, the belligerent masseuse who looks forward to working in Saudi Arabia with her boyfriend and finding a cure for her blindness; Greg Williams, Bea's boyfriend, who is victimized by an illegal recruiter, returns to the Philippines, and, in desperation, arranges live sex performances for him and Bea; Manay, a gay couturier who maintains a gay-for-pay taxi driver, nurtures a crush on Alex, manages to seduce him, and is persuaded by his new lover to help find a cure for Bea; Febrero, a taxi driver and Manay's lover, who lives with Adelina Macapinlac yet sleeps around with a naïve provincial waitress; Adelina, Febrero's live-in partner, who is a sex worker masquerading as a nurse and whose cover is blown when Manay brings Bea to the hospital where she pretends to work; Baby, the waitress who gets impregnated and eventually abandoned by Febrero, and out of frustration agrees to sex work with Japanese tourists but messes up her first encounter.

Among the major developments is Virgie's discovery of Alex's addiction and her abusive punishment of her son, which drives him to run away from home and live with Manay, from where Virgie has to retrieve him; the death by strangulation of Adelina, whose murderer is unidentified, and whose corpse is accidentally switched in the morgue with that of someone else; Manay's nervous breakdown after the discovery of the switch—coming after other disappointments (being unable to cure Bea and watching Alex descend into drug dependency); Bea's return to her massage work after refusing Greg's incitement to perform live sex, and her betrayal of Kano to narcotics police officers. The movie ends with Alex, having eluded the pursuing officers, wandering through the city until morning and lying down, exhausted, in Rizál Park.

CREDITS

Manila by Night (censored version: *City after Dark*), 1980, Philippines, in Tagalog, English, Ilonggo, Chinese, Japanese; 150 min.

Color, sound, 35 mm, 1.33:1

Shot in Metro Manila

Philippine Premiere: November 28, 1980

World Premiere: February 13–24, 1997 (Panorama Section, Berlin International Film Festival)

Produced and distributed by Regal Films; DVD (out of print) by CineFilipino

Principal Cast:

Charito Solis: Virgie, mother of Alex, a middle-class housewife whose neurotic behavior is caused by her desire to forget her past as a sex worker

Alma Moreno: Adelina Macapinlac/Ade/Adel, the common-law wife of Febrero, who leaves for work in a nurse's uniform but actually earns her living as a call girl

Lorna Tolentino: Baby, a "promdi" (a person newly arrived "from the province") who works as a waitress

Rio Locsin: Bea, a blind, hot-headed, foul-mouthed masseuse, girlfriend of Kano and wife of Greg Williams

Cherie Gil: Kano, a lesbian drug pusher who grew up with Bea at the US naval-base area and migrated with her to Manila

Gina Alajar: Vanessa/Vanny, Alex's girlfriend
 Orestes Ojeda: Febrero, a taxi driver, the common-law husband of Adelina, boyfriend of Baby, and lover of Manay
 William Martinez: Alex, the happy-go-lucky son of Virgie, boyfriend of Vanessa, and lover of Manay
 Bernardo Bernardo: Manay Sharon, a gay couturier who maintains steady relations with Febrero and Alex
 Johnny Wilson: "Daddy," a police officer married to Virgie
 Jojo Santiago: Greg Williams, husband of Bea
 Sharon Manabat: Gayng, Bea's Girl Friday
 Mitch Valdes: Evita Vasquez
 Tony Angeles: Ade's client
 Dante Castro: Sonny, a pimp
 Lucy Quinto: Vanessa's mother
 Vangie Labalan: Cora, the mother of Baby
 Abbo de la Cruz: Mortician
 Jun Macapinlac: Marichu, Manay's factotum
 Manny Castañeda, Bobby Ongkiko, Ube Abeleda: Manay's friends
 Alfred "Krip" Yuson: Poet
 Bing Caballero: Mystic
 Aida Carmona: Miriam
 Marissa Delgado: Marissa Delgado
 Al Tantay: Al Tantay

Crew:

Director and scriptwriter: Ishmael Bernal
 Producer: Lily Monteverde
 Director of photography: Sergio Lobo
 Film editor: Augusto Salvador
 Production designer: Peque Gallaga
 Music: Vanishing Tribe
 Costume designer: Bing Caballero
 Supervising sound editor: Vic Macamay

Soundtrack:

"Teach Your Children," Graham Nash, sung by William Martinez; later played by anonymous solo guitarist
 "Led Boots," performed by Jeff Beck
 "Tukso" ("Temptation"), performed by Eva Eugenio
 "Sexy Thing," performed by Bob McGilpin
 "Pinay" ("Filipina"), Florante de Leon, sung by sidewalk gang
 "Funkytown," performed by Lipps, Inc.
 "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina," performed by Festival
 "Hahabol-Habol" ("In Desperate Pursuit"), performed by Victor Wood
 "Laguna," performed by Sampaguita
 "Full Moon Boogie," performed by Jeff Beck
 "Taksil" ("Unfaithful"), performed by Imelda Papin
 "Buhay Pinoy" ("Filipino Life"), Herbert Bartolome, sung by a street gang

“Araw-Araw kay Maria” (“Every Day, to Blessed Mary”),

Tristan Jovellana, sung by devotees

“Moby Dick,” performed by Led Zeppelin

“One-Way Ticket (To the Blues),” performed by Eruption

“Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit” (“Christmas Has Arrived”), Josefino

Cenizal and Levi Celerio, sung by carolers

“Call Me,” performed by Blondie

Distributor: Regal Films; DVD (out of print) by CineFilipino, 2006–2011, occasionally available at DVD outlets including Amazon; posted in unsubtitled chunks at YouTube, with a “reconstructed” version at the *Magsine Tayo!* Tumblr blog (complete transcription and English translation available in the August 2012 issue of the open-access journal *Kritika Kultura*); slated for remastering in 2018 by ABS-CBN Film Restoration Project

Best Film, Screenplay, Actor (Bernardo Bernardo), Production Design; Urian Awards of the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino [Filipino Film Critics Circle], 1981

Best Film of 1980-1989, Urian Awards of the MPP, 1991

Included in the canon surveys of *National Midweek* magazine (1990) as 1st out of 10; and the *Pinoy Rebyu: Filipino Film Aggregator* website (2013) as 4th out of 100; listed in *SINÉ: The YES! List of 100+ Films That Celebrate Philippine Cinema* (Pasig City: Summit Media, 2017), unranked

INTRODUCTION

As soon as I started the professional life that I had yet to fully chart, *Manila by Night* was ready to mark my steps. I had just completed the first of two bachelor’s degrees at the University of the Philippines (declared the national university in 2008), but my preparation for a career in journalism did not work out as I (and my circle of friends) thought it would. The anti-dictatorship movement I had participated in prescribed a brand of Marxism that I later learned went by a few names, with “orthodox” being the less-offensive term. I decided to distance myself from the political and economic analyses on which I’d built my name as a campus journalist, and focused on cultural reporting. My internships also alerted me to the existence of values that I knew I could never take seriously—the cultivation of sources (the more exclusive or exceptional, the better), for example, and the drive to out-scoop everyone else. I decided to give freelancing a shot, and when I couldn’t shape a sufficiently interesting story out of a cultural (usually film) event, I’d turn in a review instead.

By late 1979, I’d made enough of a buzz to be invited to the award-giving film critics circle. I also heard of a movie about Manila nightlife—which I’d been discovering on my own as a restless, hyperactive insomniac. When I was invited to a preview of *Manila by Night*, I was stunned to discover a lot

of the personalities, locales, and lingo that I'd familiarized myself with since college. It was like I didn't have to wait until nightfall any longer: I could just step into the screen, and that would be the city I had come to know. It wasn't a pretty sight, but it was electric, erotic, vulgar, violent, dangerous, and loving, all in ways that the US-supported and Catholic Church-sanctioned dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos would find embarrassing, if not outright immoral. It was too good to be untrue, so to speak, so I resolved to watch it as often as I could in case the regime decided to destroy all existing copies and consign the film to oblivion.

Which nearly came to pass. Before I could arrange to watch another preview, news came out that the movie had been banned by the then-militarized Board of Censors for Motion Pictures, a body that had tussled with *Manila by Night* director-writer Ishmael Bernal a few times already for too-earthly sex scenes in his previous films. "No worries," said those in charge of the film, since the movie would be making its debut in an international venue anyway, having just been personally selected by Moritz de Hadeln to compete at the Berlin International Film Festival. Bernal, whom I'd met as a critics circle member, provided me with cassette tapes on which a playback of the audio track was recorded, with instructions to transcribe the dialog and provide a literal translation to be used as a guide by the German subtitler. The tapes were low-end, obviously second-hand, and

I had to return them right after using them; if I'd known they would be the source of the only available "integral" version of the film, I would have asked for a better recording. A "where-are-they-now" epilogue was also hastily assembled by the producers for the Berlinale screening, to mollify the censors by making the claim that the intransigent characters were punished while the rest became upright citizens worthy of Ferdinand Marcos's "New Society."

After I turned in my work, a grapevine report circulated in film circles about Imelda Marcos, with her typical flair for the dramatic, watching the movie and breaking down afterward. Everyone's worst fear was confirmed: the movie would remain in limbo until the First Lady could be persuaded otherwise. I requested the copy of the transcription I made from Bernal so it could be printed "uncensored" in the March 1981 issue of *The Review* (see Figure 1), a now-defunct monthly periodical in which I wrote and occasionally edited special issues. In November 1980, a few months before the script came out, the movie itself was approved for local release, with a four-page censors' permit—the longest that had ever accompanied a Philippine screening. Since all mention of "Manila" (dubbed "City of Man" by the increasingly unstable Imelda) was disallowed, the movie's title was changed to *City after Dark*.

The deliberation session for the critics' annual awards was understandably turbulent. Along with a few other members,

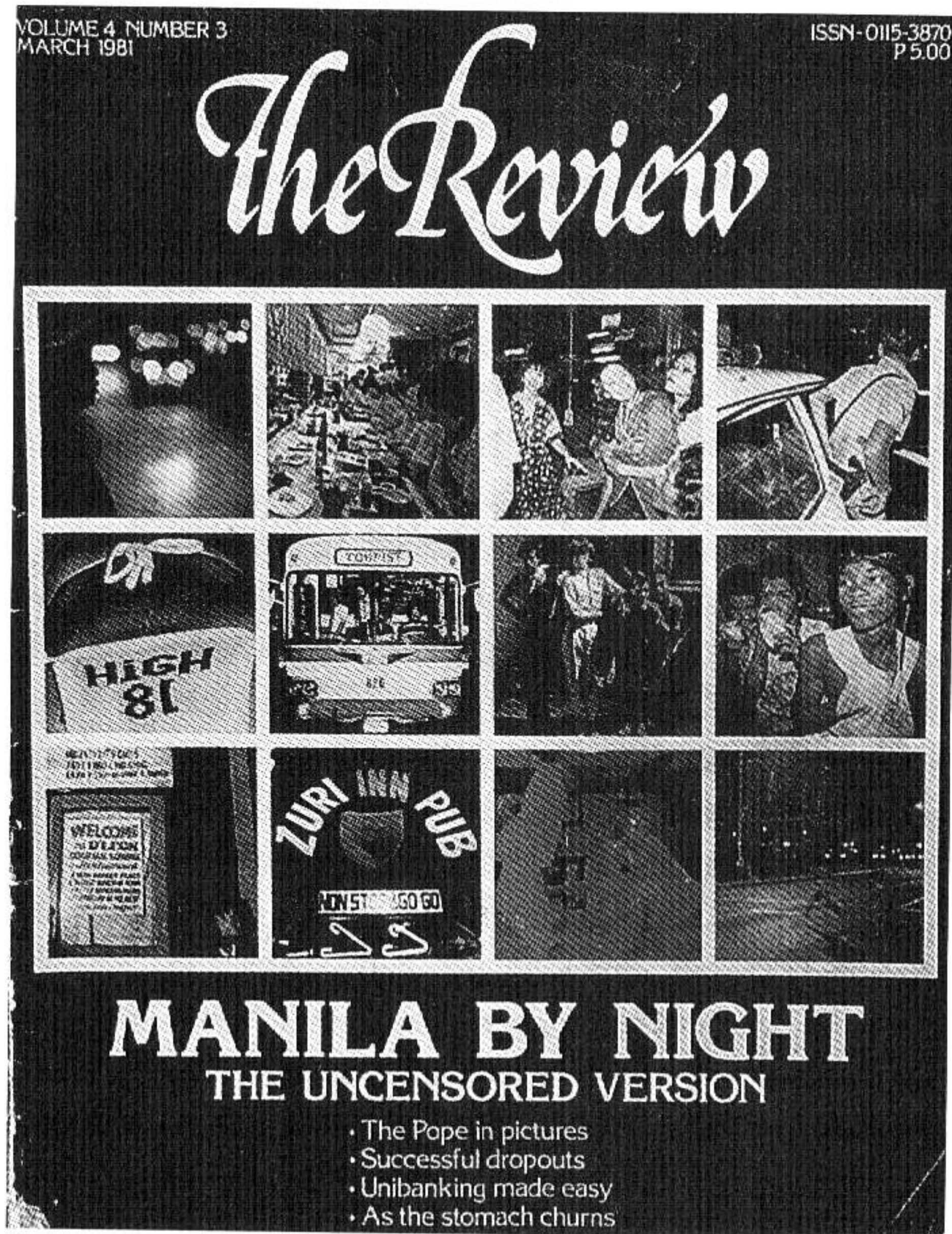


FIGURE 1. The transcribed script of *Manila by Night*, published during the period of its martial-law interdiction, in *The Review*. To temper the controversy, photographs taken by Agence France-Presse chief photographer Romeo M. Gacad were used in place of stills from the film. Photo courtesy of the Bayani S. Santos collection.

I insisted that any recognition given to *City after Dark* would be tantamount to validating what the censors had done. This resulted in a surprising inconsistency in the awards results, including a win for Best Picture but a loss for Best Director (one senior member mentioned that Bernal deserved to be “taught a lesson” regarding the lack of surface polish in his work). The logic was certainly bizarre—if the mangled version of the film deserved to win, then its strength derived primarily from its directorial virtues. From this point onward I began to question the Hollywoodian logic behind the critics’ awards activities, and have since sworn to premise my critical output on the assumption that, among other things, their earlier methods of multiple screenings and intensive deliberations may be useful, but their divisive, formalist, and canonical social-realist approach to award-giving deserved nothing but condemnation, if not contempt.

Meanwhile, the publicity team behind *Manila by Night* continued to conduct previews of the uncensored version—and I continued to attend as many of them as I could. I’d seen Robert Altman’s *Nashville* (1975), Bernal’s takeoff text, during its week-long run in Manila, and began paying close attention to attempts by other filmmakers, as well as by Bernal himself, to replicate this specific approach to the multiple-character film narrative. Despite the trauma experienced by *Manila by Night*, the multi-character film format succeeded so well that it became a recognizable and distinct genre in Philippine



FIGURE 2. Martial-law era poster for the uncensored screening of *Manila by Night*. Courtesy of the Mowelfund Film Institute archives.

film practice, with filmmakers (and a few critics) describing its samples as “milieu movies” and producers as well as talent managers introducing new faces in batches meant to appear as equal lead performers in as many film projects as they could sustain.

A few years later, the anti-dictatorship movement began to pose a serious challenge to Ferdinand Marcos’s presidency. I was working at The Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP), the government film agency, and was surprised by the ease with which I was able to circulate a request to screen *Manila by Night* (not *City after Dark*) and process the paperwork for its release (see Figure 2). The agency also assigned me to complete the then newly introduced undergraduate film program at the national university. Even before the people-power uprising of February 1986, the ECP was dissolved, but my new degree enabled me to start teaching as an instructor, and eventually helped me wangle a Fulbright grant for graduate studies in the US. My doctoral dissertation dealt, predictably enough, with the multi-character film format. During my last trip to Manila, I had an informal discussion with Bernal (a mini-interview of sorts), and managed to extract from him a promise to sit for an interview for my dissertation on multi-character cinema. I told him I’d be drafting a set of questions and would send them to him before my next trip home. While I was away, he passed away from a cerebral aneurysm, joining the legendary realm where

Manila by Night continues to flourish. I decided to forgo all trips outside the US until I had completed my dissertation. My residency deadline was looming, and I was hastily drafting my manuscript on September 11, 2001, when my parents called to ask if everything was all right. The first tower crashed right after I turned on the television, and from that point on I knew that returning to the Philippines might not be the best option, but it was the only definite line of action that would be open to me in the near future. Bernal had been gone for over half a decade, and Philippine cinema was about to abandon celluloid production and embrace the digital era for good.

ONE: MANILA BY DAY—FIFTY YEARS OF HOLLYWOOD

Movies and the Philippines

The Philippines holds a number of distinctions, some of them shared with its Asian neighbors, others a source of struggle and consternation for its population. It was the first country in the Far East Asian region to be colonized by Europeans, during the historical moment when surrounding Oriental influences had not yet fully arrived in the 7,500-plus islands (formerly around 7,100 until a recent recount) that constituted the then yet-to-be-defined and still-unnamed territory. We can visualize this process as sets of arrows moving over a map of the region. The Philippine archipelago lies at the southeastern-most portion of Asia, so the cultural influences that had spread in the surrounding region, all of them from overseas, would have culminated in the area: Chinese culture from the north, Indian culture from the west, Islam from farther west (the last two arriving indirectly, via neighboring Southeast Asian territories). But before these non-Western movements could take root, from the east, Spanish explorers arrived by way of the Americas, led by a renegade Portuguese, who laid claim to an arbitrary group of islands still possessing an array of native cultures and languages.¹ Later waves of European

¹ The Commission on the Filipino Language reports that the number of languages in the country ranges from 86 to 170 (Almario 2014, 7), a figure

explorers would similarly declare surrounding island groups as their own national territories—which explains the peculiar (queer in the original sense) geography of Southeast Asia, with certain island-states separated from the cultures and populations next to them, larger land areas divided into different countries, and city-states located within discrete larger states.²

As the least distinctive Asian territory, closest to a regional *tabula rasa* during its moment of conquest, the Philippines did not possess the pre-European cultural apexes that distinguished its neighbors. Most of what may be regarded at present as traditional Asianness can be gleaned from a few mosques and indigenous practices in the southern island of Mindanao; one may also argue that the northern portion of the archipelago, on which the Spanish colonizers focused, might have too willingly shed its Oriental characteristics, especially in the drive to define a singular national identity,

complicated by the co-existence of several dialects. The August 2017 online edition of the World Factbook of the Central Intelligence Agency lists only two Philippine languages (the official ones, English and “based on Tagalog” Filipino), and, contradictorily, “eight major dialects” starting also with Tagalog—all of which in fact are languages.

² Because of a difference in geographical orientation reinforced by the galleon trade with Mexico, the Spaniards reckoned Philippine dates eastward (toward the Americas). As a result, the country ran one day behind the rest of Asia and had to skip the last day of 1844 in order to conform to the calendar of the other countries in the region (Ariel and Berger 2006, 127–40).

starting with the nineteenth-century anti-colonial revolution. “Benevolent” American colonization, which replaced Spanish rule, was another historical aberration that further alienated the country from its Asian roots. By the time the Japanese invaded in order to set up their vision of a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the Philippines remained the only Asian colony to actually welcome back its non-Asian colonizing power. During the initial post-colonial period (when developing countries typically set up authoritarian regimes), the Philippine dictatorship operated more in line with the US-supported (and US-exploited) Latin American banana republic model, rather than the fast-track development and protectionist policies followed by its neighbors. This resulted in severely plundered reserves and billions of dollars of largely anomalous foreign loans (Krugman et al., 1992). Its current strong economic performance derives from the successful export of the only product its Catholicized population is reliably capable of generating: human labor.

Within this fraught historical and socio-economic background, cinema assumed more significance in the Philippines than it had in neighboring countries. As in most other nations, it was introduced by entrepreneurs who were more interested in profit than in political intervention, with producers eventually adopting the Lumière brothers’ system. After the introduction of chronophotographs by Francisco Pertierra in January 1897, a little over a year after the

December 1895 Paris premiere of Louis Lumière's *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (*La sortie de l'usine à Lyon*), a Lumière cinematograph projector was purchased by Antonio Ramos. He screened the phenomenally popular minute-long "actualities" (documentary footage) that comprised early film productions at a theater in Manila owned by "Messrs. Leibman and Peritz"—who, unlike the Spaniards Pertierra and Ramos, were Swiss citizens (Deocampo 2003, 37–46). A pithy summary of the country's colonial experience, first with Spain and then with the US, ascribed either to National Artist (and queer author) Nick Joaquin or to the well-known essayist Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil, and made famous by Stanley Karnow, describes the Philippines as having spent "three centuries in a Catholic convent and fifty years in Hollywood" (Karnow 1989, Chapter 1).

Master's Tool

As an instantly popular Western invention, the development of cinema in the Philippines seemed to be constantly intertwined with major events in the country. Its introduction (as chronophotography) occurred a day after the shot heard around the country—the execution by firing squad of José P. Rizál (1861–96), whom the Americans eventually declared the Philippines' national hero. Rizál's execution was instigated by clerical authorities and is now regarded as the spark that fired Asia's first anti-colonial revolution.

The first Lumière cinematograph screenings comprised thirty actualities that were combined and recombined in programs of ten titles each, persisting for about three months at steadily decreasing ticket prices despite the emergence of one other competitor (Deocampo 2003, 47–53). The likeliest reason would be the increasing social instability wrought by the revolution against Spain, wherein the colonial forces were routed out and with a final stab at expropriation sold the colony (for US \$20 million) to the government that had declared itself the Filipinos' ally—the United States of America. Thus, the colonizers' club worked out differences among them to their mutual advantage at the expense of their colonized populations.³

³ Korean freedom fighters had a parallel experience after their country was forcibly annexed by Japan; after wondering why the US hesitated to assist them, they managed to uncover a document, the Taft-Katsura Agreement, wherein Japan would recognize the US's ownership of the Philippines⁴ just as the US would observe Japan's claims to Korea (Esthus 1959, 46–51).

⁴ A note on grammatical number and variant spellings (see previous footnote): Spain had named the colony *Las Islas Filipinas*, which the US translated as "the Philippine Islands" (abbreviated as PI) and shortened to "the Philippines." Hence, while colonial-era literature designated "Philippines" as plural, the country's postcolonial self-reference is singular, with "Philippines" understood as short for "Republic of the Philippines" (abbreviated RP). The people are termed "Filipinos" ("Filipinas" for women), maintaining the Spanish designation; the other current national language (aside from English) is "Filipino."

The US, aware of accusations of hypocrisy leveled at it by European colonizers, exerted efforts toward distinguishing its style of governance from that of the Euro-controlled colonies in the region—although the cost of its repression of the Philippine revolution, which redirected its resistance against Spain, was staggering by any measure. The US introduced free public education, culminating in the American University of the Philippines (now without the term “American,” and recently declared the country’s national university); it mobilized a “hamletting” strategy, where villagers suspected of assisting revolutionary elements would be forcibly relocated in order to contain as well a serious cholera epidemic, with colonial warfare becoming the means by which “the administrative practices of the army sanitary bureau flowed into and recanalized a subject population” (Anderson 2006, 46); it steered the country away from the Spaniards’ theocratic system toward secular democracy; and it introduced the concept of freedom of the press within the limits of colonial supervision.

It would be reasonable to claim that the US reintroduced the idea of the people coexisting with a foreign occupant in much the same way that the US also reintroduced film—and succeeded where the Spaniards had faltered. Part of the reason was external, since the US was in the process of dominating global cinema production and could easily facilitate its own

citizens’ production, distribution, and exhibition activities in its overseas territories. The other reason, overlooked in most histories of cinema, was internal. In 1922, when Vladimir Lenin declared that “of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema” (reported in *Sovietskoye Kino* 1–2 [1933]: 10)—acknowledged by film historians as the first attempt to use film for state interests—the US had already successfully deployed photography and then film as its most effective means of convincing the skeptical American public of the justifiability of colonizing the Philippine islands. The most celebrated example of photographs and films being used for propaganda was achieved by Dean C. Worcester, the US Secretary of the Interior. During the actuality era, Thomas Alva Edison had produced crude and propagandistic anti-Spanish and anti-Filipino material that determined the tone and direction the US media machinery would be taking (see Figure 3). One tendency that unified the extremely popular products of both Edison and Worcester was their willingness to resort to fakery and distortion—Edison by letting African Americans and his Jersey film lot represent Filipinos and the Philippines respectively, and Worcester by insisting that female tribal subjects pose topless and by using papier-mâché heads to represent the “savagery” of headhunting warriors (Rice 2014, 118–55).⁵

⁵ The *New York Times*’ December 31, 1913 review (“Calls Wild Men Our Wards”) of one of Worcester’s presentations equated the progression from



FIGURE 3. Imaging of the Philippines (and its people) as dark-skinned, bawling, immature malcontents, with the US as a flustered and presumably concerned authority, from the June 4, 1898, issue of the satirical magazine *Judge*. From Lisa Pennington (no date), “Spanish-American War Primary Resources,” *MacArthur Memorial Education Programs*, Primary Document #2.

Hence, the zero-point, or absolute beginning, of Philippine cinema has always been a contentious issue, whether “Filipino” is defined in terms of content, talent, source of capital, intended audience, and so on. This is because the very definition of “Filipino” is inherently conflicted, imbricated in the country’s colonial origins. This can be seen in how cinema became involved in the condition that Benedict Anderson described as the determinant of the nation (1983, 154): the designation of a national language from among over seventy native tongues. With English and Spanish already staking their claims in the educational system, the final showdown was between the then-numerically superior Cebuano and the Manila-spoken Tagalog. All four languages could be heard in early sound films, with the officially declared Tagalog (rechristened Pilipino and later Filipino) superseding the others and eventually creolized in an English-privileged blend called Taglish (Lim 2015, 176–81).

Language without Words

Film served as a vehicle by which Filipinos could indicate their preference for a dominant language. Beyond the issue of language choice, and in line with the study of *Manila*

still photography to film with the natives’ development under colonization: “The savage, naked, dirty, and unkempt, was shown in still photographs, while that same one-time savage, clothed, intelligent in appearance, and clean, later was shown in moving pictures” (quoted in Rice 2010, 69).

by Night, film arguably provided a means of creating and transmitting cultural meaning, more stable than the necessarily volatile spoken option. Its disadvantage may be its inadequacy for abstractive discourse, but its prevalence may be able to account in part for contemporary Filipinos' much-admired emotional quotient, making them the most in-demand overseas workers in the service and health professions (SEI-DOST 2011, 10-11).

If we inspect the record of Filipino film production, we also find the medium overcoming all kinds of national crises—the World War II Japanese occupation (1941–45), the declaration of martial law (1972), the anti-fascist people-power revolt (1986), and the International Monetary Fund-World Bank financial crunch (late 1990s) that overlapped with the death of celluloid production. In each instance, the rate of production fell, even reaching zero during the Japanese era, but the restoration of relative stability always saw an upsurge in local industrial output—ahead of other media, and in the case of the last listed crisis, ahead of other Filipino industries (several of which never fully recovered).

In fact, with the film industry's revitalization after its near-total suppression during World War II, film attendance steadily grew during the period known as the First Golden Age, roughly comprising the 1950s. This era was marked by so-called vertical integration, with three studios owning their own exhibition venues and monopolizing production. In

an interview, film critic Bienvenido Lumbera attributed the consistency of output to the producers' practice of allowing themselves an occasional prestige project, inasmuch as the profitability of their other future projects was already guaranteed (1990, 21). On the other hand, this Ford-like production model also proved repressive, and not just for producers interested in participating in mainstream production; it enabled the so-called Big Three to function as a cartel that blacklisted unruly talents (usually labor organizers) and created a sense of dissatisfaction among the biggest money-earners (usually star performers) whose services were contracted for fixed periods by their home studios.

The busting of the studio system oligopoly (following the logic of the US Paramount decision, known formally as *United States v. Paramount Pictures Inc.* [334 US 131] or the Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948) resulted in the biggest stars of the Philippines' First Golden Age setting up their own production houses. This led to the domination of so-called independents that eventually reduced the studio monopolists to relative inactivity and eventual closure. The period between Golden Ages (roughly the 1960s through the early 1970s) has been generally regarded by critics and historians as one of "Rampant Commercialism and Artistic Decline," a section title in Bienvenido Lumbera's groundbreaking historical revision (1997, 181–84), a judgment that does not square with the evidence. In fact, the 1960s was marked by

a pioneering, taboo-breaking, politically charged vulgarity never seen before or since in the country, which is essential to explaining why the Second Golden Age (1975–86) held far more promise and managed to meet more expectations than the first. The 1960s was also the first time that annual Filipino film production hit triple-digit levels, and the only decade when the total would occasionally exceed two hundred titles per year (David 2016).

Moreover, from the 1960s through the Second Golden Age's beginning in the mid-1970s, the Philippines had one of the most active film industries in the world in absolute terms (after India, the US, Japan, and France). In per-capita terms, it was more active during this period than India, whose 800 films for 700 million viewers was proportionately lower than the Philippines' 150 films for 70 million. In 1983, before the *Guinness Book of World Records* switched to a gross statistical measurement, Filipinos were ranked as the most active moviegoers in the world. The confluence between film and politics also began during this period, when then-presidential candidate and future martial-law dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos (1917–89, born the same year as the first Philippine film production) married beauty queen Imelda Romualdez (b. 1929), effectively thwarting her movie-star ambitions. He commissioned Sampaguita Pictures, the First Golden Age studio where she had screen-tested, to produce the first of his election-campaign hagiographies, and elicited crucial

last-minute sympathy votes by publicizing his wife's emotional theatrics when the film was censored (actually given a delayed screening permit) during its premiere night (see Figure 4). It was therefore no surprise to media observers when the Marcoses took a keen interest in cinema. They strengthened the film-production arms of government media agencies, eventually setting up their own umbrella agency, the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, run by their eldest child, Maria Imelda "Imee" Marcos. They resisted intense lobbying from Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, to allow foreign screenings during the lucrative Christmas season instead of devoting the time to the Metro Manila Film Festival. They encouraged foreign productions, culminating in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and set up the FIAPF⁶-certified A-listed Manila International Film Festival. From a larger historical perspective, this partiality toward film was no different from the practice of previous, contemporary, and future dictators. Marcos himself made sure that he got a share of illicit pleasure from the flourishing film scene, if certain lurid accounts (notably by Primitivo Mijares) are to be believed; one story tells of an American starlet, Dovie Beams, who became Marcos's mistress while shooting a movie in the

6 Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films (International Federation of Film Producers Associations).



FIGURE 4. The Marcos family during Ferdinand's 1965 inauguration (top, official press photo) and as represented in film (bottom, Sampaguita Pictures' still of *Iginuhit ng Tadhana: The Ferdinand E. Marcos Story* [Conrado Conde, Jose de Villa, and Mar S. Torres, 1965]).

Philippines. She presented to the media an audio recording of their final sexual encounter supposedly in order to preempt an assassination attempt by Imelda Marcos (Rotea 1983, 136–81).

The most significant exploitation practiced by the Marcoses involved the selective withdrawal of censorship policies to arouse public disgust over pornographic productions. Their first attempt was part of the buildup toward the declaration of martial law in 1972, when soft-core erotic movies (with hard-core insertions)—collectively called *bomba* (literally “bomb”)—proliferated, starting with Ruben Abalos's *Uhaw (Thirst)* (1970). Attending to Imelda after a miscarriage (allegedly due to the stress of opposition politics, extensive activism, and a highly critical press), Ferdinand denounced the Philippines' “sick society.” He issued Proclamation No. 1081 (the declaration of martial law) on September 21, 1972. Two days later, he stated that the country was about to witness, under his tutelage, the emergence of a “New Society.” Four years later, to justify a military takeover of the censorship board, he similarly lamented the regularity of so-called “bold” films, which were overtly sexually themed, though less explicit than the *bomba* trend. Upon issuing Executive Order No. 770 to found the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, he exempted from censorship all films screened as part of the Manila International Film Festival and, during the rest of the year, anything exhibited at the Manila Film

Center. This prompted the production of hard-core sex films that were retroactively dubbed *penekula* (a portmanteau of “*pelikula*” or “film” and “penetration”).

“*Ishma*” and Manila by Night

The trends in sexually explicit films during the Philippines’ militarized period (1972–86)⁷ are as good a starting point as any in discussing *Manila by Night*. The movie was completed between libertarian periods and had the ironic good fortune of attracting international attention, becoming the first Filipino film to be selected for competition at the Berlin International Film Festival. Its director-writer, Ishmael Bernal, first made his mark in 1971 with a self-produced reflexive satire on filmmaking during the *bomba* era, titled *Pagdating sa Dulo (At the End)* (see Figure 5). Bernal maintained an interest in gender and sexuality along

⁷ Martial law was declared on September 21, 1972, and officially lifted on January 17, 1981. Since Marcos maintained the same emergency powers that he held before the purported return to civilian rule, critics charged that the 1981 proclamation was merely a “paper lifting.” The assassination of Benigno S. Aquino Jr. on August 21, 1983 (who was returning from exile in the US) led to an economic and law-and-order crisis that Marcos sought to ameliorate by agreeing to a snap presidential election, as proof of the people’s vote of confidence. The widespread and blatant cheating, combined with violent intimidation of opposition supporters, incited a military-led revolt that resulted in the February 1986 people-power uprising and eventual ousting of the Marcos regime.



FIGURE 5. Ishmael Bernal directs Rita Gomez (as a taxi dancer), and Vic Vargas (as a taxi driver), a couple who get discovered as performers in the then-booming pre-martial law sex-film circuit, in his debut *Pagdating sa Dulo (At the End, 1971)*. Frankesa Films and Mever Films publicity still.

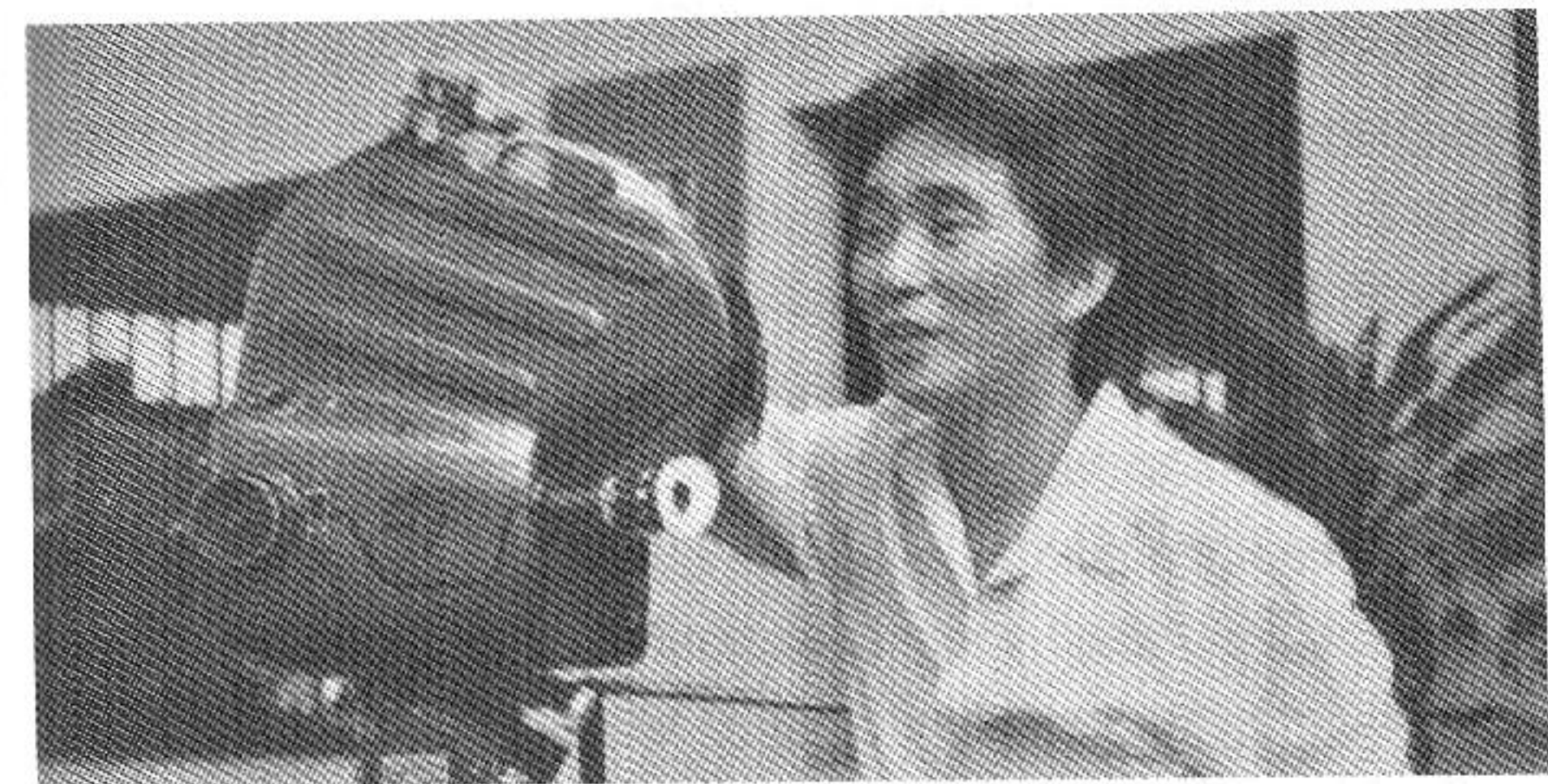


FIGURE 6. Publicity still of Ishmael Bernal on location. Courtesy of Angela Stuart Santiago, *ProBernal AntiBio* Facebook page.

with a willingness to explore various, occasionally offbeat, modes of storytelling. Born in 1938, Bernal (known to most friends as “Ishma” and to a few others as “Bernie”) came of age during the First Golden Age of Philippine cinema and majored in English literature at the de facto (now official) national university (Hernando et al. 1994, 210). He nurtured an interest in the related area of theater, and upon graduation in 1959, worked with documentary expert Lamberto V. Avellana, who was subsequently proclaimed the first National Artist for Film, and to whom he paid tribute in his first film (Carballo 2010, 38). His postgraduate studies comprised a Licentiate in French Literature and Philosophy at the University of Aix-en-Provence as well as a Diploma in Film Directing at the Film and Television Institute of India as a Colombo Plan scholar (see Figure 6).

During a stint as a film critic prior to his directorial career, he described the decade of his awakening, the 1950s, in these terms: “In letters and arts, there was a general dislocation, a distrust in the intellect as the supreme force, an overall cynicism with a world that was capable, after all, of two world wars” (1970).

Before he passed away, Bernal had been working on his “tell-all” biography, the writing of which he entrusted to his friend Jorge Arago. After Bernal died in 1996, the bulk of the material he had compiled—audio tapes, photographs, notes, and journals—were lost in a fire that ravaged the Arago

residence. Arago was nevertheless able to write a biographical article, “Pro Bernal, Anti Bio” (Anti Bio was the title Bernal stipulated for the finished work), and passed on his contacts and materials to another friend, Angela Stuart-Santiago, who completed Arago’s book project using the title of his article. In 2012, as a special issue of *Kritika Kultura*, the Philippines’ only Institute for Scientific Information-indexed cultural studies journal, six scholars contributed the greatest number of articles devoted to a single Filipino movie, the first time such an intensive study had ever been attempted in the country. The movie was *Manila by Night*, with the opening article, “Bernal as Auteur,” written by his nephew, Bayani Santos Jr.

Santos, who was one of Bernal’s designated heirs, traces his uncle’s creative proficiency to the Bernal-Santos clan’s tradition of liberal thinking and artistic productivity. Bernal’s maternal uncle, Lope K. Santos (the “K” was for “Kanseko,” the Tagalized version of “Canseco”) remains familiar to present-day Filipinos as the author of the 1906 socialist novel *Banaag at Sikat* (*Early Dawn and Full Light*) as well as the *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* (*Grammar of the National Language*); his daughter, Paraluman Santos Aspillera, was similarly highly regarded as a linguist-educator. Lope’s cousin, Constancio Canseco de Guzman, was a prolific composer—arguably the First Golden Age of Philippine cinema’s best—but is known today for the *kundiman* (nationalist love song) titled “Bayan Ko” (“My Country”), which was adopted as an anthem by the February 1986 people-power protesters. A

grandnephew of Lope, George Canseco, was the most successful pop and film music composer of the Second Golden Age. A cousin of the Santoses, Susana Canseco de Guzman, was the Philippines' first woman filmmaker, while Vito Canseco Santos wrote what was regarded as the best Tagalog thesaurus-dictionary (Santos 2012, 31–32).

Bernal was the love child of Elena Bernal and Pacifico Ledesma. He grew up with his mother, whom he called Nena (also known as Lena), in the Bernal-Santos household. Mother and son maintained a strong bond throughout their lives; after Ishmael passed away at the age of fifty-eight in 1996, his mother followed less than a year later (see Arago 1996). It was through Nena (see Figure 7) that Bernal managed to absorb the Bernal-Santos clan values (Santos 2012, 29–31). Toward the end of his life, while lamenting to friends that his career was over, he expressed a desire to “go back to family” (Santos 15). Bernal grew up in a household of strong women—to whom even the strong-willed patriarch Lope (Nena's maternal uncle) would defer—which helps to account for his preference for and specialization in gender and sexual politics (Santos 26–29), in contrast with the traditional class-based politics observed by his contemporary and friendly rival, Lino Brocka.

The Bernal-Santos clan might be regarded as liberal in the old-school sense in that “family members were hesitant [to openly discuss] issues such as sex and morals, of which the family had its share of transgressions” (Santos 17). Bernal reverted



FIGURE 7. Elena Bernal, single parent of Ishmael Bernal. Courtesy of the Bernal-Santos family collection.

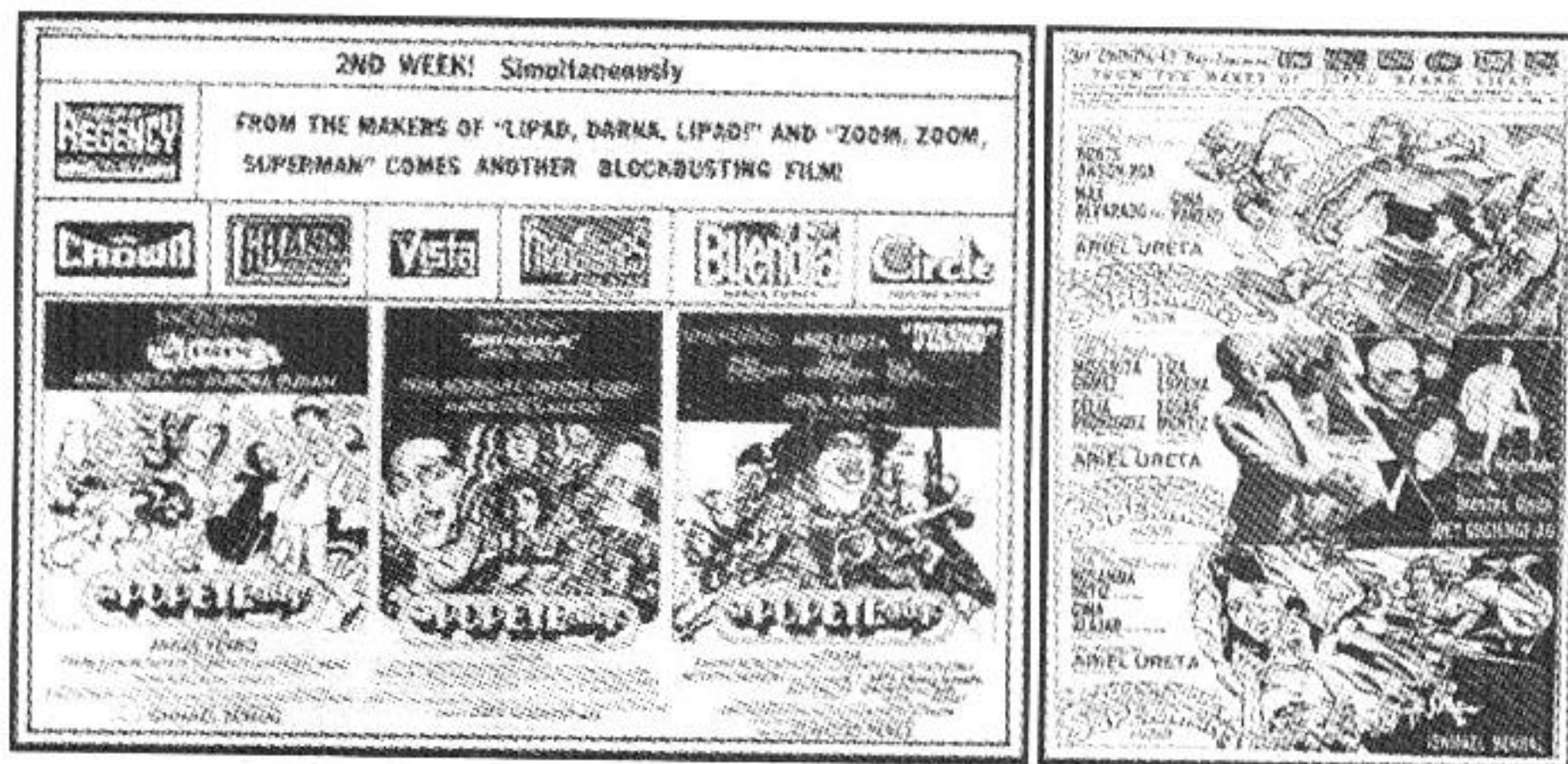


FIGURE 8. Camp specialists mimicking the smorgasbord-movie formula. Courtesy of Video 48.

to the clan's code of decency and discretion when he was in their presence. On the other hand, he paradoxically projected a public persona of boisterous flamboyance, and at one point associated with the Sine Pilipino production outfit—a circle of camp specialists to whom he contributed installments for the parodic-superhero omnibus projects *Zoom, Zoom, Superman!* (Ishmael Bernal, Joey Gosiengfiao, and Elwood Perez) and *Si Popeye, atbp. (Popeye, etc.)* (Ishmael Bernal, Joey Gosiengfiao, and Elwood Perez, both 1973 and currently considered lost; see Figure 8). He also felt at home in both left-activist and bohemian circles, having been a confidant of Jose Maria Sison (a former classmate who later became the founder and incumbent chair of the still-outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines). Bernal was also the proprietor of the quirkily and memorably named artists' café, *When It's a Grey November in Your Soul*, which he launched in 1966. After directing his last

film in 1994, he set up *Kasalo* (companion or drinking buddy), a bar and café where a variety of friends, artists, and activists could congregate.

The Origin of Manila by Night

Manila by Night was a mid-career work from a fairly prolific filmmaker who managed to create more than fifty films in a twenty-three-year career. In addition to the aforementioned *Superman* and *Popeye* episodes, two more of his titles were installments in multi-directorial omnibus projects, while another was nearly completed but never released. All of them, viewed chronologically, evinced a deliberate yet playful working over of the medium along with a willingness to challenge audience preferences and censorship limits. These qualities betokened not just his formal film training and industry apprenticeship, but also his literature background, including a short career as a film critic. In fact, a few years after his debut, his colleagues in criticism proceeded to organize the country's first critics' circle, with whom Bernal had a delicate though generally productive relationship due to their predilection for maverick decisions in award-giving practice. (Lino Brocka, in contrast, had a much more combative relationship with the same group of critics.)

Manila by Night marked a turning point in Bernal's collaboration with Lily Monteverde, whose Regal Films was then poised to become the Philippines' most successful studio,

issuing more than 600 productions in four-plus decades of activity (not counting its earlier distribution of foreign films as well as the output of several subsidiaries and a television arm). Bernal's earlier films were produced by some of the more active studios that emerged after the First Golden Age, including Lea Productions, which was closely associated with Lino Brocka. In 1975, during Brocka's breakout year with *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*Manila: In the Talons of Light*), Bernal made *Mister Mo, Lover Boy Ko* (*Your Mister, My Lover Boy*) for Crown Seven Film Productions, owned by Jesse Ejercito. The younger brother of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, Ejercito provided roles for another brother, George Estregan, who starred in five Bernal projects. (The Ejercitos used other family names because of their family's disapproval of their profession.) The brothers led colorful lives and had spectacular flameouts: Estrada was deposed from the presidency in another people-power uprising, and Estregan dominated the hard-core erotic films and videos that emerged as part of the *penekula* trend.

Jesse Ejercito's next project with Bernal, *Ligaw na Bulaklak* (*Wildflower*), released in 1976, adapted the Lolita narrative to a restive Third-World rural context. The tale of corrupted innocence, marked by impressively handled crowd scenes, was such an unanticipated success that Ejercito was persuaded to produce another storyline that Bernal had drafted as a film student in Pune (aside from his debut film). *Nunal*

sa Tubig (*Speck on the Water*, 1976) preceded *Manila by Night* as a *cause célèbre*, with a publicity blitz that highlighted its exotic locale and use of skilled performers, many of them from theater. Further notice came from the IBCMP (Interim Board of Censors for Motion Pictures, known since 1984 as the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board), which demanded the shortening or deletion of several soft-core sex scenes, all of which involved George Estregan and one of the leading ladies; prior to *Nunal sa Tubig*, Estregan was famed for fearlessly participating in the first same-sex kissing scene in Philippine cinema, in Armando Garces's since-lost *Eric* (1969), produced by Joseph Estrada (see Figure 9).

Nunal sa Tubig failed to make enough money to recover Ejercito's investment, eventually leading to the closure of Crown Seven Film Productions. While Ejercito focused on his other less active company, Seven Stars Productions, Bernal made a couple of films for Lily Monteverde's Regal Films. When Bernal and Ejercito resumed their producer-director collaboration in 1979, Bernal had adopted a radically different style from any of his earlier films: he was now using hand-held cameras, improvised scenes, noise-filled soundtracks comprising pointedly observed inner-city chatter, snatches of industrial and pop music sounds, and (a holdover from his earlier work, including *Nunal sa Tubig*) indeterminate closures. Focusing on "crowd" narratives—college co-eds in *Menor de Edad* (*Underage*) (1979) and bar girls in *Aliw*



The kissing scene between George Estregan and Oscar Roncal in Emar Pictures' "ERIC."

FIGURE 9. George Estregan (left), star of *Nunal sa Tubig*, in an earlier role that launched his reputation as a pioneering figure in Philippine erotic cinema. Source: "Eric (Emar Pictures, 1969)," Pelikula, Atbp. blogspot feature care of James de la Rosa (July 7, 2015).

(*Pleasure*) (1979)—the films provided a raw urban specificity and mimicked the on-the-fly aesthetic of keenly observed documentaries.

The only matter that remained in the conceptualization and execution of *Manila by Night* would be Bernal's awareness of Lino Brocka's much-admired city film, *Maynila*. Earlier, Brocka had also attempted a multiple-character narrative, with *Lunes, Martes, Miyerkules, Huwebes, Biyernes, Sabado, Linggo* (*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday*) (1976), featuring a nightclub in the



FIGURE 10. Four of the seven club performers in Lino Brocka's *Lunes, Martes, Miyerkules, Huwebes, Biyernes, Sabado, Linggo* (1976). Mever Films publicity still.

US naval base's red-light district where a bar girl performs onstage for each day of the week (see Figure 10). The multiple-character structure ultimately collapsed when it centered on a young man in search of his mother, who turned out to be an elderly sex worker in the same bar. Three years later, Brocka had a more successful attempt on a much smaller scale with *Ina, Kapatid, Anak* (*Mother, Sister, Daughter*, 1979), about the anxiety-ridden deathwatch over the patriarch of a clan of declining rural gentry, specifically its effect on its generationally separated female family members.

When Monteverde approached Bernal for a large-budget production to commemorate Regal Films' second anniversary

as a production outfit, he came up with a sequence list (the chronological series of events in the film plot, as determined by locale), announced his intention to improvise the scenes, and assembled a cast drawn from a mix of the Regal stable, Ejercito's talents, friends in theater, and Manila's demimonde (Bernardo 2016). It was an opportunity for Bernal to apply his skills in documentary and complex narrative structuring, which he'd successfully deployed in his last Seven Stars projects, to a wide array of characters—all of whom inhabited the Philippine martial-law era's urban nightlife.

Controversies

The buzz that attended the early-print screenings of *Manila by Night*, where the pre-scored rough cut was presented to various experts and acquaintances for comments and suggestions, ranged from excited to ecstatic. Lino Brocka had just rejected, on live television, the Best Director award given to him by the critics' group for *Jaguar* (1979)—the Philippines' first entry to the Cannes Film Festival—over what he averred was the members' prejudice against the movie's lead actor, Phillip Salvador (Maglipon 1993, 148). With Brocka's city film *Maynila* topping canon surveys as the country's all-time best film—something it still does—people sympathetic with the local critics' group and the movie press (a sector that Brocka antagonized by refusing requests for interviews) were willing to consider an alternative title.

As it turned out, *Manila by Night* was many of the best things *Maynila* had been, and many other things that *Maynila* had failed to become. *Manila's* major failing, in relation to the Brocka masterpiece, was necessarily technical since Bernal's directorial strategy was diametrically opposed to the clean, fluid takes and linear narrative of *Maynila*.⁸ Not only was *Manila by Night* open-ended, it was also arguably unfinished; anticipating the censors' shortening of drug and sex depictions and their bleeping of swear words, Bernal extended several lovemaking scenes and peppered the dialog with obscenities. As it turned out, his anticipation of the worst had been uncharacteristically optimistic.

An "original" version of *Manila by Night* was finalized and submitted for approval in early 1980 to the military-controlled Interim Board of Censors for Motion Pictures (IBCMP), a body designated by the Office of the President of the

8 In the Filipino critics' official anthology for films released in the 1980s, the review of *Manila by Night* concludes that "The film's technical aspects are not exactly first rate but they are well above average" (Bautista 2001, 158); it then qualifies the statement by starting with, "What is more important is" and referring thereafter to the film's political content. Another review reiterated that, "unlike other Bernal films, this one suffers from amateurish cinematography, sound engineering, musical scoring, and editing. But the Bernal magic comes through despite all the technical shortcomings" (Cruz 1980, 45). These reviews reveal the critics' unfamiliarity with documentary and Third-Cinema stylistics, which I will be discussing in the next section.

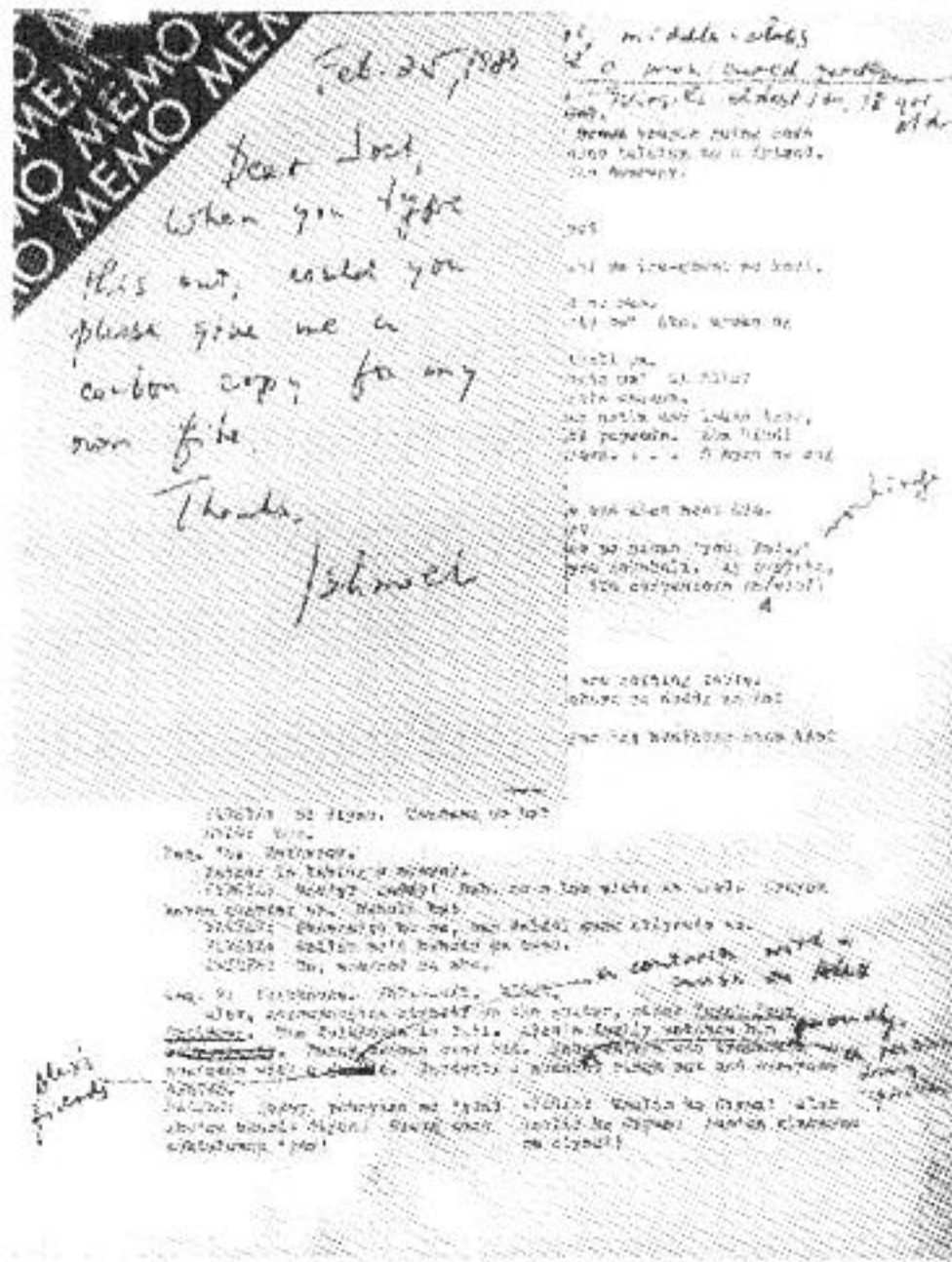


FIGURE 11. Transcription of *Manila by Night* recording with Ishmael Bernal's handwritten note (dated 1981) and corrections. Author's collection.

Philippines. It was promptly banned and remained under official disapprobation, prompting frantic negotiations between the producer, the board, and several well-meaning intermediaries. The print was made available for numerous press screenings, which contributed to a mini-cult wherein certain individuals would keep showing up whenever a screening was announced. The transcrip-

tion I made of this print (see Figure 11) became the basis of the published screenplay in *The Review* (March 1981: 23–41), as well as its corrected version in the Philippines' leading humanities journal, *Kritika Kultura* (August 2012: 172–272).

The Berlinale Connection

In mid-1980, Moritz de Hadeln, recently appointed Director of the Berlin International Film Festival, attended one of the *Manila by Night* previews and personally invited the film to compete at the Berlinale. While requesting a German subtitler's guide (an English transliteration of the dialog,

as distinguished from English-language subtitles), Bernal informed me that he had consulted de Hadeln regarding sequences that he could trim, mostly the sex scenes and the bayside frolic of dope fiends and Halloween revelers. De Hadeln refused, maintaining (per Bernal) that he wanted the film's Third World "feel." Hopes were high for the movie's participation—another Filipino movie, Kidlat Tahimik's 16mm *Mababangong Bangungot* (*Perfumed Nightmare*), had won a special critics' prize in 1977 and was subsequently picked up for distribution by Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope company.

In order to appease the censors, a coda was inserted in *Manila by Night's* last sequence, in the midst of drug-dazed Alex's wandering, which consisted of outtakes of seven characters strung together with a bombastic male narrator's voice stating that most of the characters had undergone personal redemption and become productive members of society:

Alex turned over a new leaf, now at DARE [Drug Abuse Rehabilitation Center] after deciding to become a respectable citizen; Kano, because of her occupation as a drug-pusher, will now be rotting in prison; Baby fortunately married a doctor who was willing to address her predicament [as a single mother]; Virgie has become a social worker ministering to women who strayed from the path of righteousness, as she once did; Bea felt disgust toward the filthiness in her profession, turned away from wickedness, and is now

a waitress at the Deaf and Blind Restaurant at the Luneta [People's Park]; Manay Sharon, after joining the Cursillo [a religious-revival seminar], acquired a wholesome mentality and now completely rejects the depraved temptations of same-sex attraction; Van maintained an excellent student record and has become a promising agent in reforming the kind of people who bring darkness to Manila" (trans. by the author).⁹

This coda was prepared by the *Manila by Night* promotions staff with Bernal's approval. (I was present when he previewed it for the first time and witnessed his highly amused response. In fact, the voice-over text was consistent with the movie's satirical humor and highlighted the hypocrisy of the government's "developmentalist" media policy.) As a result of the confusion over whether the movie would be approved for foreign exhibition, a print was finalized using the subtitler's guide (not in German, but in the transliterated English intended for the German subtitler) that also included the coda. This was the "integral" print most foreigners had

9 For Bernal's penultimate Seven Stars film, *Menor de Edad (Underage)* (1979), the production appended an English-language textual coda that marked it as a multi-character film produced during the martial-law dictatorship (thereby saddled with moralist happy endings), and that recalled the ending of an earlier multi-character movie from Hollywood, George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973).

seen until the movie was finally allowed to be screened at the Berlinale after Bernal's death in 1996.

After almost a year of negotiation, the IBCMP passed a badly mangled version of the film for screening at a local theater exhibition; the censorship board additionally forbade all mention of "Manila," requiring a title change for the movie, to *City after Dark*.¹⁰ Commercial screenings were tumultuous, with people walking out of the theaters shouting "*harang*" (the Filipino word for annoyance and frustration, literally meaning "hindered"); Bernal himself claimed he walked out of one such screening. The video and television versions were further watered-down versions of this print. The rules for the critics' annual prizes confined the choice of film to the *City after Dark* version, diminishing its chances in several categories (Bernal won for screenplay but lost for direction); the critics group, which I had joined by then, issued a statement condemning the excessive censorship imposed on the film. When the Marcos government's exclusive venue, the Manila Film Center, came under fire a few years later for screening

10 One academic article in a volume on city and film repeatedly misidentified *Manila by Night* as "*Manila after Dark*" (Tolentino 2001, 158–70), a title that recognizes the historical fact that the movie ran into censorship trouble but fails to reckon with the cause: the use of the city's name. Even after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, government publications, including those of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, have continued to privilege the censored name *City after Dark* (Pareja 1995, 151–52).

pornographic films, it extended its censorship-exempt prerogatives to *Manila by Night*, allowing the “integral” version to be premiered and exhibited. Bernal’s preferred “director’s cut,” which would have corrected some rough patches and shortened the scenes he considered excessive, was never realized.

Listed below are the deletions specified in the two-page Permit Certificate 19937-38 issued November 27, 1980, to Regal Films by the acting secretary of the IBCMP. The actual print suffered far more damage than the list suggests, implying that the censors did not list everything they took out (for example, all the swear words in scenes involving the foul-mouthed Bea and the toilet pick-up scene where Manay asks Alex out). The actors’ first names in the original have been substituted below with the names of the characters in the narrative:

- All bust exposures, frontal and side view
- Kissing scenes between [*sic*] Febrero and Manay and Alex
- Top shot of nude Bea and Alex in bathtub and the whole bathtub scene in sauna parlor
- Puffing of marijuana on rooftop and sale of the same inside Alex’s car
- Whole scene of Bea semi-nude bathing near house
- Bed scene of Bea and Greg Williams

- Scene of Kano kissing Bea from neck to lips
- Close-up of Rizál monument in [the] Luneta
- Vanessa and Alex bathing [*sic*—showering] in hotel, including sniffing of prohibited drugs
- Pumping scene of Febrero on top of Ade
- Scene of Kano in bay with exposed nipple through wet T-shirt
- Scene of Ade on top of Febrero
- Focus on private parts of Febrero and Greg in briefs
- Manay and partner in very skimpy attire
- Mashing of Virgie’s breasts by her husband
- Close-up of dancing males in disco joint [*sic*—gay bar]
- All words “Manila,” “*leche*” [damn], “*demonyitang puta*” [demonic whore] by Manay

(IBCMP Permit Certificate 19937-38,
November 27, 1980)

In fact, this permit was essentially a consolidated version; the original censors’ permit, posted on box-office windows, ran a record four single-spaced typewritten pages long, since each and every objectionable instance had to be listed in chronological order. Since no copy of the four-page original can now be found, it remains only in the memories of those who saw it.

The Other Manila Movie

Because film critics have positioned Ishmael Bernal and Lino Brocka (1939–91) as contenders for the best Philippine auteur of their time (and perhaps of all time), *Manila by Night's* stature inevitably became intertwined with that of Brocka's *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*Manila: In the Talons of Light*, 1975). Both were epic-scale productions that summon the capital city by name and purport to examine its unstable *mélange* of native and Western cultures (the latter further subdivided between contending European and American influences, and the US representing not just “the center and face of empire but also the theater and figure of the global”—[Capino 2010, xix]) as well as the individual and social traumas wrought by uneven development under an authoritarian system. As mentioned earlier, *Maynila* had (and continues to have) the edge, with wider international acclaim. Martin Scorsese spearheaded its recent digital restoration, and *Maynila* also managed to top most local film-canon surveys, with the exception of the only one to factor respondents' individual preferences in the final tabulation. As ultimate proof of its overseas success, it has been released as a Blu-ray disc in Europe by the British Film Institute, and will similarly be distributed in the US by the Criterion Collection in 2017 (Gallagher 2016)—a feat achieved by no other Filipino title.

Maynila had an easier time with the local (pre-militarized)

censorship board, even while enduring a controversy centered on Brocka's attempt to enhance, as it were, his adaptation of its source novel by improvising a long sequence where Julio Madiaga, the main character, gets distracted from his search for his childhood sweetheart by an apparently gay-for-pay sex worker, who introduces Julio to the rent-boy scene. According to Brocka, “When Julio finally meets Ligaya and sleeps with her in a motel room, he understands her travails thanks to his homosexual experience ... The two know what it means to be dirtied” (Sotto 1982, 225). Edgardo M. Reyes, the author of the source novel, filed a legal complaint against the adaptation (subsequently settled out-of-court) and rallied his supporters to his cause.

An article in the literary journal of the national university, titled “A Brief on *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (Or Why *Maynila* Should Ever Be Masculine),” denounced the film version for “[emasculating] an austere masculine novel” (Jacob 1975, 70) and notes that the film's “palpably stale and run-of-the-mill” reunion between the narrative's doomed lovers was “a lousy mean way to culminate Julio's search. But in the context of the protracted (almost a quarter of the movie's length) *bakla* [homosexual] interlude, that suits Brocka perfectly” (75). In language considered acceptable for its time, the article made liberal use of terms like “homos,” “fairies,” and the aforementioned “*bakla*,” yet expressed an unconscious homoerotic protectiveness toward the novel's main character as well as its author.

The key, however, lies in the article's description of *Maynila's* "interlude" as constituting "almost a quarter of the movie's length." At the current running time of 125 minutes, a quarter would constitute over half an hour, whereas the detour of Julio into the world of male prostitution in existing versions would be sixteen minutes, or about half the amount claimed in the article. The explanation is that the "Julio-as-rent-boy" sequences were trimmed, specifically those following the point where Julio is laid off from a construction project and attempts to spend the night at a gay cruising area where a new character, Bobby, first makes his acquaintance. After an initial brothel scene, an extensive stretch of sequences following Julio's misadventures with fellow sex workers to their much-anticipated big-time gig at a seaside resort was discarded after the movie's initial theatrical run in July 1975, and has never been screened since. The longer version's last missing scene accounts for a then-publicized shot—actually a beach-location still and now mistaken for an indeterminate soft-core glamor pose—of lead performer Rafael (Bembol) Aranda Roco Jr in swim briefs (see Figure 12).

Between the rent-boy sequences in the brothel (the only portion that remains in existing prints) and the sequences on the beach, the narrative follows Julio, who goes along with his mentor Bobby and the latter's circle of sex-work professionals. Following the then-prevalent terms of desire, the members (who at one point operate as a semi-underworld gang) are all

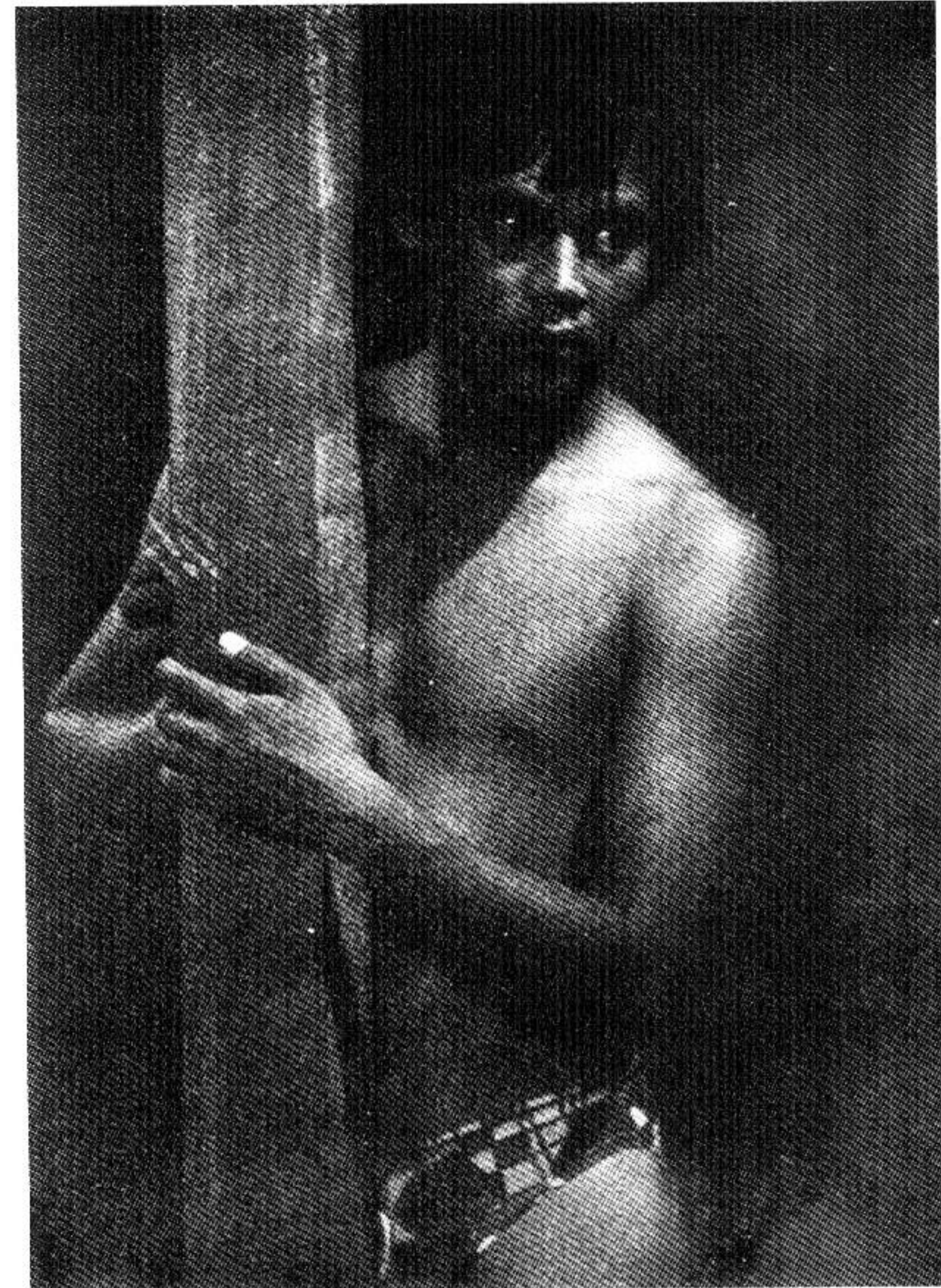


FIGURE 12. Rafael (Bembol) Roco Jr as Julio Madiaga in the now-missing sequence of Lino Brocka's *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975). Cinema Artists publicity still.

straight-acting—which the film suggests is the reason for their ready acceptance of Julio, whose hesitation in homosexual performance is presumably read by both hustlers and johns as confirmation of his heterosexuality. Although Julio's first customer in the brothel (who utters the last line retained from the originally extended sequence) complains of his passivity during love-making, the movie appears to assume that Julio continues to be welcomed in the "life" despite his lack of inclinations (and concomitant skills) because of the other characters' implicit acknowledgment of his greater degree of manliness—presumably derived from his working-class experience.

The highlights of Julio's queer detour include a depiction, per cineaste and *Manila by Night* actor Bernardo Bernardo's recollection, of "the real-life Tambakan alley in Santa Cruz [the squalid residential section of a low-end retail district] where an elderly half-blind pimp named Cleopatra ruled over his harem of hustlers. At the top floor, the laundry line of briefs hanging outside the window signaled to interested gays on the street below if there were available men upstairs" (Bernardo 2012). Another major sequence took place, as mentioned in the newspaper reviews of several critics, in a movie venue along downtown Rizál Avenue, the art-deco Ideal Theater (see Figure 13), then known as the venue for MGM releases. In this sequence, Julio agrees to be set up by Bobby and his friends as bait for any closeted gay male cruising in the darkness of film screenings; the group, posing as



FIGURE 13. Ideal Theater (c. the mid-1960s) along Rizál Avenue, Manila's shopping district, where Julio Madiaga joins his hustler friends to extort money from closeted gay men. Source: Paúlo Rubío, "Ideal Theater," *Arquitectura Manila* (June 27, 2014).

undercover vice cops, would then pounce on the victim and shake him down in order to extort quick (though rarely hefty) profits.

During the final extended beach sequence—the longest single setting in the film—Julio's behavior is consistent with his hesitant responses in the initial brothel sequence. He continues to reject a series of effeminate yet increasingly illustrious clients until he turns violent against some of them, occasioning stereotypical "screaming-fag" hysterics among the supporting performers. Fired on the spot by the brothel manager, Julio turns to drink and lies on the sand, seeking sympathy from Bobby, the self-declared het man who had

befriended him and introduced him to sex work as a means of income. The sequence, as I remember (as a college freshman), also contains possibly the most impressive of the film's several beach scenes, shot during magic hour, with color saturation intensifying along with the emotional tension in the scene. When Bobby, no longer able to control his same-sex desire, plants a kiss on Julio, he responds with disgust and says something to the effect of, "I thought you were different from them, but you're also just another *bakla*," and abandons him. In the next sequence (recognizable to viewers of still-existing copies), Julio calls on Pol, a former construction co-worker.

A larger overlooked paradox is the fact that the extended gay-hustler sequences (still perceivable from the short scenes that remain) are both unconsciously homoerotic yet indubitably anti-queer; the film, like Jacob's article, is consistent and earnest in its sentimental tenderness toward Julio Madiaga. Arguable proof of this is that the film dispenses with an episode in the novel wherein Julio, entirely by accident, attempts to rob a stranger at night—in Agrifina Circle, incidentally another area for locals cruising for sex partners—and winds up killing his victim. In defiance of the novel, Jacob approves of this romantic instance of self-censorship since Julio's motive would allegedly be "definitely mercenary and utterly condemnable, patently not in keeping with his character as a poor but decent young man" from a far-flung provincial

island (Jacob 1975, 70). Yet an acknowledgment in the article of the novel's autobiographical nature (71) also raises the possibility that, in contending over Julio, each side in this debate—film and article—struggles for the ultimate romantic quest: the right to represent not so much the body, but rather an embodiment, of the novel's author.

Notwithstanding this largely academe-centered controversy, *Maynila* went on to win a raft of local academy prizes and garnered further acclaim abroad.¹¹ In the most extensive premillennial survey conducted of film critics and critical practitioners, it tied with Eddie Romero's 1976 historical epic *Ganito Kami Noon ... Paano Kayo Ngayon? (As We Were)* in the total number of votes received (David and Garduño 1990, 136). When individual rankings were factored in the tabulation, however, *Manila by Night* emerged higher in the respondents' esteem. Bernal, who submitted his own list, was ethical enough to refrain from mentioning his own films (unlike the other practitioners), yet the only Brocka film he listed was the

11 One other since-unseen detail in *Maynila* was a title card, inserted during the opening credits, that appeared only during the film's original July 1975 run. Duly noted in contemporary reviews, the card read "1970," a signal that the movie intended to exempt the 1972-inaugurated martial-law regime from its sweeping social critique. After being granted recognition by the local industry's academy awards, the disclaimer never appeared again. The 1982 Paris screening, in fact, splashed the words "Manille '75" on the poster, situating the narrative squarely during the year of the film's production and release.

one made prior to *Maynila—Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* (*Weighed but Found Wanting*) (1974). Although more ideologically conformist than *Maynila*, *Tinimbang Ka* was noteworthy for having a pair of small-town outcasts (a male leper and a madwoman) as lead characters and provided a humanist argument for understanding nontraditional individuals, notably a sex-starved single older woman and a sexually repressed gay teacher.

As a matter of record, Brocka had started out as an anti-Communist homophobe, singling out for persecution his fellow artists at the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Velasco 1993, 31-36). Even discounting its homophobia, *Maynila* also suffered from a surfeit of identity troubles, even by still-contemporary politically correct standards: its protagonists were fair-skinned mestizo types, its villain a small-time Chinatown proprietor, its abusive labor boss as well as an ambitious-yet-decadent worker both dark-skinned men, its white-slavery recruiter an overweight dark-skinned woman, and the sidewalk gang that fatally lynches its male protagonist comprise *lumpenproles*. Some of these types appeared in *Manila by Night*, to be sure, but the latter's satirical approach and deconstruction of the terms of social evil served to overturn the melodramatic earnestness of the Brocka text.

Brocka himself remained defensive about his earlier missteps in all his interviews—even professing a preference for anarchism during the height of his anti-Marcos activism

(Maglipon 1993, 123). Nevertheless, as early as the year after *Maynila*, he proceeded to undertake a careful reconsideration of his excesses, with strong women protagonists in *Insiang* (1976), a recuperation of the *lumpenproletariat* condition in *Jaguar* (1979), and even a depiction of a sympathetic and progressive Chinese family in *Gumapang Ka sa Lusak* (*Dirty Affair*) (1990). The only area where he still needed an unqualified turnaround was in queer cinema: his entry, *Macho Dancer* (1988), remained problematic for its exoticization of poverty and its sudden, unwarranted recourse to urban-guerrilla politics. Aware of the mixed results, and encouraged by the movie's successful US distribution, he had planned a series of more queer-oriented films on the topic of rent-boys struggling against Third-World deprivations; unfortunately, he died before he could tackle any of these and a long list of other projects, and left them to be completed by his associates.

A Pinoy Queer-Cinema Mini-Canon

Manila by Night's achievement traverses several extended categories, so that most film scholars overlook it as (or regard it as more than) a queer entry. Its status as a pioneer in the queer category can be better appreciated when we consider that other noteworthy queer Filipino films emerged much later, with the freedom from business and government interference afforded by digital production. "Queer," of course, is a useful conceptual category, but nearly impossible to execute in neat packages since it arguably abhors neatness to begin with. Nevertheless, the following three categories—gay, lesbian, and camp—are suggested:

Gay. Two possible subcategories of this are the closeted male character, of which Lino Brocka's *Tubog sa Ginto (Dipped in Gold)* (1971) is one example. While still marked by the director's own hesitancy regarding transgressive sexuality, the film nevertheless benefits from his fierce compassion for the conflicted character and lead actor Eddie Garcia's richly textured reading. Brocka's other projects after *Maynila* had better identity politics, but not to the same degree of sophistication as Bernal: his *Ang Tatay Kong Nanay (My Mother the Father)* (1978) ends with an

unnecessarily sentimental plea for understanding, while the above-mentioned *Macho Dancer* takes a disapprovingly voyeuristic approach to the excesses of gay nightlife culture and stipulates radical political action in order to redeem its hero. Brocka planned a series of rent-boy films before he died, all directed by his associate Mel Chionglo and released in North America by the same company that handled *Macho Dancer*—*Sibak: Midnight Dancers* (1994), *Burlesk King* (1999), and *Twilight Dancers* (2006).

In the digital era, the notable titles with lead gay characters are: Aureus Solito's *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros)*, 2005), about a working-class twink, his protective father and brothers, and the hunky cop whom he falls for but who threatens his family's security; Francis Pasion's *Jay* (2008), about a TV producer-director who covers the hate-crime murder of a schoolteacher (who shares his name and sexual orientation), and who attempts to repackage his report in order to make it more marketable to media executives and sponsors; Alvin Yapan's *Ang Sayaw ng Dalawang Kaliwang Paa (The Dance of Two Left Feet)*, 2013), a love triangle featuring a dance and literature teacher, the student who falls in love with her, and her mentee, who falls for the straight-identified guy; and Lawrence Fajardo's

Imbisibol (*Invisible*, 2015), about overseas workers in Japan, including an elderly gay couple (one played by *Manila by Night*'s Bernardo Bernardo).

Lesbian. The coverage of same-sex female desire in Philippine cinema had been subject to even more repression than that of male homosexuality. The earliest performer who profited from his portrayal of queeny characters—Dolphy (a straight-therefore-acceptable comedian)—teamed up with Lolita Rodriguez playing a butch character in Mar S. Torres's *Jack en Jill* (*Jack and Jill*, 1954). Later performers such as Roderick Paulate and Bernardo could get away with maintaining and even succeeding with their queer personas, but their female counterparts always needed to be “persuaded” (occasionally even raped) in order to “discover” their allegedly repressed straightness. Given this caveat, the country's foremost star, Nora Aunor (who turned out to be an outstanding performer as well as a queer icon), appeared with her rival Vilma Santos in Danny L. Zialcita's *T-Bird at Ako* (*Lesbian and I*, 1982), and pulled off a coup of sorts—a heartfelt, passionate, and authoritative delineation of lesbian desire, fully worthy of comparison to *Manila by Night*'s Kano. Not surprisingly, Bernal regarded Aunor as a genius among the country's performers.

Among celluloid-era titles, Mel Chionglo's *Isabel Aquino: I Want to Live!* (1990) and Gil Portes's *Class of '91* (1991)—both hard to find and worth tracking down—are early examples of positive images of Philippine lesbian characters. Joel Lamangan's *Sabel* (2004), based on the real-life story of a woman who started as a free spirit, became a nun and later a heterosexual wife, then joined the Communist people's army with her new female spouse, might be easier to find. Among digital entries, *Kaleldo* (*Summer Heat*, 2006) by Brillante Mendoza features a rural-based lesbian character forced to turn into a strong woman. A debut film about unrequited-yet-unforgettable first love, Sigrid Andrea Bernardo's *Ang Huling Cha-Cha ni Anita* (*Anita's Last Cha-Cha*, 2013), portends better entries for queer women in the near future.

Camp. The opportunity to “read” queerness in film (as will be further explained in the next chapter) became paradoxically intentional via the output of a circle of filmmakers that originally included Ishmael Bernal. Eventually packaged as soft-core titillations, the women characters in works such as Joey Gosiengfiao's *Underage* (1980) and Elwood Perez's *Silip* (*Daughters of Eve*, 1985) undergo an awakening of their desires and desirabilities, and use these as weapons against

unsuspecting or abusive men. In this respect, Brocka's *Insiang* (1976) incited genuine drag-queen appropriations, apparently without the director's intent. More recent expressions of campness have returned to the original fantastic renditions of Bernal, Gosiengfiao, and Perez: Joel Lamangan's *ZsaZsa Zaturannah ze Moveeh* (2006) provided a twist to Darna (the Philippine equivalent of Wonder Woman), in that a repressed gay beautician transforms into a literal superheroine whenever he swallows a magical meteorite; Jade Castro's *Zombadings 1: Patayin sa Shokot si Remington* (*Remington and the Curse of the Zombadings*, 2011) shows the title character struggling with a curse placed on him when he was a naughty young homophobe while witnessing several men in his hometown drop dead simply for being gay; and Matthew Abaya's *Vampariah* (2016) features a Filipina-American vampire hunter seeking her parents' killer—a mythological self-segmenting viscera feeder called a *manananggal*.

A far longer list would comprise films with queer supporting characters, even if we were to confine our choices to positive-image presentations. Minor queer film characters started regularly showing up in Philippine movies with the early output of Ishmael Bernal and Lino Brocka, and (not surprisingly) have occasionally realized more interesting developments than the major het characters.

Stereotyping remains a constant feature, with the trajectory veering from a harmless asexual clown in a film from the 1950s (the aforementioned *Jack en Jill*), to the present-day, serious-indie depiction (in the manner of Brocka's *Tubog sa Ginto*) of the tragedy of transgressive desires.

TWO: MANILA BY NIGHT—CITY OF MANIA

Many-Peopled Narratives

When Paul Haggis's *Crash* (2004) won best film at the US Academy Awards, topping (so to speak) Ang Lee's initially favored *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), people naturally wanted to find out what merits it possessed to justify its upset victory over the first openly gay Oscars front-runner. The *New York Times* argued that it was time to recognize "movies with multiple story lines" (Farber 2005), and quoted filmmaker Miranda July ("To me a single story seems like a very classical form, almost as if you're competing with the Greeks") and, more extensively, Stephen Gaghan ("Tolstoy said that the most important element in writing fiction is your ability to master transitions. [A multiple-narrative film] turns out to be such a cinematic idea. You can cut from a radical cleric addressing disaffected young people to a massive yacht in the Mediterranean. There is a lot of power in those juxtapositions"). A later *Times* article reviewing a recent release, Ray Lawrence's *Jindabyne* (2006), closes with a reference to "the kind of multi-stranded narrative that has become ... the dominant genre of international prestige filmmaking" (Scott 2007).

As if to reaffirm its increasingly controversial decision, the Academy decided to give its life achievement award the next year to Robert Altman, who specialized in the form, and

whose peak achievement, *Nashville*, swept all the available major critics' prizes for its year of release but was cold-shouldered by the Academy in favor of a more conventionally plotted entry. Although a detailed history of "movies with multiple story lines" can be productive in itself, it's vital to first qualify our terms: a movie may contain either multiple plots or multiple characters, but a quick glance at *Manila by Night's* synopsis would make clear that it essentially comprises multiple characters in singular plots (actually settings). A film with multiple plots need not have several main characters, as demonstrated in multiple-personality studies such as Nunnally Johnson's *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) and Daniel Petrie's *Sybil* (1976), not to mention a wide variety of fantasy films. On the other hand, movies in which the characters are set in sufficient proximity with one another that they interact physically (such as *Nashville* and *Crash*), may be definitely multiple-character but are arguably single-plot.

The predicament for anyone interested in studying multiple-character films is that narrative studies of character (as a theory, not as any specific literary entity) are not as extensive as studies of, say, plot or story. Jonathan Culler describes character as "the major aspect of the novel to which structuralism has paid least attention and has been least successful in treating" (1975, 230), while Roland Barthes critiques the valorizing of character in the practice of New Criticism as "an individual, a 'person,' in short a fully constituted 'being' ...

[who] stopped being subordinate to the action, [and] embodied immediately psychological essences" (1977, 104); he describes this as an attempt to step forward from the notion of character in Aristotelian poetics as "secondary, entirely subsidiary to the notion of action: there may be actions without 'characters' ... but not characters without an action" (105). Barthes upholds the "utmost reluctance to treat the character as an essence, even merely for purposes of classification" (105) as practiced in structural analysis, and points to the futility of privileging a "class of actors" by citing as an example the existence in many narratives of "two adversaries in conflict over some stake; the subject is then truly double, not reducible further by substitution. Indeed, this is even perhaps a common archaic form, as though narrative, after the fashion of certain languages, had also known a *dual* of persons ... If therefore a privileged class of actors is retained (the subject of the quest, of the desire, of the action), it needs at least to be made more flexible by bringing that actant under the very categories of the grammatical (and not psychological) person" (Barthes 1977, 108–09).

Not surprisingly, it was US film scholar David Bordwell who addressed the issue of what he termed "network narratives," in *Poetics of Cinema*. In a stand-alone article, "Mutual Friends and Chronologies of Chance," he noted how from the 1990s onward, several Hollywood films went beyond the single-protagonist or dual (romantic and/or rival) protagonists

in their narrative construction, maintaining that the three-or-more characters' interactions were controlled by happenstance (2008, chapter 7). Bordwell provided exemplary readings of large-cast samples, starting with Robert Altman's *Nashville*, but he made no distinction between the latter film and those with fewer protagonists beyond noting how more characters would result in more complexity. His insistence on perceiving these films' characters as isolated enabled him to conduct atomized microanalyses of specific samples in his survey of the field. More productive for this project was Bordwell's recommendation, in his introductory article "Poetics of Cinema," to be aware of three possible approaches in providing a poetics of any filmic phenomenon: the analytic method, which describes the material; the historical method, which situates it in a specific period and setting, to better understand its practitioners' motives and preparations; and the audience response, which grasps the viewers' receptiveness and reading strategies (2008, chapter 7).

The Philippine Moviegoer

A number of factors can be marshaled as possible explanations for the receptiveness of Filipino moviegoers toward multiple lead-character films. Perhaps too literal, one observation would be the close resemblance in the Philippines between film theaters and Spanish-era Catholic churches. For local audiences to look front and

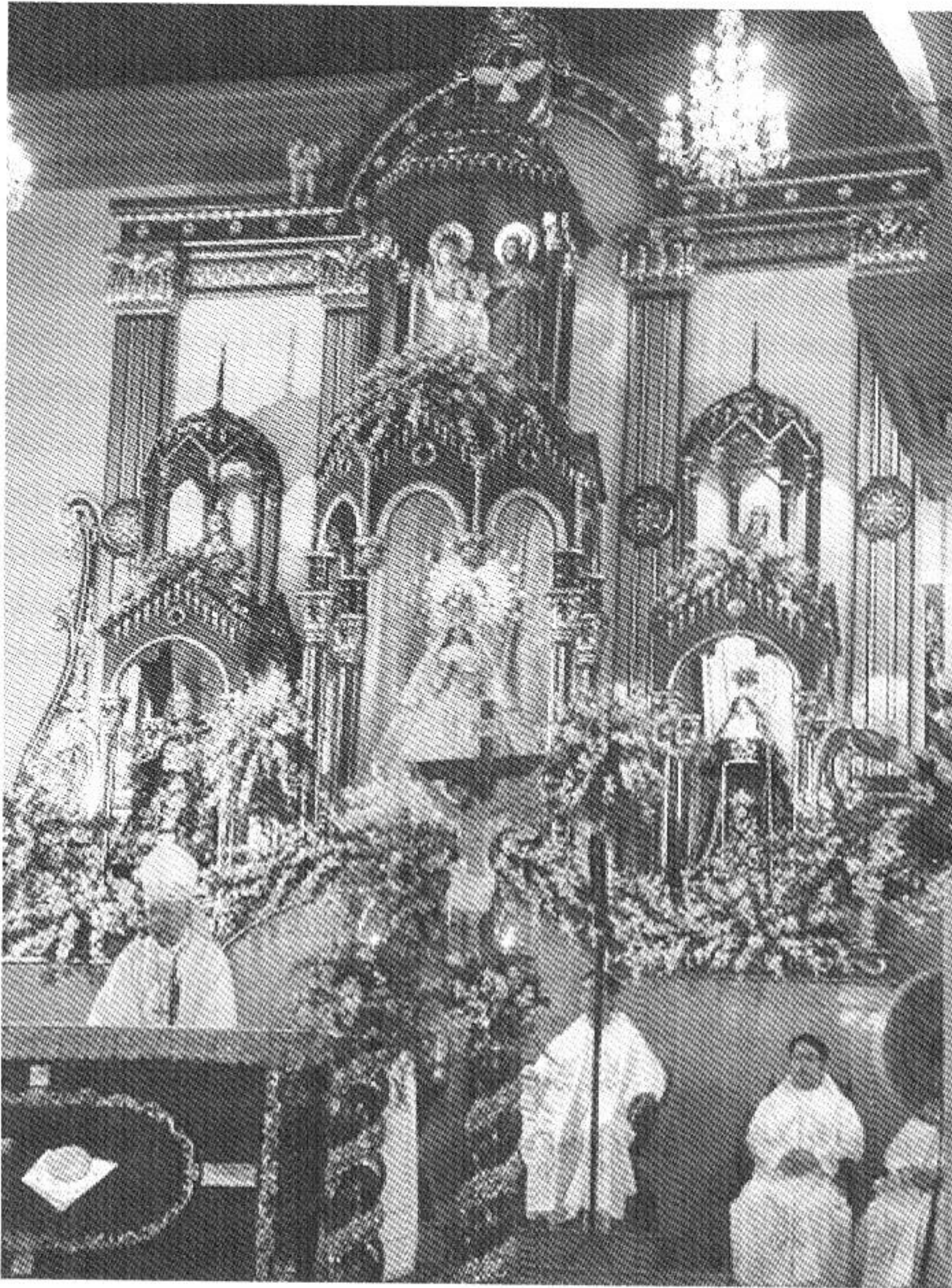


FIGURE 14. *Retablo* at the San Pascual de Baylon Parish Church (a.k.a. Obando Church) in Bulacan province, taken during the district's renowned fertility-rites fiesta. Photo courtesy of Custodia Virgo Salambao.

upward while seated in rows in regular attendance, one need only replace altars with screens in order to complete the analogy. The element of multiplicity comes in when we consider the spectacle available in the major traditional churches: the *retablos* (see Figure 14), or altar pieces, reminiscent of Mexico, where “the foci were the niches containing the *santos* [icons of the saints]” (Javellana 1994, 156). Such feudal ideals lay behind the Marcos dictatorship’s plan to repackage Manila as a larger entity—a metropolis encompassing over a dozen cities (originally only four), with Imelda Romualdez Marcos appointed by her husband as its governor in 1975. Replicating the Spanish-era rural town model, the area was named Metro Manila after its crown jewel, Manila (known during the colonial era as the “Pearl of the Orient”); Manila itself would be further distinguished by being called the City of Man, with the reclaimed area, known as the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex, serving as the equivalent of the town plaza (Lico 2003, 83–126) (see Figure 15).¹²

¹² The most sensational event in international coverage of the complex occurred in relation to film. Imelda Marcos was about to stage the first full-blown Manila International Film Festival after two dry runs. I was with the public relations division, seconded from the National Media Production Center. Preparations were frantic, occasionally requiring all-night stints at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). During one such all-nighter, a strong tremor hit the area, and we instinctively rushed to the windows to see what had happened to the supposedly nonstop construction

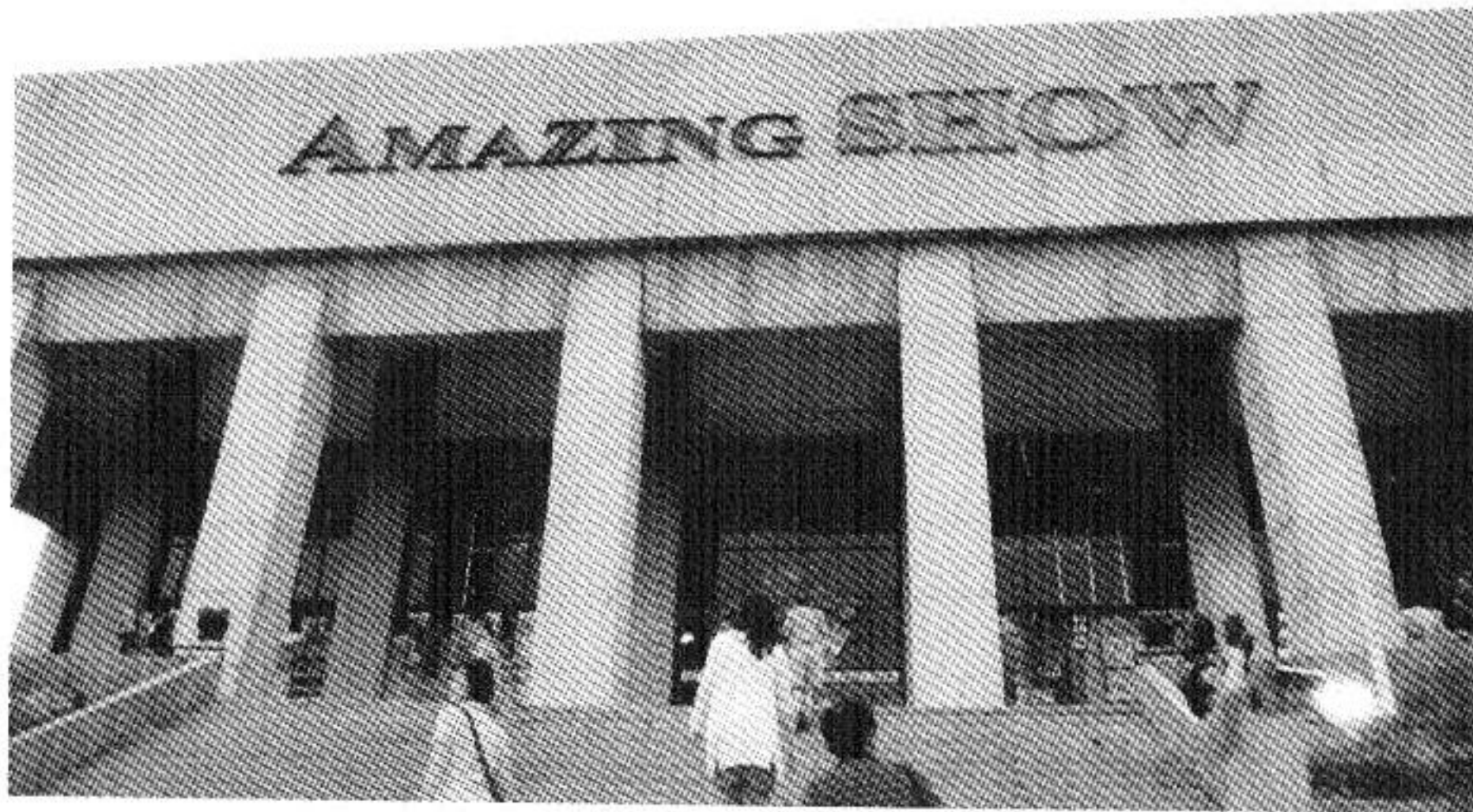
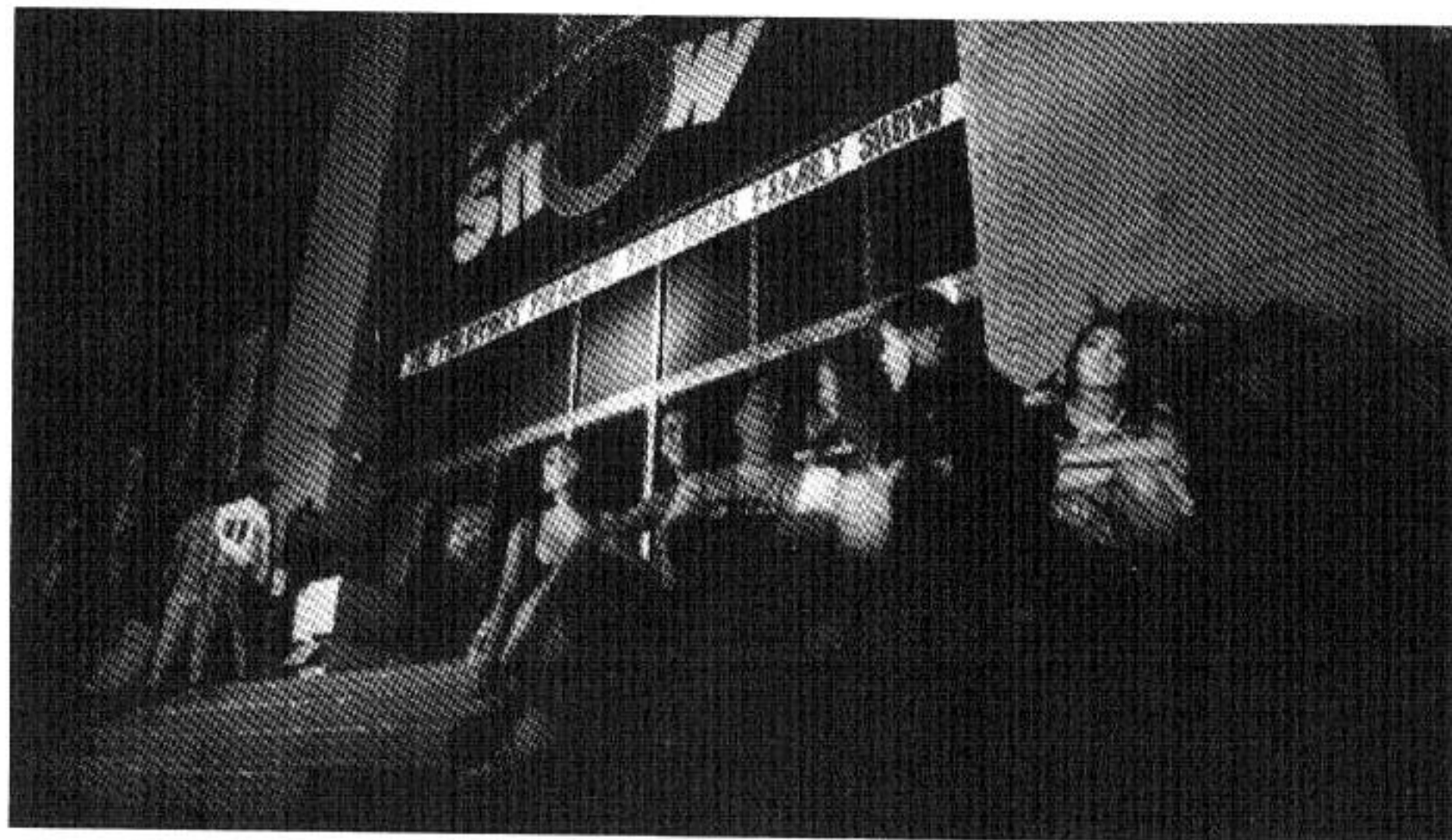


FIGURE 15. The Manila Film Center (top), originally intended to showcase the Marcos regime's support for film production, exhibition, and archiving, was a condemned building for several years because of ground subsidence and the effects of the deadly earthquake of 1990. Before a fire broke out and badly damaged the structure in 2013, the building was rented for a program titled *Amazing Show*, which featured transgender performers (bottom) and catered mostly to Asians from other countries; a movie, Eduardo W. Roy Jr.'s *Quick Change* (2013), provided a fictionalized account of the lives of the performers. Photos: Lee Kumchong (top) and Ricky Pineda (bottom).



True to the global supremacy and influence of classical Hollywood cinema, Philippine films made prior to the Second Golden Age (roughly the dictatorship years, 1972–86) also featured singular heroes, yet the more ambitious among these tended to develop their lead characters as social heroes, constantly interacting with one or more secondary characters throughout the text. An unusual and still-extant illustration would be the Japanese occupation film agency's production *Dawn of Freedom* (1944), directed by Yutaka Abe "assisted" by the most important Filipino filmmaker of the First Golden Age, Gerardo de Leon. The narrative begins with three brothers, all anti-Japanese resistance fighters, being separately betrayed (one of them mortally) by their American allies; the eldest character, Captain Gomez, comes around to the Imperial Army's vision of a pan-Asian alliance, and as proof

of the Parthenon-inspired Manila Film Center (MFC). The spectacle of workers scrambling down ropes and ladders all around the structure would be impossible to forget for anyone who witnessed it. Reports that the inner scaffolding had collapsed were officially confirmed by the government; claims that some laborers had been buried or stuck in quick-drying cement were vehemently denied. Traumatized observers said that those who were dead or seriously injured were buried in the structure in order to meet the deadline, the following week, for the festival's opening. When Imelda's then-rebellious daughter, Imee, succeeded in wrangling control of the umbrella support institution, the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, she refused to move her office from the PICC to the MFC until a native exorcism ritual had been performed (Benigno 2015, 86–93).

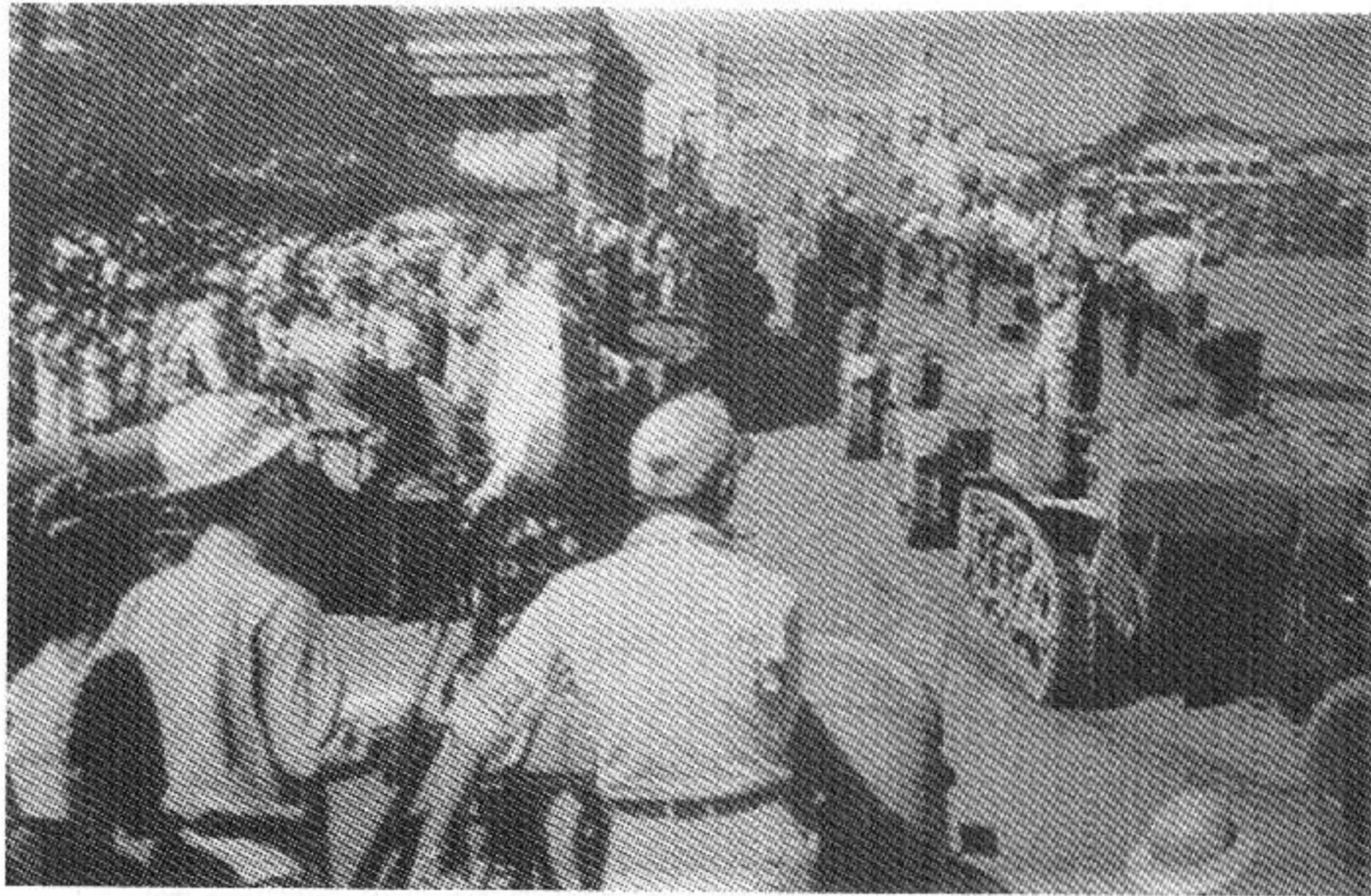


FIGURE 16. The Fall of Manila on January 2, 1942, as re-enacted from the victorious Japanese point of view in *Dawn of Freedom*. Still courtesy of *Pinoy Kollektor* blog (October 12, 2011).

of their co-equality, the Japanese official who befriends him performs domestic duties, including handwashing Gomez's uniform (which causes other soldiers to remark that he no longer needs to find himself a wife). The movie fluctuates between a stiff, formal, epic style (see Figure 16) and warm, personal, domestic scenes with homosocial overtones; based on the directors' previous (and de Leon's future) films, the "private sphere" scenes were more likely done by de Leon (Nornes 1995, 75).

In another post-World War II example, Gregorio Fernandez's *Malvarosa* (1958), the hero is the only woman in a large lower-class urban family. She performs parental functions for

her temperamental, abusive, oversexed, weak, and/or criminally inclined male siblings. Although considered to belong to the "prestige" rather than to the commercialist camp of the 1950s First Golden Age, *Malvarosa* actually breaks out of both molds. It utilizes generic elements—melodramatic developments, action sequences, fantastic coincidences, contemporary humor and lingo—in the service of a narrative set in a slum and promotes an unusual empathy with "undesirable" social types (the murderer, the pimp, the polygamist, the rapist) through the then also unusual strategy of identification with a female character (see Figure 17). Within the ideal of classical unities, the narrative is fractured via detours through the stories of peripheral characters; this serves to disrupt, among other things, the process of singular-character identification. (In a subtle manner, this fractured narrative challenges the requirement that the audience should always be able to identify with the same character throughout the presentation.) Finally, although the objective of the hero in *Malvarosa* is to rise above her station one way or another, the movie's downbeat resolution (in which she and her family lose everything except one another) "flattens" her heroism in a way that favors and augments social insight.

This narrative mode of upholding a singular character within a large social milieu arguably became the defining structure for social-realist cinema, notably in the output of Italian neorealism. Philippine film samples with such structures

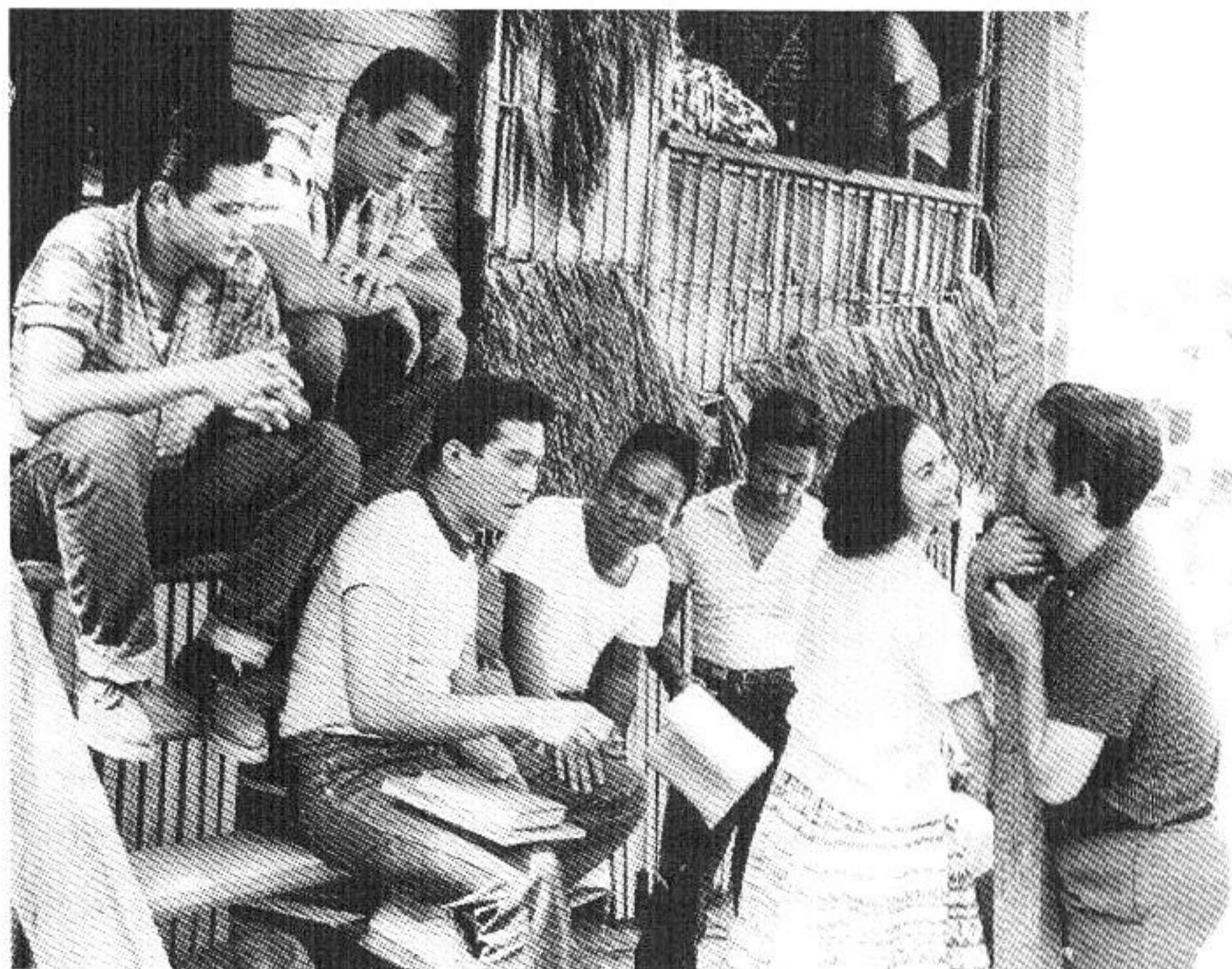


FIGURE 17. Rehearsal for a scene between Rosa and some of her brothers (plus boyfriend) in *Malvarosa*. Courtesy of the Lopez Memorial Museum photo archive.

include Lino Brocka's small-town opuses *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* (*Weighed but Found Wanting*) and *Miguelito: Batang Rebelde* (*Miguelito: Rebel Child*, 1985), and political dramas *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*Manila: In the Talons of Light*) and *Orapronobis* (*Fight for Us*, 1989); Mike de Leon's anti-fascist critiques *Kisapmata* (*In the Wink of an Eye*) (1981) and *Batch '81* (1982); Eddie Romero's period discourses *Ganito Kami Noon ... Paano Kayo Ngayon?* (*As We Were*) and *Aguila* (1980); and any number of social epics featuring action stars Joseph Estrada and Fernando Poe Jr.

Closer to the *Malvarosa* model of having a woman as social hero are Celso Ad. Castillo's *Burlesk Queen* (1977), Brocka's *Gumapang Ka sa Lusak* (*Dirty Affair*), and Bernal's *Himala* (*Miracle*, 1982).

By the arrival of the Second Golden Age (1975–86), production processes that served to prime audiences for multiple-character presentations were firmly in place, often with resounding popularity. The modern-day prototype was set by Sampaguita Pictures, which had garnered invaluable political favor by producing romanticized biographical pictures exploited by subsequent martial-law dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos for his presidential campaign, and which subsequently promoted a set of new faces, five men and five women, collectively known as Stars '66 (referring to the year of their launch—see Figure 18). One of the unarticulated objectives of the arrangement was to maximize the potential of what was then termed the “smorgasbord movie,” wherein a production would compensate for the absence of one or two major stars by hiring instead a large number of minor ones.

This type of film was released during the apprenticeship of the two most famous filmmakers of the Second Golden Age, Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal. With the Philippine release of Robert Altman's *Nashville* in 1976, both directors raced to produce similarly structured projects, with differing and defining results: as recounted in the preceding section, Brocka's entry was commercially successful but critically



FIGURE 18. The first “smorgasbord” project by a subsidiary of Sampaguita Pictures (VP refers to Vera-Perez, the owners’ family name) featuring the Stars ’66 batch, in a 1966 release. The title means “Love Has Many Colors”; however, as indicated by the listing of five directors and five scriptwriters, and as depicted in the layout, the movie does not present a singular multi-character plot but rather five dual-heroic narratives whose titles may be translated as “Jealousy,” “Regret,” “Envy,” “Suffering,” and “Hope” (Internet Movie Database). Courtesy of Video 48.

derided, while Bernal’s remains one of the most acclaimed local releases despite being a commercial flop (mainly because it had a bigger budget). Bernal’s film, *Nunal sa Tubig* (*Speck on the Water*), provides the minimum number of characters for a presentation that may be defined as multiple: three, rather than the singular hero or dual hero-antihero or hero-love interest that typified classical film texts. After a few more projects in which Bernal subsequently jettisoned the love-triangle model and expanded the number of protagonists—ultimately developing an improvisatory documentary style that allowed him to make the most of the potential of his locales and performers—he was ready for the assignment that became *Manila by Night*.

A Perverse Approach

The point I intend to make regarding *Manila by Night* goes beyond the movie’s implicit assertion that the Philippine urban underworld deployed queerness as a form of resistance to martial law, including the historical precedents of colonization, neocolonial globalization, and religion-mandated patriarchy that enabled the dictatorship to succeed. The queerness of *Manila by Night* derives from, and is rooted in, the specific configurations that Bernal applied to the film’s narrative structure and formal elements. Before we proceed further, I will clarify what a multiple-character movie is, since most feature films have multiple (that

is, more than one or two, or neither singular nor dual) characters; “multiple” in this instance refers to lead characters, or what most film-narrative descriptors would call protagonists.¹³

As far as early published film discourses went, however, only two published texts made extensive mention of multiple characters in movies, and both dealt with the New American Cinema and its aftermath. Of these two, self-avowed gay film critic Robin Wood’s *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* unexpectedly regards the “multi-plot, multi-character structure” with suspicion, by associating it in one instance with disaster films (1986, 29), and in another with the 1980s “high-school cycle” teen pic (216). Wood’s critical devaluation of *Nashville* proceeds from Altman’s supposed regard for the city of Nashville as “an image of America, though much more pessimistically conceived, with the notion of survival ... become bitterly ironic” (29). Wood then runs through a series of other movies and concludes that Altman relies on a

13 I prefer to avoid the term “protagonists,” however, since many types of lead characters may not necessarily be technically protagonistic—antagonists, for example, or romantic interests, or narrators; in an extreme instance, in *Nashville*, a nearly invisible character, Hal Phillip Walker, makes his presence felt throughout the film solely via his voice recordings. A recent volume used the title *The Multi-Protagonist Film* (Azcona 2010) and claimed a generic definition for this type of film. *Manila by Night*, however, belongs to a generic tradition specific to the Philippines, so in this study, “multi-character” refers to movies with several lead characters.

“Smart-Ass and Cutie-Pie” principle, which he defines as the use of antagonizing and disarming elements as artistic strategies (38). Returning to a consideration of *Nashville*, he concludes that “the film’s total effect—for all the marvelous local successes—is to engulf the spectator in its movement of disintegration, making intellectual distance impossible” (41). In a chapter titled “Images and Women,” Wood turns to the aforementioned ’80s high-school cycle to enumerate five characteristics of these films, comprising the “commodification of sex in contemporary capitalist culture,” the “almost total absence of parents,” the “initiation of the male virgin,” “the repression of homosexuality,” and, specific to multi-character movies, the observation that “the aim is to reach and satisfy as wide a youth audience as possible; there must, therefore, be a range of identification figures, and no minority group (with one significant exception) must be entirely neglected (though arranged within a careful hierarchy)” (215–16).

While a few of Wood’s insights may be valid within the terms of his analysis, his insistence on a narrow ideological stance has effectively allowed him to overlook the formal and structural properties of the objects of his study. The other early text that takes notice of multiple characters, Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner’s *Camera Politica*, goes further in evaluating what its authors labeled the “group film.” Ryan and Kellner’s consideration of progressive film form proceeds from their setting up of an opposition between metaphor and

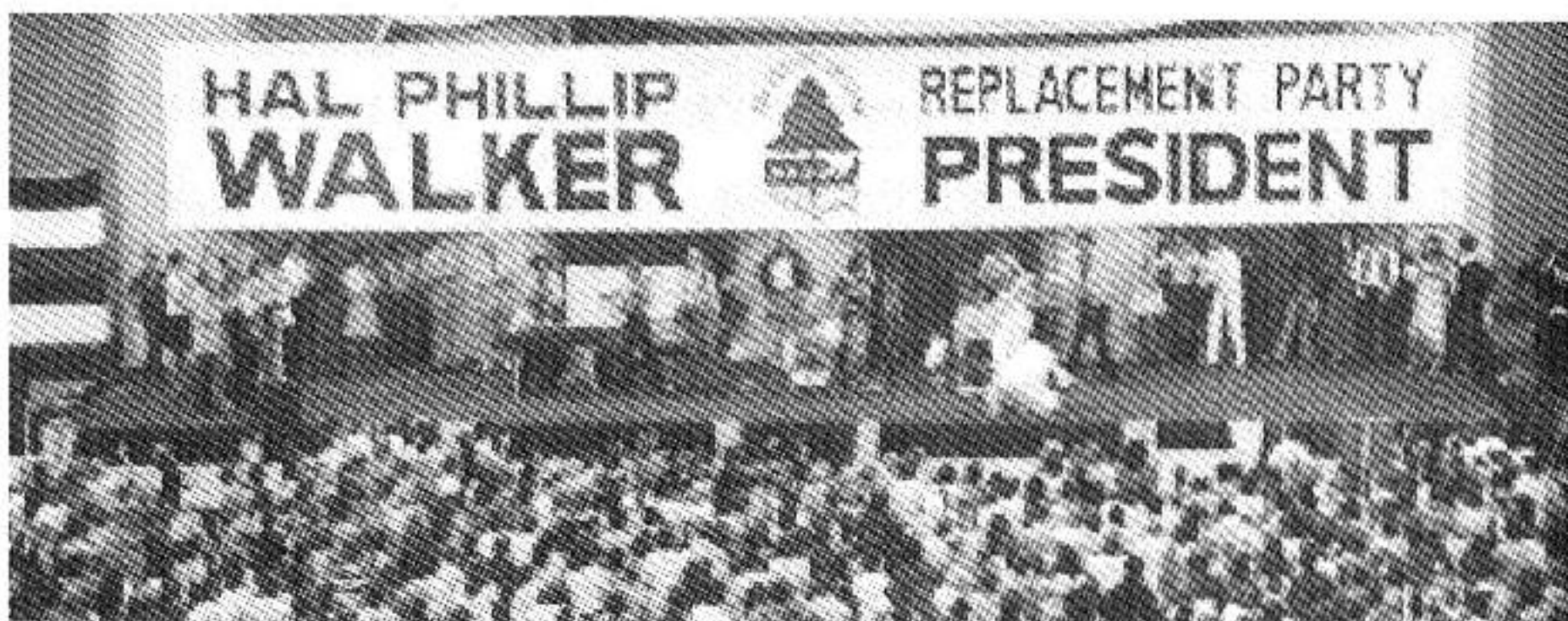


FIGURE 19. Disaster text (per Robin Wood's claims) or progressive text (per Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner)? Car pile-up and outdoor-concert assassination in Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975). MGM DVD, screen captures by author.

metonymy as related filmic rhetorical strategies (1988, 312). Within this binary, Ryan and Kellner maintain that metaphor, via the substitution of one idea for another, tends toward idealizing, while metonymy, because of its materializing effect in developing associations between related ideas, lends itself to more politically useful ends (313). By allowing its characters and their interactions to provide insights about American society, culture, and politics, *Nashville* promotes the

materializing principle and can therefore be seen as a sample of a progressive film text (see Figure 19). In this respect, the multiple-character format can be linked with a number of other features that enable the spectator to regard a film text metonymically: open-endedness, distantiation, generic playfulness, and demythologization within mainstream film undertakings (269–82).

Technique as Politics

Manila by Night's claim to be a progressive film goes beyond its structural resemblance to *Nashville*, and its (still ongoing) struggle to be created, approved, and exhibited are further indications of its subversive potential. In the earlier phase of his career, Bernal had been regarded as an astute intellectual filmmaker (with a prior career in film criticism [Vasudev 1995, 17]—perhaps the most successful critic-turned-filmmaker in the country) who was capable of executing his choice of occasionally cutting-edge subject matter with technical flourish.¹⁴ In fact, he was the local

14 After his film career had ended, Bernal came full circle—not just by opening and managing a café once more, but by also (in a sense) becoming a film critic-turned-director again: he played Pier Paolo Pasolini in Anton Juan's *Kamatayan sa Hugis ng Isang Rosas* (*Death in the Form of a Rose*, 1991), staged at the national university, where he had originally trained for theater. The presentation was highly controversial, replete with scenes of queer sex, violence, and frontal nudity, but it was also a huge success. Bernal himself stated that “this was the first time I was being directed and

critics circle's second Best Director awardee, when his star vehicle *Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon* (*Two Nests, One Bird*) intercepted 1977's best-film winner, Robert Arevalo's *Hubad na Bayani* (*Naked Hero*), on its way to sweeping the usual clutch of major prizes. Next year, his even more ambitious Euro art-film handling of a big-star love triangle, titled *Ikaw Ay Akin* (*You Are Mine*) (1978), won prizes for production design and music, and had advocates for major prizes as well.

By this stage in his career, Bernal was regarded as a narratological innovator, perhaps the country's finest, but not necessarily a major cinematographic talent on the order of other critically acclaimed Filipino filmmakers such as Lino Brocka, Celso Ad. Castillo, and Mike de Leon; again, going by the evidence of critics' awards, the work of these filmmakers consistently cornered the technical categories; Bernal's films were awarded "secondary" prizes such as the previously mentioned ones for production design (a latter-day spin-off from cinematography) and music (essentially a sub-category of sound). The logical expectation was that Bernal would be fortifying his potential in these categories in order to prove himself the equal, by cinematic standards, of his peers, just as he might be tempering his tendency to depict shocking

it was a wonderful experience and I enjoyed every minute of it" (Vasudev 1995, 27). He subsequently won his first and only performance prize from Kritika, a now-defunct alternate critics circle, of which I was a founding member.

sexual kinks and verbal obscenities in order to alleviate his standing with the militarized censorship board.

Instead, Bernal seemed to have decided on an insistence of these liabilities, intensifying them to an extent that may be termed "perverse" (in more ways than one). The turning point was in 1979 when his film *Aliw* (*Pleasure*) displayed several characteristics that would be further amplified in *Manila by Night*, from urban-lumpen subjects (with attendant salty lingo) to multi-character narrative structure to apparent slap-dash technique. The sudden emergence of *Aliw* coincided with a flurry of prolific filmmaking on Bernal's part, when he came up with four or more completed projects annually, and which lasted to the mid-1980s. The logical conclusion—that this (apparent absence of) style was his way of coping with a heavy workload—would be evinced in the minimal recognition his output received. On the other hand, both Lino Brocka and Mike de Leon, who were renowned for their technical polish (the latter, in fact, won best director the year that *Manila by Night* was in the running), were introduced to the Cannes Film Festival around this time. Bernal eventually took pains to abandon the methods he had initiated with *Aliw* and returned to his less controversial "polished" filmmaking style. Not surprisingly, his winning streak with the critics' awards returned, and he wound up with four best-director prizes, more than any other Filipino winner. Ironically, none of the films which



FIGURE 20. Triple-character films made by Ishmael Bernal prior to *Manila by Night* (left to right): a male-centered love triangle in *Ikaw Ay Akin* (*You Are Mine*, 1978); a women-focused triangle in *Nunal sa Tubig* (*Speck on the Water*, 1976); and an equal-emphasis triumvirate of sex workers in *Aliw* (*Pleasure*, 1979). Newspaper ads posted online by Video 48 (video48blogspot.com).

won awards share the same prominent canonical stature enjoyed by *Manila by Night*, *Nunal sa Tubig* (*Speck on the Water*), *Himala* (*Miracle*), and even relatively small-scale works like *Aliw* and his first film, *Pagdating sa Dulo* (*At the End*).

A more plausible explanation for Bernal’s resort to “flawed” technique in *Aliw* can be inferred from the fact that it was produced by the same person, Jesse Ejercito, but not the same production company that financed his 1976 fishing-village epic *Nunal sa Tubig* (see Figure 20). The difference lay in Bernal’s approach to the material; whereas *Nunal sa Tubig* was shot only after extensive research and scriptwriting with every set-up subjected to as thorough

a measure of control as could be mustered on a distant out-of-town location, *Aliw* (to the chagrin of the original scriptwriter) and *Manila by Night* were essentially improvised on the set. Six people were credited as “script consultants” in *Manila by Night*, all of whom had worked and/or would be working with Bernal, all with an avowed willingness to participate in improvisatory activity on his film sets. Among the six were Jorge Arago, who had scripted *Nunal sa Tubig*; Peque Gallaga, who was also production designer for *Manila by Night*; and Ricardo Lee, who would write a few other scripts for Bernal, including some of his subsequent multi-character projects.

Voyeuristic Restlessness

That Bernal had an apprenticeship in documentary production and approached *Manila by Night* in a documentary-realist manner—holding off on production activity until he had extracted information from actual milieu personalities on what their everyday concerns were and how they responded to events outside the ordinary—suggests that he had worked out his technical choices with more careful deliberation than he has been given credit for. Coming of age during the flourishing of direct cinema (and eventually offered the directorship of the University of the Philippines Film Center, which had pioneered *cinéma-direct* workshops in the country), he might have pondered the most

effective way of shaping film technique in the face of the Philippines' decline in national status—from developing to underdeveloped—in contrast with other Asian countries that had experienced similar authoritarian systems of government.

Bernal determined that documentary aesthetics would provide the most apposite (or the least objectionable) way of matching what was, after all, Western-sourced technology with Third World realities. This bespeaks a certain level of integrity, considering that this was also the period when international film-festival agents scouted for talent from countries like the Philippines—talent packaged as anti-authoritarian personalities who happened to be “gifted” in the medium. For Cannes Film Festival representative Pierre Rissient (who was, in effect, the Asian region's gatekeeper to the festival), it resulted in the exclusion of people like Bernal, whose craft was considered “sloppy.” This bit of information was relayed to me in confidence by the late film critic and historian Agustin Sotto in the same year (1981) that Lino Brocka was able to garner favorable reviews for the participation of *Jaguar* in the Cannes competition and was finalizing *Bona* (1980), also for Cannes participation. The context of the discussion was that the next Filipino to make a Cannes debut would be Mike de Leon, whose technical competence was regarded as superior to Bernal's. Sotto was instrumental in facilitating the circulation of Brocka's and de Leon's films

in Europe, assisting in the subtitling and promotion of their material.¹⁵

No help for Bernal's situation was forthcoming from Third Cinema advocates. If any consensus can be drawn from Jim Pines and Paul Willemen's anthology *Questions of Third Cinema*, it's that non- or anti-Western films ought to be exempt from the challenges of aesthetic innovation. The closest to a pro-aesthetic utterance comes from Teshome H. Gabriel, who maintained that folklore, as a repository of popular memory, would most effectively counterpose the dominant versions of “official history” that Hollywood promotes and circulates (1989, 54–56). The problematic implications of this assertion—including the conflation of everything represented as “Hollywood” into a mode of reaction—could not have been part of the aesthetic issues weighing on Bernal; otherwise, he would have gone the same direction as his contemporaries—i.e., into highly polished, anti-authoritarian

15 An issue that's never been brought up in any public venue has to do with the rival directors' respective personas: Brocka, like his serious films, was formal, reserved, and masculine in deportment; Bernal was boisterous, catty, inclined to camp, and effeminate. Although both acknowledged being homosexual, Brocka, as recounted in the preceding section, went through a phase of being “discreet,” forbidding queer behavior at the Philippine Educational Theater Association and quarreling with journalists who played up his gay inclinations (Velasco 1993, 31). Whether this implies that homophobia played a factor in the Cannes festival's gatekeeping is up to scholars of gender to tease out.

film provocations that would have been rewarded with foreign-festival acclaim and marketability.

In fact, the trajectory of filmed ethnography (as distinct from its literal documentary counterpart, film ethnography) represented by a continuum from *Nunal sa Tubig* through *Aliw* and *Manila by Night* (with a return to *Nunal sa Tubig*'s austere, carefully planned approach in *Himala*) bypasses the strict delineation of the domain of documentary filmmaking outlined in what may be construed as the standard mainstream text, Bill Nichols's *Representing Reality*. A more useful starting point would be Nichols's somewhat melodramatic description in "The Voice of Documentary" of what he champions as observational filmmaking: "Even those obvious marks of documentary textuality—muddy sound, blurred or rack focus, the grainy, poorly lit figures of social actors caught on the run—function paradoxically. Their presence testifies to an apparently more basic absence: such films sacrifice conventional, polished artistic expression in order to bring back, as best they can, the actual texture of history in the making. If the camera gyrates wildly or ceases functioning, this is not an expression of personal style. It is a signifier of personal danger ... or even death" (1988, 52).

Further confirmation of Bernal's observational strategy lies in the narrative sample he openly avowed as his inspiration: Robert Altman's *Nashville* (an American production, it must be noted). The movie's scriptwriter, Joan Tewkesbury,

achieved her ambitiously structured twenty-four-character opus (twenty-five if we count the nearly invisible Hal Phillip Walker) by spending several months immersed in the city's country-music culture (Stuart 2000, 46–48), the same process observed by Bernal in his preparations for *Nunal sa Tubig* and *Himala*. When this approach proved inadequate in the case of *Nunal sa Tubig* (in the sense that local audiences felt alienated by the result), Bernal did not abandon Altman's example altogether; instead, he took the same extra step that Altman did and introduced on-the-set improvisation to an extreme degree. Box office earnings for *Aliw* and another multi-character Seven Star film from 1979, *Menor de Edad (Underage)*, confirmed the effectiveness of the approach. Beyond the pragmatic rationale, the strategy also serves to confirm the "narrowing of the gap between the languages of documentary and fiction ... Those same lightweight, silent-running cameras and recorders, plus film emulsions whose sensitivity obviates the need for extra lighting in most situations, have led to the production of films whose fluency of camerawork and naturalness of performances ... have opened up an unprecedented range of stylistic choice" (Vaughan 1992, 104–05).

The Queering of Technique

In order to inspect the means by which Bernal (with minimal theoretical assistance from experts in the field) signaled to his audience how *Manila by Night* was supposed to have

departed from traditional (Hollywood-inflected) filmmaking, I will consider two devices—a visual as well as an audio element, both of which are normally regarded as violations of “fine” filmmaking practice, and which thereby account for, to borrow former US President George W. Bush’s unexpectedly useful term, the “misunderestimation” of Bernal in relation to other Filipino (and Third World) film practitioners.

The Mirror Effect

One visual device worth inspecting at length in *Manila by Night* is reflexivity, considered a problematic aspect of documentary film practice. Astutely describing the condition as one of “anthropological transparency,” James C. Faris traces the origin of reflexivity to an attempt by Western anthropologists to be more honest about their biases regarding non-Western peoples (as epitomized in the films of the otherwise well-intentioned Margaret Mead, after whom the longest-running annual ethnographic film festival is named). Reflexivity in this context could mean either the deliberate placement of reminders of the artificiality of media activity in a foreign or pre-modern culture, or the provision of non-Western peoples with the means to create their own images and statements.

Although the practice of reflexivity has become a regular feature of postmodernist literature, it is still securely contained in film in the sense that either the work has to be a

documentary (and therefore reflexive signifiers can be permitted along with other “errors” in production), or it has to be signaled as a fiction within the fiction (Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* [1950] was possibly the best-known classical Hollywood sample). Yet one of the least remarked-upon aspects of *Nashville* is in its closing sequence: When the crowd, agitated by an assassination, is soothed, comforted, and otherwise mesmerized by the unexpected emergence of a new talent, the coverage becomes distinctly documentary-like without warning, with camera and sound personnel captured moving about and certain “raw” lens adjustments (e.g., rack-focused telephoto shots) included in the footage. In *Manila by Night*, these indicators appear literally as light sources directed straight into the camera (see Figure 21).

The reflexive sequence (see Figure 22) initially appears to be a series of in-jokes that eventually make theoretical and pop-cultural points. As shown in the middle sample in Figure 21, the sequence begins with a floodlight being directed at the camera lens, and then turned around to illuminate the location shoot. After realizing what is going on, the trio (Manay, Bea, and Bea’s assistant Gaying [pronounced *gá’yíng*]) are accosted by a clairvoyant woman channeling eighteenth-century Philippine existence. She tells them that Bea had once been a coquette who frustrated a lovelorn painter so much that he became a thief and had his hand amputated as punishment. The woman avers that Bea has strong psychic

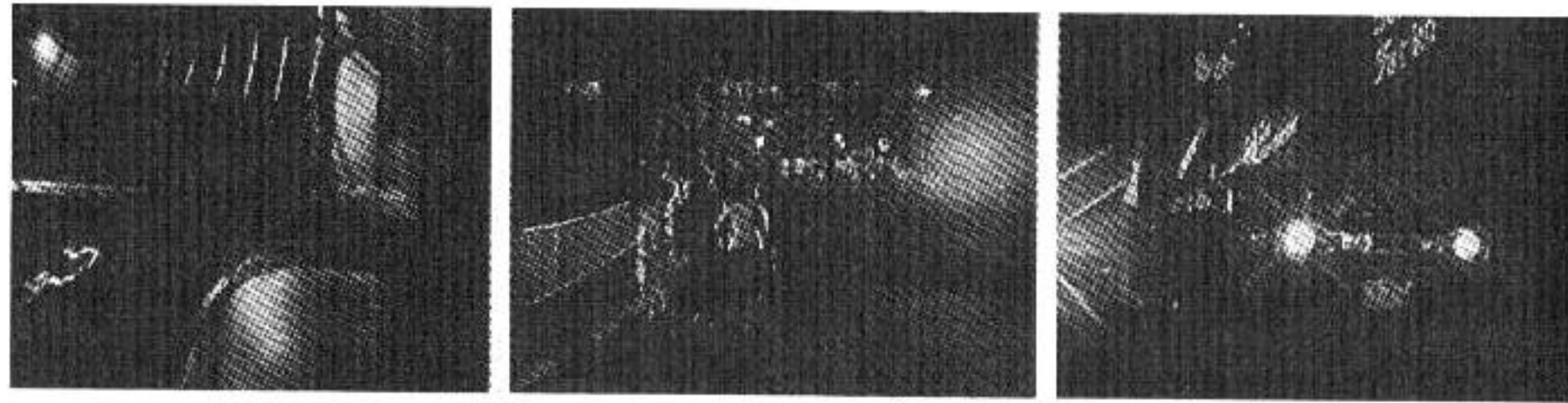


FIGURE 21. Left to right: Adelina and Febrero have sex before one of their children (an infant) cries and interrupts them; on the way to bringing Bea to Adelina's hospital workplace, Manay and his companions discover that a film shoot is in progress; chased by narcs in a car, Kano goes to her girlfriend Bea's workplace to ask for her help. Regal Films, frame captures by author.

powers—a suspicion the audience might have been entertaining, judging from the way that Bea could occasionally sense the presence of her acquaintances even without being alerted to their arrival. The encounter ends with the psychic identifying Manay as queer and leaving the trio, whereupon Manay mentions how Manila has been subject to a proliferation of crazies. (This may have been Bernal's way of critiquing Teshome H. Gabriel's prescription of folklore as a way to validate Third Cinema aesthetics).

The trio then approach the movie set, where actors playing a nurse and a bloodied victim are being prepared for the camera. Gayning identifies the actress as Marissa Delgado, whose most prominent role was that of a whorehouse madam in Bernal's *Ligaw na Bulaklak* (*Wildflower*); she became even more popular afterward in a TV sitcom titled *Duplex*, in which her character was named Manay Sharon. Delgado is seen applying and fixing her own makeup in a handheld mirror—creating an association between her and Adelina



FIGURE 22. Clockwise from top left: anonymous psychic informs Bea of her past life; Al Tantay (husband of Rio Locsin, who plays Bea) prepares for a death scene; Marissa Delgado, who once played a prostitute in an earlier Bernal film, plays a nurse on the set; in an earlier scene, the only character slated for death, Adelina (whose masquerade Bea and Manay are about to uncover), peers anxiously into a mirror. Regal Films, frame captures by author.

Macapinlac, whose transition in the film goes in the opposite direction, from nurse to sex worker. As if to bolster the connection, Alma Moreno, the actress playing Adelina, was launched in *Ligaw*. The male actor, on the other hand, is played by Al Tantay (whose name is called out by Gayning). At the time, he was the real-life husband of Rio Locsin, the actress playing Bea. At a later time, the two would break up, and Tantay, known for his association with gay talent

managers and directors, would be closely identified with Bernal, starring in several of his projects. This, of course, is more a retrospective detail rather than a reflexive one.

Sound Logic

The difficulty of isolating the *Manila by Night* soundtrack for analysis lies in more than the standard objection to the separation of the integral elements of the aural and the visual in film (Burch 1985, 200–01). On the one hand, the formal properties of the movie's soundtrack parallel Bernal's efforts to shift from a high-art approach in his prestige productions to something more accessible to a Third-World audience. On the other hand, at this stage in Bernal's career, his output defied the standard classical Hollywood values that ironically enabled other Filipino filmmakers to be noticed and successfully promoted in foreign film festivals. *Aliw (Pleasure)*, the stylistic and thematic predecessor of *Manila by Night*, was entirely unrecognizable when set alongside Bernal's previous works. It had a rough, seemingly unfinished surface, and indulged in scenes of melodramatic excess, alongside the director's usual unflinching depictions of expressions of erotic desire. The milieu of nightclub sex workers meant that its characters' use of gutter language was casual and frequent. The film also relied on a score that melded the hard rock and disco preferred by its hard-living characters with the

then-standard over-orchestrated, native-language martyr-woman ballad, immediately recognized as a form of low camp.

Aliw's most renowned achievement was its interweaving of a triple-character-based narrative without favoring any single individual as exemplary or as representative of the others. In fact, as I have earlier argued, with this multi-character narrative strategy and rough-edged execution, it can finally be upheld as the prequel of sorts to *Manila by Night*. And the soundtrack to both films, as well as to Bernal's other multiple-character exercises, is crucial, again in the sense that Bernal's direct inspiration was Robert Altman's *Nashville*. Not only was Altman's movie a musical, with an inevitable emphasis on sound, it also exemplified the triumph of the sound system of his company, Lion's Gate Films (not to be confused with the more recent Lions Gate Entertainment Corp.); in Altman's innovation, several channels were processed simultaneously in order to yield distinct yet overlapping aural information, with astute use of the Dolby noise-reduction system (Schreger 1985, 350–51).

This type of technology would have been too costly to replicate, much less import, in the Philippines. In fact, when one listens closely to a Bernal soundtrack, what is surprisingly evident is that major characters rarely talk simultaneously. At most, one of the major characters delivers dialog while one or two minor characters chat in the background. This allows the audience to continue to focus on singular characters, even as it

conveys the impression that the movie “democratically” allows other characters to emerge, sometimes eventually with equal importance.

Manila by Night had a sufficiently large ensemble to allow certain characters to speak in specific ways. Virgie, with whom the film opens, maintains a devout middle-class motherly aura increasingly disrupted by a neurotic rage, which we understand early on as coming from anxiety over her past as a sex worker, and which sometimes returns to haunt her. Bea, the blind masseuse who hopes for the kind of salvation that Virgie achieved, wallows in the same frustration and rage to the extent that she betrays the only person who truly loved her. That person, Kano, grew up with Bea in the vicinity of the US naval base. Kano combines the street-smart attributes of a drug peddler with the tenderness of her role as Bea’s naïve and sentimental same-sex lover. Adelina is Virgie in reverse—having been unable to rise in social status, she maintains a casual equanimity in her nightlife profession while mimicking the trappings of respectability in her masquerade as a hospital nurse.

In contrast with these openly contradictory female characters, the straight men are unusual only in the sense that they reject the then-standard Western dictum of exclusive heterosexuality, and instead (following prison logic—see Fleisher and Krienert 2006) regard their conquest of gay admirers as an enhancement of their sense of machismo. In other terms, they are indistinguishable from one another. Alex, Virgie’s son,

never runs into the other major male character, Febrero, except at the end when Manay, the gay lover they have in common, brings them to Adelina’s funeral; Febrero, however, can easily be seen as an older version of the younger, irresponsible, charming, and dissolute Alex.

Manay, the queer male character, is in danger of being read as a stand-in for Bernal. This is a contestable reading that Bernal himself disavowed, but it is also understandable, given the extended exchanges that the character has with several of the other characters, manifested in Bernal’s claim that the film was “a tableau of his ‘street life’ within the environs of [Manila’s depressed areas,] where he would spend nights of decadence experiencing everything from drugs to prostitution” (Carballo 2010, 36). And while on the whole we may see characters like Manay and Kano as embodying a middle ground—male and female in the same persona, in a way that has become increasingly acceptable even in contemporary mainstream cinema—this kind of compromise by definition is laden with risk and difficulties, even though Bernal navigates their characterization with a keen understanding of both their strengths and weaknesses. Manay seems to be trying to cope with a bewildering array of survivors in the urban jungle while making sure that he gets his share of available beefcake.¹⁶

¹⁶ More intensive considerations of Manay’s and Kano’s queer significations will be pursued later in this chapter as well as in the next.

Manila by Night arrived at a moment when Hollywood practice had absorbed enough Europe-sourced New-Wave innovations to attempt a return to field recording in place of extensive studio dubbing, the apex of classical production tradition. The merits of such a practice would have been immediately evident to someone trained in documentary filmmaking like Bernal. However, such a transition would have also encountered resistance from producers, who would have had to invest in more sophisticated field-recording equipment and dispense with their extensive and profitable post-production facilities. (In this case, Magnatech Omni Studio, as acknowledged in the movie's closing credits.)

In Bernal's films, starting with *Aliw* and *Manila by Night*, what resulted instead was the emergence of seemingly opposed elements of documentary "noise" (in the sense of small talk, rather than non-human or inanimate dissonant sounds) that was artificially and painstakingly created in the studio—just as on the narrative level, Bernal's characters embodied severe and unstable contradictions. In this sense, he went a step further than the feminist placement of sound as the womanly counterpart of the image (Lawrence 1991).

Bernal's decision to reproduce milieu-specific cacophony through careful observation, notation, and recording partook of the same careful efforts by which seemingly

casually randomized high-art output (Jackson Pollock's abstract-expressionist paintings, for example) is accomplished. In an interview (confirmed via an October 2011 *Facebook* exchange with the production designer, Peque Gallaga—who became a celebrated filmmaker in his own right), he outlined how everything in *Manila by Night's* soundtrack would be devised, including the dialog, since all he had in the beginning was a sequence list rather than a screenplay. His multi-character movies after *Manila by Night* all relied on independent scriptwriters, so it was only during this period that he was able to do things entirely his way. Yet the fact that the city and its residents were recorded, processed, and reproduced as raw material had the effect of strengthening, rather than refining or distilling, the movie's documentary properties. In this regard, one could argue that, even more than the visual surface, the sound design of *Manila by Night* exemplified a queering of technique—a conflation of unruly source material with the exacting discipline of studio recording—in order to present a result that was faithful not to the demands of standard film practice, but to the nature of the original material itself.

Wow and Flutter

If we further isolate the music of *Manila by Night* from the soundtrack, we find that this seeming rejection of standard

filmmaking conventions turns on itself, in the sense that Bernal's interest in the merits of modernity becomes apparent. A casual listen might lead us to suppose that the musical soundtrack of *Manila by Night* repeats the strategy described earlier in *Aliw*, with music selected in order to serve as further illustration and amplification of plot developments. But the opening credits begin with a raw jazz-inflected progressive-fusion number, an original composition by Vanishing Tribe, a band that had won a critics' prize for its use of baroque chamber and impressionist piano music in an earlier Bernal movie, *Ikaw Ay Akin (You Are Mine)*.

The first instance of pop music in *Manila by Night* is an on-site performance (by the character Alex) of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's "Teach Your Children" at a folk music café, and unlike in *Aliw*, this separation between diegetic pop and non-diegetic prog-electronica is maintained throughout the film. The pop music selections are also more varied, ranging from jazz fusion to heavy metal, Christmas carol to Pinoy rock, and even including spoken word alongside the heartbreak and disco numbers (Winston Raval, *Facebook* message to author, September 2011). Typical of the wit behind the choices is the insertion of Festival's harmless-because-fluffy disco version of "Don't Cry for Me Argentina," from the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Evita* (also the name of one of

the characters, a customer of Manay)—which had been banned in the Philippines because of its perceived reference to Imelda Marcos.

We could inspect two examples of how sound and music are interwoven in order to provide commentary on the dialog, both of which involve the movie's queer characters. The first is a discussion of true love between Manay, the gay couturier, and Kano, the lesbian drug pusher, at Sauna Turko, the massage parlor where Kano's girlfriend Bea works. Here the triangulation among dialog, sound, and music is fairly consistent and straightforward. Jeff Beck's prog-jazz number, "Full Moon Boogie," situates the action in the "cool" present, while the sound of the *Space Invaders* video-arcade game played by Kano portends a more individualist and self-obsessed future even as the two engage in an ages-old debate on the merits and failings of true love.

The other example is between Manay and his polyamorous taxi-driver boyfriend, Febrero. Manay has just discovered that Febrero's common-law wife, Adelina, is not the night-shift nurse she claims to be, and he worries that she might be engaged in less-wholesome activities (a suspicion which eventually turns out to be true). In an all-night people's park, the Luneta, they experience distractions by Manay's friends as well as a street poet and a circle of cultists. In this example, the interplay among the

sound elements is more complicated. The diegetic disco number, “Funkytown” by Lipps Inc. (presumably being played on park speakers) provides ironic contrast with the anxiety-laden exchange between Manay and Febrero, the commentary by Manay’s gay friends, and the prayers of the devotees. At one point, Alfred “Krip” Yuson’s poem “There Is No City but This City”¹⁷ gets recited by the real-life poet himself, but in this case, it functions as the equivalent of the classical Hollywood non-diegetic musical commentary (Adorno and Eisler 2003, 27–30), serving in effect to remind the audience that, for all its broken dreams, Manila will continue to endure as it has in the past.

This quick inspection of *Manila by Night*’s technical strategies manifests an intensive study of film aesthetics on the part of the director, evidently based on the effectiveness of similar cases in other Third-World films. Bernal’s dilemma was that he was contravening not just the then-emerging critical preferences for academically prescribed competence, but also the bias of Western festival scouts who favored standard Marxist-inflected social critiques coupled with surface gloss. *Manila by Night*’s more significant contributions lay in its narrative and

¹⁷ Yuson subsequently added two stanzas to the poem and published it in his collection *Dream of Knives* (1986, 36), as “Monologue for Ishmael Bernal’s *City after Dark*, after Cavafy.”

thematic innovations (which will be tackled in the rest of this volume), but the film’s seemingly harmless and deceptively flawed technique suggest that its director’s vision was more of a whole than even its fans had supposed.

A Multi-Character Movie Supplementary List

In “Mutual Friends and Chronologies of Chance,” David Bordwell provides what he calls “A Working Filmography” of multi-character movies, which he terms “network narratives” (2008, chapter 7). He brings up a number of examples in depth, including *Nashville*—the text that occasioned the most extensive discussion of the format. Another practitioner who inspired theorizing about the progressive possibilities of this type of presentation was John Sayles, whose *Return of the Secaucus Seven* (1979) was favorably compared with another college-reunion film, Lawrence Kasdan’s *The Big Chill* (1983), in Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner (1988). Not surprisingly, Altman, his mentee Alan Rudolph, and other *Nashville*-inspired filmmakers (including Ishmael Bernal) along with their protégés and colleagues attempted multi-character texts every so often.

Filipino practitioners will be cited in the next chapter, but among the US titles not included in Bordwell’s list, Edmund Goulding’s *Grand Hotel* (1932) would be a fairly successful early attempt in triangulating its main characters, while Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and George Lucas’s *American Graffiti* (1983), although ultimately privileging a specific male character, present a sufficient multiplicity of near-major characters that

enable us to acquire a dramatic understanding of their respective social milieux.

Among European auteurs, Luis Buñuel’s specialization in narratives that effectively discarded literary conventions permitted him to ignore, whenever necessary, the heroic or dual character-determined structure; in particular, the scripts that he collaborated on with Jean-Claude Carrière, specifically *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 1972) and *Le fantôme de la liberté* (*The Phantom of Liberty*, 1974). Roughly between these two entries came Ingmar Bergman’s *Viskningar och rop* (*Cries and Whispers*, 1972), featuring a quartet of women confronted with suffering and death, and François Truffaut’s *La nuit américaine* (*Day for Night*, 1972), on the difficulties experienced by a troubled movie set. Alain Resnais’s *Mon oncle d’Amérique* (*My American Uncle*, 1980) creates a playful disquisition on the studies of Henri Laborit, a French scientist who sought to develop antipsychotic medication.

Non-French productions include Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Trilogy of Life* comprising his bawdy and spirited adaptations of *Il Decameron* (*The Decameron*, 1971), *I racconti di Canterbury* (*The Canterbury Tales*, 1972), and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (*Arabian Nights*, 1974); as well as the celebrated (and feared) *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975), adapted



FIGURE 23. Anthony Rose's *Curious?* (1998), which features two couples exploring bisexual options. Publicity still from Vivid Raw.

from the Marquis de Sade's novel, the first of what would have been Pasolini's *Trilogy of Death*. Another Italian entry, Liliana Cavani's *La pelle* (*The Skin*, 1981), is an overlooked adaptation of the real-life memoirs of members of the victorious Allied forces after World War II, describing the vanquished Italians' descent into disarray and despair. Dutch director Paul Verhoeven, also celebrated for his queer output, has at least two multi-character titles, *Spetters* (1980) and *Starship Troopers* (1997), while Swedish director Lukas Moodysson may be included for *Tillsammans* (*Together*, 2000).

Asian multi-character film titles not mentioned in Bordwell's list would include Thai filmmaker Vichit Kounavudhi's *Luk e-san* (*Son of the Northeast*, 1983) and Jafar Panahi's *Dayereh* (*The Circle*, 2000). South Koreans have a productive yield, mostly from their Korean War film genre; Park Chan-wook's *Gongdong gyeongbi guyeok JSA* (*JSA: Joint Security Area*, 2000), Kang Woo-suk's *Silmido* (2003), and Park Kwang-Hyun's *Welkkeom tu Dongmakgol* (*Battle Ground 625*, 2005) are representative samples.

A final realist mode comprises pornographic films, where several titles made ample use of the multi-character format (presumably because of its facilitation of multiple-partner scenes). Examples include Henri Pachard's *Outlaw Ladies* (1981), Andrew Blake's *Night Trips* (1990), and John Stagliano's *The Fashionistas* (2002). Queer porn tracks its origins from antiquity through the physique magazines of the Cold War and first reached out to the general public via the avant-garde and pop output of artists such as Andy Warhol. Multi-character examples are Anthony Rose's *Curious?* (1998) (see Figure 23) and Kristen Bjorn's *The Vampire of Budapest* (1995).



FIGURE 24. Four of the major upper-crust characters in Jean Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (1939), including the central love triangle (front row, second to fourth from left): Roland Toutain as André Jurieux, Jean Renoir as Octave, and Nora Grégor as Christine de la Cheyniest, an unnamed retired General (Pierre Magnier) who comments on the events, and the Marquis Robert de la Cheyniest, played by Marcel Dalio. Literally beneath these characters are the working-class characters, who play out a more complex love quadrangle involving Octave, Christine's maid Lisette, the Marquis's gamekeeper Edouard Schumacher, and Marceau, a poacher recently hired as a shoeshiner by the Marquis. Nouvelles Éditions de Films, publicity still.

THREE: BEYOND MANILA—CINEMA AND NATION IN CRISIS

Locale as an Entity

The method by which *Manila by Night* permits, so to speak, the proliferation of multiple characters would be familiar to people who have seen any of the several multi-character movies that have virtually become the “official” narrative format of American independent productions. A major character is presented, along with other major characters who may happen to be in the same setting; then the character(s) encounter—sometimes intensively, sometimes merely by chance—a previously unIntroduced major character, whom the narrative will proceed to follow, and so on, reminiscent of Max Ophüls's *La ronde* (*The Roundabout*, 1950), based on Arthur Schnitzler's play *Reigen*, written in 1897 (published 1900 though not performed until 1920). This narrative strategy of following one character after another, however, yields a text that introduces and possibly develops a group of people without allowing the viewer to find out how their social relationships function beyond their incidental connections with one another.

The way to genuinely facilitate the depiction of relationships is by having the characters interacting with one another as often as possible, in the manner of contemporary US indie films that center on groups of friends within a community.

This permits us to witness a social group with the simultaneous satisfaction of following the development of a number of major characters. One possible disadvantage here, as evident in what we may call the BFF (best friends forever) movies, is that the social group comprises more or less similar social types. A political awareness may be fostered in the characters by their circumstances, as manifested in Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill* and John Sayles's *Return of the Secaucus Seven*, the movie to which *Big Chill* paid tribute. Yet the depiction of social mechanics is still not facilitated by this method; at most, what we might be able to study definitely is a demonstration of group dynamics via each character's attendant social aspects.

Would the addition of more characters, representing as wide an array of social types as the text can sustain, provide us with the necessary kind of realism that we are asking for here? That appears to be the case in Robert Altman's *Nashville*, but I'd venture to add another device, all present in the last three films mentioned: many scenes of social gatherings where several, if not all, of the characters are present. *Nashville*, for example, features a number of circumstances (mostly concerts, but also an airport arrival and a highway pileup) where several characters get together, and builds up to the final outdoor concert where everyone (save for one character who announced his departure from the city the night before) shows up. A possible predecessor for this strategy is

a French film, one that was impressively produced much earlier than *La ronde*: Jean Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939), where an entire group of aristocratic friends and their servants play out an often humorous, occasionally moving, and ultimately tragic series of extramarital affairs (see Figure 24).

Babies and Beauties

The transition in Philippine cinema from the 1960s smorgasbord movie to the modernized version of the multiple-character film arises from the inherent instability of having several characters in one presentation and the standard expectation (and producer's preference) that the audience identify with only one, or oscillate between two, major characters. The smorgasbord project provided the best possible arrangement in the sense that it could claim an array of (mostly minor) stars while providing the conventional pleasures of genre products at the same time.

The "genre" tag is instructive in the sense that even in American films, the multi-character format was recognized as a genre unto itself only later in the game. Even *Nashville*, considered by Robin Wood as belonging to Hollywood's 1970s disaster-film cycle, appeared in separate anthologies by the National Society of Film Critics as either a comedy (Byron and Weis 1977) or a musical (Jameson 1994, 347–54). It was described by Bordwell, per Altman's intent, as "a political

assassination film (a going concern in the mid-1970s)" (2008, chapter 7). In contrast, by the time *Manila by Night* came out in 1980, Filipino producers realized that the smorgasbord idea, essentially a star-launching strategy, could be revived—but without using the older term, which was associated with a studio from the First Golden Age. Lily Monteverde, owner of Regal Films and producer of *Manila by Night*, had already successfully initiated a film trend called "bold," which was reminiscent of the early-1970s occasionally hard-core *bomba* films, but with a touch of class suggested by its use of English. Popularly known as "Mother Lily," Monteverde adopted the smorgasbord strategy of launching three matched pairs of young stars and called them the Regal Babies; one of them (William Martinez) played Alex in *Manila by Night*.

Jesse Ejercito, who had produced Bernal's earlier films and whose "bold" actresses (Alma Moreno and Lorna Tolentino) were among the lead performers in *Manila by Night*, decided retroactively to market projects that literalized his production outfit's name, Seven Stars. His ultimate goal was to produce a film, directed and written by Bernal, that featured the seven women he had individually introduced as lead performers (all of whom became award-winning "bold" actresses) in his projects. To be titled *Siyete Belyas* or Seven Beauties (the Spanish-derived "*belya*" also connoted sex worker), the project was "launched" as a variety program titled *The Belles Are Swinging* (see Figure 25) featuring



FIGURE 25. Left: The "Siyete Belyas" cast (minus one) of *The Belles Are Swinging*, featuring (left to right) Beth Bautista, Amy Austria, Elizabeth Oropesa, Lorna Tolentino, Alma Moreno, and Daria Ramirez. Right: the seventh member, Chanda Romero, is with Bernardo in the publicity shot of the dinner-theater production of *The Goodbye Girl*, adapted by Bernardo and directed by Jonas Sebastian. Bernardo and Romero had a romantic relationship that lasted for about two years. From the collection of Bernardo Bernardo.

the seven actresses and directed by *Manila by Night* actor Bernardo, but never materialized as a film.

With the turn to a libertarian policy necessitated by the inauguration of the Manila International Film Festival in 1982 (as a pre-event to be followed by the actual festivals in succeeding years) and, reinforced by the martial-law regime's defensive posture following the assassination of Senator Benigno S. Aquino Jr. in 1983, several batches of women stars had to be launched in order to meet the demand for profitable

sex-film productions.¹⁸ The most famous ones were the series of actresses introduced by Rey de la Cruz, who bestowed “themes” on the groups of women and renamed them accordingly (David 1986, 12). In chronological order, these comprised the “Softdrink Beauties” (Coca Nicolas, Sarsi Emmanuelle, Pepsi Paloma, plus an “uncola,” Myra Manibog, see Figure 26); the “hard-drink beauties” (Remy Martin, Chivas Regal, Vodka Zobel, and Brandy Ayala); and, after the 1986 people-power revolt, the “revolutionary beauties” (Aida Dimaporo, Ava Manotoc, Vanessa Ver, Lota Misuari, and Polly Cayetano—all named after then-controversial political figures). The satirical wordplay quickly became the template for all the other local star-builders—for example, the early 1980s so-called and nearly forgotten “street beauties” (Ayala Buendia, Aurora Boulevard, Remedios Malate, Lerma

18 The swing to a female-dominated star system first occurred during the intense nationalist foment of the 1960s, when a brief, artificial period of prosperity allowed less-privileged urban citizens (many of whom had migrated from rural areas) to insist on a new breed of stars less like the studio-prescribed conservative mestizo types: more dark-skinned or Asiatic, shorter of stature, identifiably working-class in origin, with women attaining top-rank stature. The two biggest stars of the Second Golden Age era, Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos, exhibited these qualities. This progressive window was effectively shut when the martial-law government, as a stop-gap measure that quickly became a permanent solution, began exporting local labor to earn foreign income that could be remitted to the country—thus obliterating the local proletariat’s direct potential for introducing further changes in the home country.

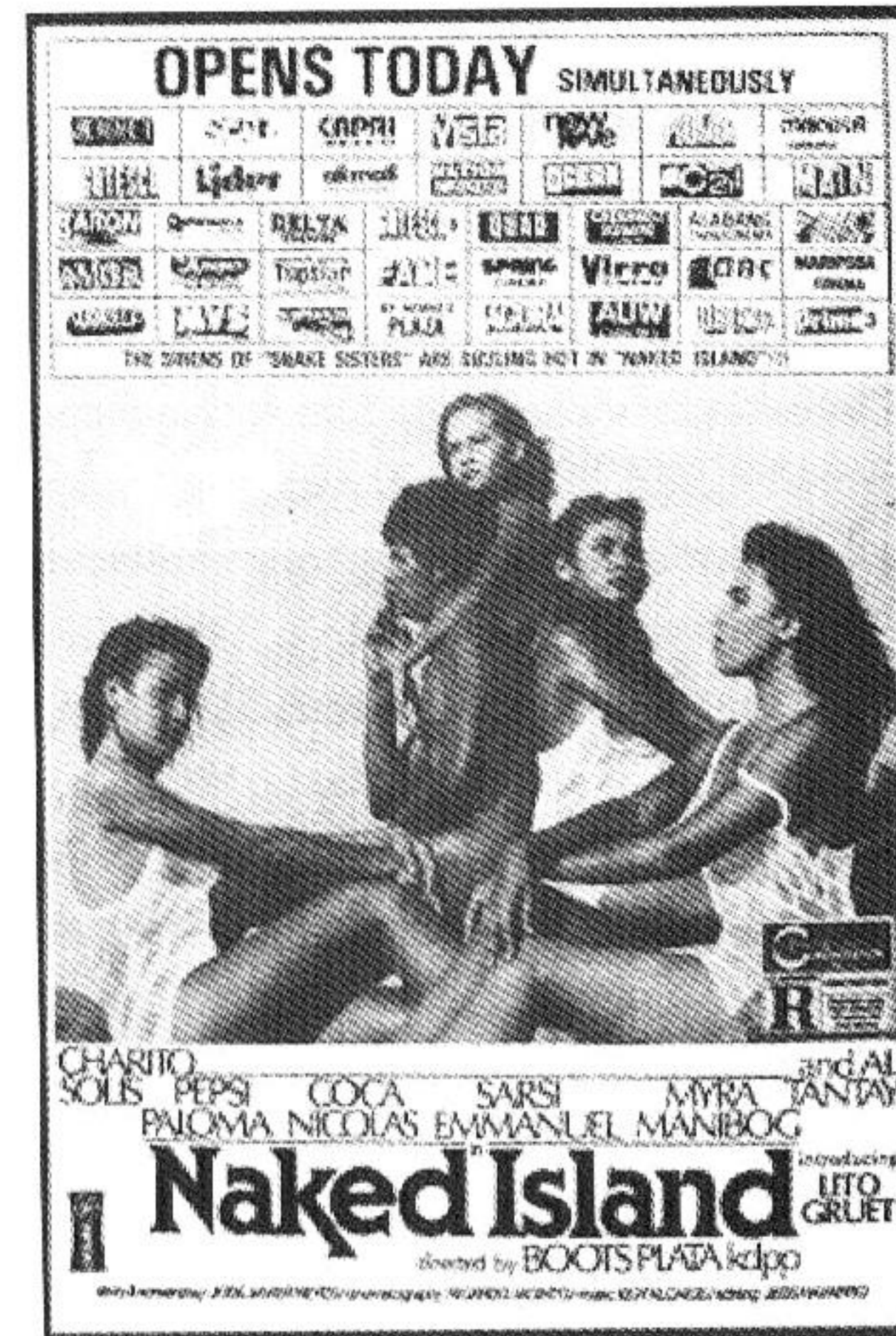


FIGURE 26. The “Softdrink Beauties” in a soft-core sex film originally produced for the Marcos dictatorship’s censorship-exempt venue, the Manila Film Center. Like Jesse Ejercito’s “Siyete Belyas,” the members strove to distinguish themselves as competent, if not outstanding, actresses. Sarsi Emmanuelle (misspelled in the layout text) managed to acquire the most prestigious reputation in the batch. The youngest member, Pepsi Paloma (standing, with Emmanuelle leaning on her), was similarly gifted, but was gang-raped by a trio of noontime television comedians and “persuaded” to drop her case by an associate of the rapists, who eventually became a right-wing (pro-Catholic and homophobic) senator. Paloma supposedly committed suicide soon after, under suspicious circumstances. Newspaper layout copy courtesy of Simon Santos, Video 48.

Morayta and, in reference to the Pasig River's Jones Bridge, Bridget Jones).

Triangulations

The means by which Bernal prepared himself for tackling a *Nashville*-inspired multi-character assignment was, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, by reformulating the most basic possible concept of multiplicity; that is, by relying on neither singularity (the hero) nor duality (either hero/antihero or hero and romantic interest). The director had made two smorgasbord-type projects early in his career—*Daluyong!* (*Storm Surge!*, 1971) and *Huwag Tularan: Pito ang Asawa Ko* (*Bad Example: I Have Seven Wives*, 1974), the latter an adaptation of François Truffaut's *La mariée était en noir* (*The Bride Wore Black*, 1968) produced by the same outfit responsible for the original smorgasbord films. He may have encountered a difficulty with narrative streamlining reinforced by studio pressure and audience expectations, which tended to reduce the number of major characters until a hero (the philandering husband in *Huwag Tularan*) or a couple (the married couple besieged by the sexual revolution's morality issues in *Daluyong!*) become the central focus.

With the love triangle—the most common permutation of the triple-character narrative—Bernal found a means of stabilizing the plot via the character torn between two equally desirable options. Yet during the period when he was working

out the mechanics of the multi-character film, other Filipino filmmakers were indulging in a specific type of triple-character story premised on the “bold” requirement: tragic or occasionally triumphant sex workers unified by their place of work, usually a bar or nightclub. (Such films also proliferated during the 1970s dictatorship period in South Korea and were given the descriptive term “hostess movies”—a name also appropriate to their Philippine equivalent; see Kim 2014; as well as Chung and Diffrient 2015, chapter 1; and Yecies and Shim 2016, chapter 6.)

Hence, Bernal's *Aliw* (*Pleasure*) assignment in 1979 would have been strictly run-of-the-mill if he had not been able to discover the means by which the multi-character principle could be successfully implemented:¹⁹ instead of having each character's story unfold one after the other (per the standard episodic “hostess movie” procedure), the filmmaker could maximize their interactions in their workplace and resist favoring any one of them. Each of the characters (the

19 The threatening populist nature of the multi-character text must have set off alarms with the censors. However, *Aliw* had the least trouble among Bernal's milieu movies, not only because he already had experience in dealing with them (after their negative response to *Nunal sa Tubig*), but also because a “mere” sex-themed film with an unpolished surface did not seem to call attention to itself. Nevertheless, the censors truncated the film's original title, *Aliw, Sir!* (*Pleasure, Sir!*), since “Sir” was the term commonly used by Ferdinand Marcos's underlings to address the dictator, a notorious womanizer.

minimum of three) could have a series of lovers as a requisite of her profession; but with the narrative constantly returning to the working woman, none of the relationships needed to be valorized over the others. With Bernal's literary background, he was still able to devote some attention to characterization so that the central "hostesses" in *Aliw*—Ayet, a materialistic and cynical expert who falls in love with a poor student; Lingling, a naïve provincial who learns to be more sensible in her choice of men; and Esper, an unwed mother who loses her only shot at true love because of her excessive devotion to her family—manage to have distinctive (if standard) developments. Their individual resolutions build up to a variation on the personal-as-political principle, where their private and professional concerns overlap (Ayet no longer enthusiastic about scoring with new johns, Lingling settling for a wealthy though heavy-handed sugar daddy, and Esper drowning her sorrow in alcohol), and require a benevolent dressing-down from the nightclub manager (see Figure 27).

The Multi-Character Movie Genre

With the triumph of *Aliw* as both a commercial attempt and a triple-character narrative, Bernal effectively ushered in an era of multiple-character film production in the Philippines—a mode of practice that complemented the studios' and talent managers' strategy (recapitulating the smorgasbord tradition) of launching new stars in



FIGURE 27. The triple-character "hostesses" in Ishmael Bernal's *Aliw* (1979), left to right: Ayet (Amy Austria), Esper (Suzette Ranillo), and Lingling (Lorna Tolentino). Seven Stars Productions, publicity still.

identifiable batches. *Manila by Night* may be regarded as the sequel-of-sorts to *Aliw*, as both films deal with the urban underworld and deploy documentary film aesthetics that enhance the raw, vulgar, tumultuous nightlife that Bernal set out to capture onscreen.

With an unexpected proliferation of lead performers, *Manila by Night* succeeded where smorgasbord movies could not—i.e., in resisting the tendency to pick out a character (or

two) as emblematic of the rest and upholding her or him as central hero or antihero. In this manner, *Manila by Night* connected with Robert Altman's *Nashville* and a few other exemplars in world cinema, proceeding from a paradox in classical film narrative. The paradox turns on the presentation and development of character: the less "crowded" a lead character is by other characters, the more she or he can be developed. For this reason, secondary characters are understood as conforming to types or, at best, character sketches (i.e., well-developed types). The challenge in creating a small-group narrative, comprising at least three major characters, is the ability to develop each one to the point where she can be distinct from the others; this development, in fact, can be enhanced by each character's interactions with the others, so the crowding, in this case, works to provide opportunities for any character to be advanced in conjunction with at least one other character. Having two or more characters' dramatic arguments simultaneously advanced in the plot was made possible with the perfection of the deep-focus technique in classical Hollywood, plus an equivalent use in sound, perfected in Robert Altman's Lion's Gate system (Schreger 1985, 350).

Hence, when the group onscreen is numerically expanded to the point where full individual character development becomes impossible within a standard screen-time limit, and the film continues to refuse to uphold a hero or even valorize at least a small sector (in effect reducing the narrative scope

to focus on a group), the logical expectation is that the movie will fail to advance a character; it would, again at best, be a "mere" conglomeration of successful types. Why, then, does the complaint regarding this shortcoming in characterization never arise in critics' responses to films such as *Nashville* or *Manila by Night*? The answer is that the perception of a character is never really abandoned. When a filmmaker enables types to flourish within the context of a progressive social critique, an opportunity to develop a different, singular type of character becomes available.

This character does not reside in any of the narrative's actors, but operates on an abstract level. It is, in fact, society that becomes the character—possibly a society defined by the geographic and temporal circumstance that the movie inspects, but a character in dramatic terms nevertheless (David 2011, 89–90). The society in question experiences a crisis, attempts to seek solutions that in turn generate new crises, and reaches a point (of no return) where a resolution becomes inevitable. As an example, "Manila" in *Manila by Night* attempts (via its characters) to pursue romantic happiness in the course of survival, but these essentially bourgeois-aspirational attempts inevitably lead to frustration and duplicity, so that after each character, unawares, violates a personal commitment, she or he winds up damaged and abandoned by everyone else, most painfully by the very person that they had counted on for love and support. The film

narrative distinguishes individual characters by clarifying the degree of pain and heartbreak—and occasionally even hopefulness—that they experience.

Road Not Taken

The last point to make about multi-character film design would be its most potentially controversial one: can we consider this form radical, or transgressive, or (put another way) queer? As mentioned in the preceding section, Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner attempted to prescribe in *Camera Politica* what for them constituted progressive cinema—including the “group” or multi-character film—as well as other characteristics like open-endedness, distantiation, generic playfulness, and attempts at demythologization (1988, 269–82). They take care to warn that “the criterion for judging such matters should be pragmatic, one that measures the progressive character of a text according to how well it accomplishes its task in specific contexts of reception” (268).

The approach I would propose comes from an earlier mode of practice, one whose once pre-eminent significance was eventually downgraded, if not dismissed altogether, by the argument presented by Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni’s influential *Cahiers du Cinéma* editorial, “Cinema/Ideology/Criticism,” in which films with political content but conventional (realist) form are considered less productive than those that use form to expose the machinations of

ideology (1971, 31–32). Comolli and Narboni’s categorization of films according to their combination of formal and ideological properties validated the revaluation of classical Hollywood auteurs and consequently led to a more critical regard of social-realist texts. The opprobrium regarding films that had once laid claim to political awareness and social discursiveness might have been well-deserved, if we consider how Third-World cinemas (including the Philippines’) tended to observe the predictable dichotomy between “commercial” genre production and “artistic” social-realist projects. The modes of reception manifested the filmmakers’ lack of fuller social commitment: the genre products were created for local mass audiences, while the serious outputs were exported to assuage the consciences of foreign-festival jurors and audiences.

If we ascribe the realist property of a film like *Manila by Night* to its specific grounding in time and space, we can see how its depiction of the existence and interaction of types of characters signals its presentation of a cross-section of society. The only additional factor is the infusion of a progressive perspective in order for us to be able to claim that such multi-character films are social-realist in the way that older attempts (following the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critique) could only hope to be, but were hampered in their observation of conventional film heroics. In Philippine film production, as in Hollywood, only a select few could pull off the

multiple-character film format. Among Filipino practitioners, the term they used to describe their projects was “milieu”—a word that recalls the “social” in social realism.

Thus, with the elements of commercial profitability, formulaic description, spectatorial recognition, and some names (milieu movies in general, milieu realism in exceptional cases) coined by practitioners to describe the activity, we can confidently conclude that the multiple-character movie, during the period that it remained a format in Hollywood and elsewhere, was already a distinctive film genre in the Philippines.²⁰ It reminded Philippine audiences of their then still recent familiarity with smorgasbord films, and attested to their capacity to follow multiple lines of action along with in-depth compositions and simultaneous delivery of dialog.

At the risk of over-idealizing the milieu-film genre, I’d like to suggest that subtle and transgressive forces were at play. The Philippine Third-World audience, like many elsewhere, attended film screenings in order to amass their store of knowledge and pleasure. In the case of foreign films, the

²⁰ Film genres are more difficult to define than literary genres; the latter originated in formalist discourse, while films (like popular literature) provoke varying degrees of confusion because their genres tend to rely on incompatible categories (Langford 2005, 4-5). What makes multi-character filmmaking unique is that its reliance on literary devices, primarily character and structure, makes it possible to persist as a format, even if producers and audiences do not (yet) recognize it as a genre.

typical viewer would be made to identify with an idealized representation of herself onscreen, enacting the enchantments of material prosperity in fabulous, if not fantastic, locales. With a milieu movie, the viewer could witness a representation of character close to herself—and more than that, she would witness other types playing out conflicts and issues recognizable to her and other members of the audience. Although the Western or Westernized film would be typically bigger-budgeted and consequently feature bigger stars, the comparatively less-affluent nature of the milieu movie, with its compensatory accretion of lead actors, would paradoxically have a grander effect on the native viewer as if she moved from an austere, though well-appointed transept chapel that featured one saint (the Western-style movie star) to the center of the cathedral, facing the *retablo* with its impressive proliferation of icons.

Milieu Realism

A variation of the milieu format occurs when the characters have distinct functions, and a more technical process—rather than the social interaction—becomes the focus of the plot. This type of narrative may be termed ensemble (although Western critics tend to use this term to refer to “group” movies in general). The ensemble lends itself to smaller groups, since a large number of lead characters will tend to raise the issue of the social relations

among them. Documentaries and docudramas like Gillo Pontecorvo's *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966), which rely on a large cast, function as ensemble works when the sociopolitical relations among the characters can be assumed by the audience and the plot builds toward the film's delineation of anticolonial liberation.

In 1980, the same year *Manila by Night* was released, Ishmael Bernal volunteered to mentor a young woman director, the then-twenty-seven-year-old Marilou Diaz-Abaya. She had just released a feminist ensemble film titled *Brutal* (1980), whose plot was echoed in Marleen Gorris's debut film *De stilte rond Christine M.* (*A Question of Silence*, 1982) in which a woman is arrested for committing a crime but refuses to speak to anyone about it. In *Brutal*, the woman, along with her conservative mother, her promiscuous best friend, and the female journalist covering the case, all function as lead characters. The journalist's investigation serves as the framing device, and the plot utilizes flashbacks to reveal clandestine acts and hidden motives. Ricardo Lee, the scriptwriter of *Brutal*, was one of the script consultants for *Manila by Night*.

All that had to happen for Bernal to cement his mentorship was to introduce Diaz-Abaya to his pre-*Manila by Night* producer, Jesse Ejercito; in 1982, the team (with Diaz-Abaya directing, Ejercito producing, and Lee scripting) came up with the feminist multi-character film *Moral* (1982), which features four unruly women characters, former classmates at the national



FIGURE 28. Left photo: Maritess (a writer married to a chauvinist husband) desperately ambitious singer Kathy, and promiscuous junkie Joey (seated left to right) meet Kathy's lesbian manager Jean Miller. Right photo: Sylvia, after a night out with a new lover, retires to the bedside of her ex-husband Robert and his partner Celso, with whom she developed enough rapport to maintain an extraordinary friendship. Seven Stars Productions, frame captures from Ricardo Lee's published screenplay of *Moral*.

university. They contend with forces of change brought about by Western liberalism that conflict with the military dictatorship's reactionary tendencies. By way of acknowledging Bernal's (specifically *Manila by Night's*) influence, one character was a shoplifting druggie who slept around as her way of defying convention, another was an ex-wife who carried the flame for her now-out gay husband, a third a frustrated writer whose chauvinist husband insisted on keeping her pregnant, and the fourth an ambitious but untalented singer who readily bedded anyone willing to boost her career, including a lesbian talent manager at one point (see Figure 28).

Lee also continued his scriptwriting assignments for Bernal, collaborating on the Regal Baby project *Ito Ba ang Ating mga Anak?* (*Are These Our Children?*, 1982). The attempt to ascribe Third-World angst and ennui to middle-class youngsters

begged a comparison with the genuinely subversive exposés of *Manila by Night* with the more recent project paling in comparison. As a result, Bernal's and Lee's subsequent projects—*Relasyon* and *Himala*, each starring the country's rival top stars and both released in 1982—observed the traditional linear-heroic narrative format and won box-office and critical acclaim. Even before Lee ended his collaboration with Bernal over some professional differences (Lee 2012, 21–22), Bernal took another stab at a multi-character film with *Bihagin: Bilibid Boys (Capture: Jailhouse Boys, 1981)*, written by a one-time collaborator, Deo Fajardo Jr. From then on, his occasional milieu projects featured other writers: *Working Girls* (1984, with a sequel in 1987, written by Amado Lacuesta Jr.), featured seven female office employees in Makati, the business district (now city), during the period of protest actions that led to the February 1986 people-power revolt; *The Graduates* (1986, written by Rosauro de la Cruz), was about freshly minted bachelor's-degree holders seeking employment during the period of instability following February 1986; and *Wating (Street-Smart, 1994, written by Floy Quintos)*, which happened to be Bernal's final film, depicted a new lost generation, reminiscent of *Ito Ba ang Ating mga Anak?* and set during a period of post-authoritarian democratic space and developmental trauma.

As a result of the success and notoriety of Bernal's achievements, Regal Films managed to bank on a series of

multi-character projects featuring their stable of “Regal Babies.” Maryo J. de los Reyes, whose debut film *High School Circa '65* (1979) featured a love triangle and a large cast of characters, purveyed *American Graffiti*-style nostalgia and later provided a triple-character romp with *Schoolgirls* (1982). When a reliable competitor to Regal Films (calling itself Viva Films) came along, the company contracted one of the Regal Babies and assigned de los Reyes to concoct an all-male multi-character outing with *Bagets* (1984), whose title appropriated local gay lingo by conflating *bago* (meaning “new” and connoting youth) and *gets* (a modification of the English word, meaning “to pick up”). One of the after-effects of the *Manila by Night* controversy affected the slightly risqué *Schoolgirls*: despite its overall wholesome orientation, it was also initially banned by the censors and released with several cuts.

The directors who launched the early 1970s camp trend along with Bernal (see the Chapter 1 section titled “Ishma” and *Manila by Night*) also flourished in Regal Films and made their share of milieu projects: Joey Gosiengfiao with *Underage, Temptation Island* (both 1980), and *Story of Three Loves* (1982), and Elwood Perez with *Summer Love* (1982). Another filmmaker with an extensive output of multi-character projects was *Manila by Night* script consultant, Mel Chionglo, who was also the scriptwriter for Lino Brocka's 1979 *Ina, Kapatid, Anak (Mother, Sister, Daughter)* and

production designer for Bernal's *Ikaw Ay Akin (You Are Mine)* in 1978. For Regal Films, Chionglo made the more mature Regal Babies films *Summer Holiday* (1983), *Teenage Marriage* (1984), and *Paano Kung Wala Ka Na (What Happens When You're Gone)* (1987). He also did a soft-core film, *Company of Women* (1985), and after Brocka's demise, the planned sequels to *Macho Dancer* (1988), titled *Midnight Dancers* (1994) and *Twilight Dancers* (2006).

Aside from his connection with Bernal, Ricardo Lee was involved as the writer of several of Chionglo's projects. Another milieu practitioner emerged as well, Jose Javier Reyes, who scripted *Summer Holiday* as well as *Oro, Plata, Mata (Gold, Silver, Death)* (1982) and *Bad Bananas sa Puting Tabing (Bad Bananas on the Silver Screen)* (1983), the breakout and second film of Peque Gallaga, another *Manila by Night* script consultant as well as its production designer. Gallaga's subsequent milieu movies included the prestigious Regal projects *Virgin Forest* (1985), *Tiyanak (Demon Foundling)* (1988), and *Isang Araw Walang Diyos (One Godless Day)* (1989). As director, Reyes paid tribute to Bernal's *Working Girls* with his *Makati Ave. (Office Girls)* (1993), crafted the ensemble piece *Minsan May Isang Puso (Once There Was a Heart)* (2001), and directed a remake of *Working Girls* (2010). Bernal's erstwhile assistant director and bit player, Joel Lamangan, similarly did *Pangako ng Kahapon (Yesterday's Promise)* (1994, written by Lee), *Filipinas (Philippines)* (2003), and *Desperadas*

(*Desperate Women*, 2007) as his contributions. Initially type-cast as a flaming queen, *Manila by Night* performer Bernardo had two multi-character projects afterward: the gay-rights comedy by J. Erastheo Navoa, *Mga Paru-Parong Buking (The Outed Butterflies)* (1985), and the migrant-worker drama *Imbisibol (Invisible)* (2015), whose director, Lawrence Fajardo, has specialized in the milieu format with *Amok* (2011) and *Posas (Shackled)* (2012), and the aforementioned *Imbisibol*.

A number of other practitioners who were less directly influenced by milieu projects but occasionally dabbled in them include Danny L. Zialcita with the queer comedy *Si Malakas, si Maganda, at si Mahinhin (The Manly, the Pretty, and the Shy)* (1980); Carlos Siguion-Reyna with *Misis Mo, Misis Ko (Your Missus, My Missus)* (1988) and *Tatlo ... Magkasalo (Three ... Together)* (1998); Mario O'Hara with *Tatlong Ina, Isang Anak (Three Mothers, One Daughter)* (1987); Jeffrey Jeturian with *Pila Balde (Fetch a Pail of Water)* (1999), *Tuhog (Larger Than Life)* (2001), *Bridal Shower* (2004), and *Bikini Open* (2005); and Armando Lao with *Biyaheng Lupa (Soliloquy)* (2009), an impressive debut that, alongside Bernal's *Manila by Night* and Diaz-Abaya's *Moral*, belongs to an order of outstanding exemplifications of the practice. Not surprisingly, Jeturian and Lao were mentored by Lee, Jeturian had worked with Diaz-Abaya, and Lao wrote most of Jeturian's multi-character films.

Contemporaries of Bernal who were also considered

critics' favorites include Celso Ad. Castillo, who deployed the format in the soft-core films *Virgin People* and *Snake Sisters* (both 1984), which starred the so-called Softdrink Beauties, and the Viva Films melodrama *Kailan Tama ang Mali* (*When Does Wrong Become Right*, 1986). Mike de Leon, who like Lino Brocka (and unlike Ishmael Bernal) was introduced to the Cannes Film Festival, bookended his Euro film presentations with multi-character projects: the comic-musical surrealist fantasy *Kakabakaba Ka Ba?* (*Are You Nervous?*, 1980) and a glossy melodrama, *Hindi Nahahati ang Langit* (*Heaven Cannot be Sundered*, 1985). Finally, Bernal's friendly rival Brocka managed to catch up with the sex-themed *Caught in the Act*, (1981) and *White Slavery* (1985), achieved his late-career peak with the postmodern political thriller *Gumapang Ka sa Lusak* (*Dirty Affair*, 1990), and *Ama ... Bakit Mo Ako Pinabayaan?* (*Father ... Why Did You Abandon Me?*, 1990) before his accidental death cut short his career. The projects that Brocka had in the pipeline, some of which were completed by others (as either film or stage productions) all evinced his willingness to grapple with increasingly complex narratives and epic-scale casts of characters, convincing several observers that he had been aspiring to the same peak that Bernal had attained earlier.

A "Straight" Way Forward

The queerness in *Manila by Night* resides as much in its

politicization of so-called perverse sexualities as it does in its reconfiguration of film form in order to critique conventional heroes. Both qualities work in tandem and reinforce each other, so that it is difficult to imagine the material being treated in any other way with the same degree of success. An appreciation of the type of Third-World cinema that *Manila by Night* represents (as opposed to, say, the class-dominated Marxism of Lino Brocka's films acclaimed outside the Philippines) begins with the racial politics espoused by Frantz Fanon (1967). A logic similar to the justification for multi-character texts appears in the works of Dominique-Octave Mannoni (with whom Fanon expressed strong differences). Mannoni's modification of Sigmund Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex into the "Prospero complex" resembles, at first glance, the social-character film narrative in which a central character (in this case, Prospero, the paternalist colonizer) interacts with a number of other characters representing various social types. Since Mannoni drew from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, these other types comprise Miranda, his daughter, who is threatened by rape at the hands of an inferior being; Caliban, the disgruntled and demonized Other, his own complex arising not from a rejection of his oppressed condition but from a desire for a more benign master; Ariel, the favored Other who is led on with the promise of prosperity and eventual liberty; and

Gonzalo, an old dotard treated with hypocritical respect by Prospero (Mannoni 1964, 105–09). Where Fanon's elaboration of cultural racism found productive applications in radical politics, Mannoni's concepts were embraced by a number of politicized theater artists.

If we allow for a shift in focus—from privileging Prospero to granting the other participants equal significance—the Prospero complex becomes even closer to the non-heroic (or antiheroic, in the literal though unindividuated sense) ideal of the Philippine milieu movie. This shift can be made on an abstract level by taking into account Freud's exposition of group psychology. Rather than the small and deliberately formed assemblies that the concept is commonly used for, group psychology actually delineates a state of affairs that is not only social in nature, but that also calls for political measures—i.e., the condition of a leader imposing restrictions on a group in order to ensure subordination toward himself, and who aims to legitimize his undue measure of influence ideally through “the illusion that the leader loves all of the individuals equally and justly” (Freud 1959, 56). The use of the primal father and the horde as models indicates that group therapy, much less small groupings, need not be one of the discursive priorities of Freud's essay. Homi Bhabha has drawn from Freud's description of the melancholia of the ego—an awareness of its own inferiority—that ensues from excessive criticism by the ego ideal (Freud 1959, 64). Bhabha

sees this as equivalent to the rejection by the subject of the colonial master that she had been trained to identify with, an early step in colonial disengagement (Bhabha 1992, 65). In fact, as Philippine film scholar Patrick F. Campos has implied, *Manila by Night* has effectively stepped out from melancholia by being ironic rather than tragic; it allows its subjects the option of taking charge of their environment via a non-technocratic reclamation of panoramic perspectives (2017, 60–61).

Gender Types

If we inspect *Manila by Night* according to gender divisions, we find straight-identified characters as well as openly gay (male and female) characters. Cross-dressing is performed largely by gay or transsexual men, but these appear mainly on the periphery; the only cross-dressed woman, on the other hand, is the lesbian Kano, a major character. Among the other non-queer major characters, six women and two men do not engage in same-sex relations. These women are Virgie (Alex's mother), who nevertheless is haunted by her sex-work background and has to retrieve her son from the gay couturier Manay Sharon; Adelina, who knowingly shares her live-in partner Febrero with Manay, and who also lives as a clandestine sex worker while masquerading as a night-shift hospital nurse; Baby, the waitress whom Febrero impregnates and abandons, who is forced to (unsuccessfully) seek

assistance from Adelina for an abortion and is finally persuaded to oblige Japanese sex tourists; Vanessa (Alex's girlfriend), who resents Alex's decision to live with Manay after he runs away from his parents and rejects him for his worsening drug addiction; Gayng, Bea's assistant, who's too young to be interested in sex but still gets exposed to promiscuity and felony; and Evita, whose socialite status enables her to be as promiscuous and hedonistic as Manay. The men are "Daddy" (Virgie's husband), a policeman who married his sex-worker mistress by whom he is browbeaten; and Greg Williams, Bea's live-in lover, who forces her to be his live-show sex partner after being duped by an illegal recruiter for a lucrative overseas job.

Between the gay-available men and (one) woman, on the other hand, it is the men who foreground their reasons for crossing over, so to speak. Febrero asks Manay for financial support in the midst of a daytime cuddle, while Alex claims to be easygoing (and implicitly hypersexual), "tripping" on sex as much as he does on drugs. For her part, Bea (as Kano confesses to Manay) is like Alex in that she doesn't demand money—ironic, considering her profession; she tells Kano that she pins her hopes on Greg to redeem her through his Middle Eastern employment but then betrays Kano to the narcs after Greg not only returns frustrated and debt-ridden, but also attempts to drag her down lower in the sex-work hierarchy ("You'll turn me into a whore!" is her darkly comic reason for rejecting his

proposition). Bea's contradictions suggest that Febrero's and Alex's claims may also be deconstructable. Febrero's devotion to Adelina is upturned by Manay's (accurate, as it turns out) allegations about her, and he ends up neglecting his affair with Baby; while Alex, rejected by his straight family and girlfriend, turns to Manay and manages to impair both of them as well as contaminating Manay with his drug habit.

In an interview for this book project as well as in preparation for his personal memoir (Figure 29), actor Bernardo Bernardo qualifies Bernal's assertion that all the characters in *Manila by Night* were intended to have equal significance: "I must confess that up to now I am convinced that Manay is the alter ego of Bernal—the director/scriptwriter. Bernal was very specific. He told me directly during our first production meeting that this gay character is 'the *conscience* of the city' ... As fleshed out, Manay became a hopeful, helpful, but ultimately helpless guide doomed by his own hubris—blind to his own flaws, he betrays those who fail to meet his expectations, while he himself is eaten up by his own addiction, promiscuity, and lies," and thereby functioning as "a flawed conscience" (Bernardo 2016). Bernardo follows this presentation of the film's most articulate though still short-sighted character in Manay's descent into addiction:

It is tempting to oversimplify and simply risk calling Manay a gay Jiminy Cricket who is tragically blind to the errors

of his own ways. But I think it is more telling of Bernal than Manay that the character seems above reproach and blind to his own flaws. Bernal makes Manay's promiscuity funny and attractive; his drug addiction [was] unexposed (although Bernal had me behaving more neurotic and looking "increasingly wasted" onscreen as my relationship with Alex soured, Manay's addiction was never shown; by contrast, Virgie, Alex, and even Vanessa were shown indulging in drugs); and, his innate distrust of people coupled with his penchant to manipulate relationships [are portrayed] as almost acceptable quirks of a neurotic. (Bernardo 2016)

The Other(ed) Queer Character

Depictions of queer characters, especially of gay men, underwent a noticeable shift in Philippine cinema after *Manila by Night*. Bernal may have been aware of the intervention he was making by providing Manay with witticisms and seriocomic turns. Hence Dolphy, the primary "gay" local performer until 1980, generally allowed his outrageous flaming characters to be converted by heterosexual encounters, with two exceptions—his film project with Lino Brocka titled *Ang Tatay Kong Nanay (My Father the Mother)* in which he played a cross-dressing beautician in love with a straight man; and another project, Gil Portes's *Markova: Comfort Gay* (2000), based on the unconfirmed allegation that the Imperial Japanese Army forced gay Filipino men to render sexual services during World War

II. The next major "gay" performer after him, Roderick Paulate, could get away with maintaining his persona as *parlorista* (beauty-parlor sexual invert) while performers after Paulate could be either straight actors essaying gay characters or openly gay folk (and transsexual women, in certain instances).

Lesbian actors had the less-privileged option of being either not as visible or as villainous. Even nearly a decade after *Manila by Night*, some queer women would still be shown onscreen "discovering" their heterosexual nature through oxymoronic "corrective rape," where the leading man forces himself on the recalcitrant female. The transition to heterosexuality would then be signaled by the woman "yielding" her butchness to conventional femininity (Cantor 2012, 98). Moreover, after the advent of the so-called digital revolution, when Philippine cinema coped with the increasing infeasibility of celluloid production by transitioning to video format, soft and hard-core gay movies were produced on a regular basis; lesbian-themed films, on the other hand, have remained a rarity, although the emerging material (as noted in the sidebar at the end of chapter one) provides reason to be optimistic.

In fact, in *Manila by Night*, Kano is arguably the literal title character in the sense that she is the only one who does not appear during daytime. In "To Conform or Not to Conform, That Is the Genderqueer Question," Libay Linsangan Cantor



FIGURE 29. *Manila by Night's* queer character performers Bernardo Bernardo and Cherie Gil, in a publicity still for an adaptation of Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*. From the collection of Cherie Gil Eigenmann.



FIGURE 30. Left: Kano's butch performance. Middle: Kano argues for true love as Manay maintains a skeptical attitude. Right: Kano comforts Bea by plying her with a mild drug and sex. Left: publicity still from Regal Films, courtesy of the Mowelfund Film Institute archives; middle and right: frame captures from *Manila by Night* by the author.

maintains that Kano—who migrated with Bea to the metropolis from the US naval base in a northern province and whose nickname (pronounced *ka'nô*) is the local contraction of “Amerikano”—is presumably of liminal racial origin. She earns a living from highly informal and necessarily illegal resources, and dresses up as a “performative butch” as a hopeful means of countering the heterosexual male characters’ abusive treatment of Bea (Cantor 2012, 99–109). The ultimate irony is that, during the exchange between Manay and Kano, it is Kano who expresses the feminine hope that true love may be a possibility, to which Manay semi-comically responds (as a stereotypically straight-male cynic would), “You know, it’s all an illusion. They say when you fall in love, life becomes beautiful. But [as for] me, when I fall in love, life gets fucked up!” (see Figure 30).

As the downtrodden queer character whose fate (after her capture by narcotics agents) is left up to the dictatorship to decide, Kano may be seen as the subversive signifier of *Manila by Night*, with Manay acting as both foil and herald. Her genderqueer position allows for the possibility of qualifying our view of the straightness of the male characters in the film. If we grant the feminization of the colonized Other, then the fact that the film’s gay-available men can still be called “straight,” even within quotation marks, implies the condition of bisexuality as defined in Western terms. But then again, since these men were not men enough by virtue

of their Otherness (and therefore, within the existing binary, are regarded as feminized, if not women), their capacity for straightness marks them as lesbians.

Radical Potential

The potential for radical applications of this insight can be appreciated through a recollection of the historical development from gay through queer to lesbian as narrated from within the ranks of lesbian activism itself. As the first visible participant in sexual activism, the (necessarily masculine) gay person found himself dichotomized, in then-emergent public and legal debate, into either a responsible citizen (and therefore monogamous or, at best, celibate) or a dangerous solicitor; the queer response was to uphold the latter category rather than allow gays to be accepted at the expense of the very sexuality that already defined them in the first place (Smith 1992, 206). The lesbian predicament was that, in the privileging of the male homosexual, even after the shift in discursive strategies, the homosexual woman remained equated with the responsible-citizen codification via the sexist insistence on women as sexually passive and therefore harmless—e.g., as reflected in the invisibility of lesbianism in sodomy laws (Smith 207). In her bid to secure socially discursive visibility, the lesbian saw her options as falling within the “harmless” rather than the “dangerous” sphere

of comprehension: sexualized, she was regarded as a poor substitute for the heterosexual man; desexualized, she was depicted as seeking either to mother or to be mothered (Richardson 1992, 191–93).

Certain arguments that appear to be most applicable to the lesbian predicament reconsider the condition of invisibility as a further means of distinguishing subjects formerly oppressed by their concealment from public awareness and acceptance. In writing of the Foucauldian regimes (primarily that of heterosexuality) of discourse/power that regulate the materialization of sexual norms, Judith Butler stresses that “it will be as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are *not* constructed and, further, to ask after how bodies that fail to materialize provide the necessary ‘outside,’ if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter” (Butler 1993, 15–16).

One might be able to draw correspondences between Butler’s account and *Manila by Night*. Butler’s paradoxical upholding of bodies that “fail to materialize” helps define the bodies that are granted material privilege in both physical and pecuniary senses. And the film has left historical traces and generated ideological shifts in its wake without necessarily allowing itself to be the same “body” that it was for those who viewed it. Even more uncanny is the manner in which

these latter-day discourses on gender and sexuality conjure up the Philippines' still-enduring anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian response—that of guerrilla warfare. The eventual articulation of what may have been, at this point, the most successfully suppressed First-World gender-cum-sexuality resembles the voice of the long-suffering Third World. Both groups have realized, upon their asynchronous awakening, the need for small-scale struggles of attrition, premised on a readiness for covert operations and aimed at maximizing popular sentiment for the movement and against unconscionable oppressors (see Figure 31).

As a multiple-character sample situated within this ongoing inspection of its levels of consciousness, *Manila by Night* does more than merely fragment traditional notions of character. The resultant reliance on types facilitates the move away from concepts of property and money economy associated with modern capitalism and toward the Western reader's postmodernist realities of corporate individualities (Suvin 1988, 688). More important, the constant shifting of identification from one subject to another without any singular subject predominating enables the envisioning of a social formation—an abstract super-character that is literally socially constructed. In a progressive context, this milieu character can be advanced as a figure to be set against the (heroic) patriarchal father, thus ensuring that it is both distinctively non-patriarchal and protective toward its subjects

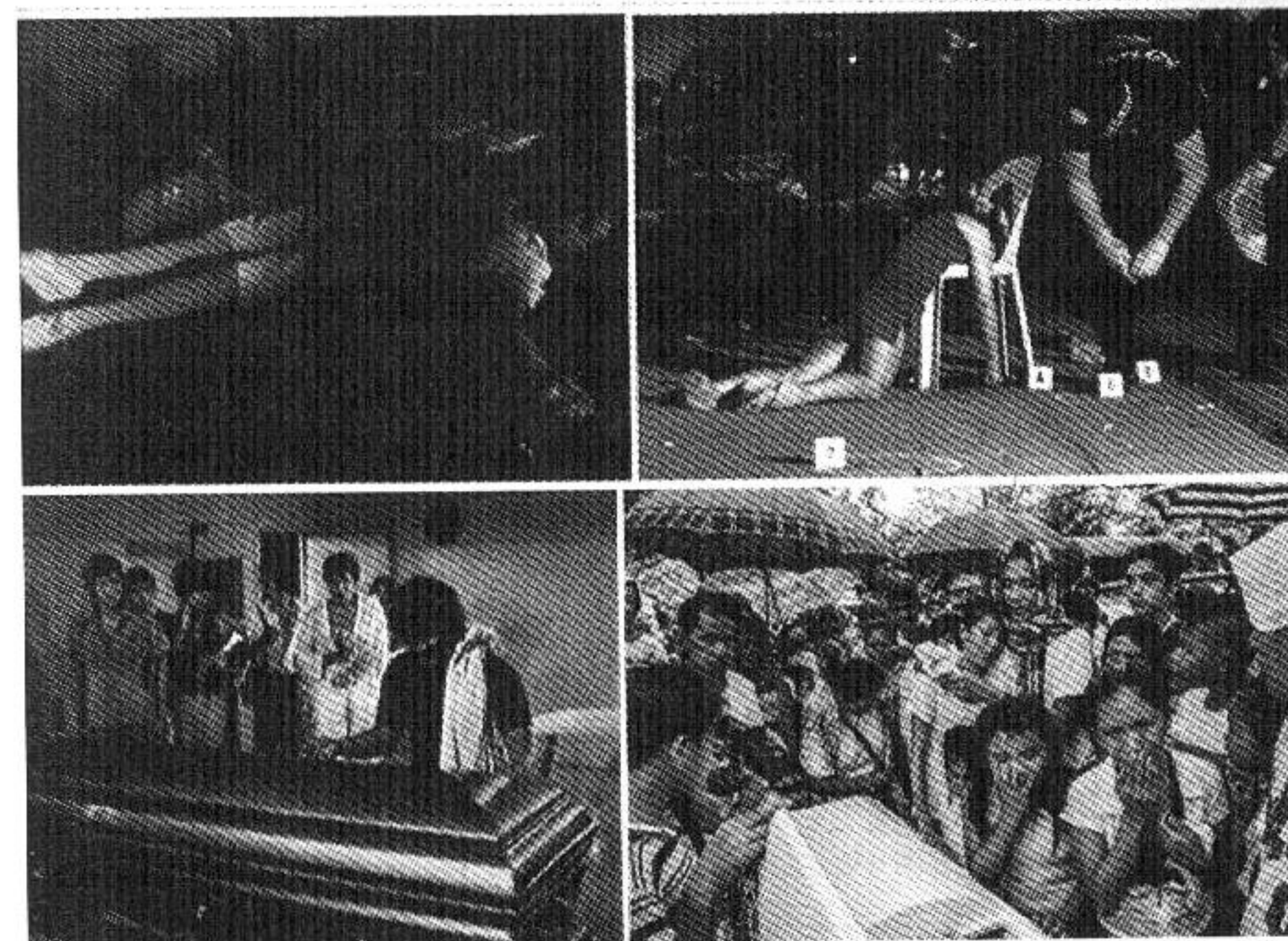


FIGURE 31. *Manila by Night* c. 1980 (left: the murder of Adelina Macapinlac by an unknown assailant and the discovery of an unknown corpse in her casket), and *Manila by night and day*, c. the present (right: night worker Christina Padual's interrupted street meal, and the inconsolable mourning of extrajudicial killing victim Joselito Jumaquio). DVD captures by author; top right photo by Howie Severino (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*), and bottom right photo by Daniel Berehulak (*New York Times*).

in a manner that partakes of both feminist-motherly nurture and lesbian-perverse alterability, attributable to the fictional nature of the text. In a worst-case scenario, where the possibility of critical annihilation appears inevitable, the entire super-entity that *Manila by Night*, along with what its comparable subjects embody, could simply dissolve in its presentational mode and constitute the equivalent of a dream that can always threaten to recur. If the preceding statement

sounds too idealistic to lend itself to questions of institutional change, we can still safely enlist the horde of leaderless subjects whose adaptability applies not just to their agglomeration, but to their individual sexualities: developmentally regressive, carnally productive without being reproductive, and disclosing without the solicitation of sympathy, they foster the Othering of the powerful by revealing what patriarchy has denied as a consequence of its historical interventions and what it has largely managed to suppress within its own boundaries. There is more to be feared, after all, in the return of the unrepessed.

CONCLUSION

The scholarly coverage of *Manila by Night* has made it the most academically productive Philippine film release in history—a circumstance that turns on several ironies associated with the film. Not only was it suppressed by the martial-law censors, it was also disparaged by the intelligentsia, particularly the Filipino critics circle during its annual awards. Adding to the confusion over the film was its indeterminate nature: it was ambitiously structured but executed with the director's appropriation of Third-World aesthetics, and it never had a definitive director's cut. As a distinctively Third-World entry, it also departs from the typical Third-World film's evasion of formal innovation (instead using politicized content as a means of compensating for this lack). *Manila by Night's* formal elements continue to generate accomplished discursive material.

Most ironic of all, the film partook of the insights into character and structure provided by Robert Altman's *Nashville*—a movie from the US, the Philippines' own neocolonial center—and deployed a sophisticated and accomplished narrative design using characters drawn from the dregs of the urban milieu. Philippine popular culture was itself receptive to the promise of expecting several performers in a single presentation, thanks to an earlier tradition of so-called smorgasbord films. However, *Manila by Night* resisted the

tradition's tendency to identify and uphold a singular hero or a dual hero/antihero or hero/love interest. From these several layers of social, political, and historical oppressions, desolations, and paradoxes, *Manila by Night* managed to attain a visionary triumph, drawn from its director's considerable analytical abilities as well as from the film's own capacity to construct a singular and complex abstract super-character, notwithstanding the absence of a definitive director's cut.

The critical and box-office performance of *Manila by Night* and other releases by Ishmael Bernal spurred Filipino film producers to revive the smorgasbord-film concept with not just multiple new faces, but multiple-character plots. The genre of what became known as milieu movies saw the best local practitioners (directors and writers) attempting the format, some more than others, and many in acknowledgment of the groundwork laid by Bernal. *Manila by Night* saw its fortunes slowly improve with the passage of time, with its original cut premiered during the waning years of Ferdinand Marcos's dictatorship and exhibited (after Marcos's ouster) at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it was originally slated for competition but disallowed from participating by Imelda Marcos herself.

Its status as a pioneering queer text is assured, not just because of Bernal's openly gay personality, but because of the movie's depiction of the Third-World *lumpenproletariat* as more sexually fluid than their bourgeois counterparts. The

movie's moral interlocutor is its strong-willed, promiscuous gay-male character Manay, but its moral center is arguably its unmitigatedly Othered character Kano, a genderqueer-lesbian drug peddler utterly devoted to her childhood friend and one true love, who eventually turns her over to narcotics plainclothesmen. The reading of *Manila by Night* one may advance from this observation is that, in highly simplified terms, the queerness Bernal upholds is lesbian in orientation and radical in politics. Certainly the movie may still be able to yield further (and possibly contradictory) readings, but from this attempt to assess its transgressive potential, we can be assured that it (and the culture of resistance that spawned it) can still be useful for any number of critical, formal, and social insights.

APPENDIX

MANAY REVISITS *MANILA BY NIGHT*: AN INTERVIEW WITH BERNARDO BERNARDO

As part of my preparation for this book, I drew up a questionnaire for one of *Manila by Night*'s lead performers, Bernardo Bernardo (b. 1945, Figure 32). He provided answers that carefully qualified certain long-held assumptions about the film and shared insights into how groundbreaking his characterization was by triangulating the relationships between the character (Manay), the actor (Bernardo), and the director-scriptwriter (Bernal). Ironically, as he would expound at length in the interview, the stereotyping he faced as a result of his depiction of Manay resulted in his decision to take a break from Philippine theater and media arts. Local performing arts endured a long spell without its most successful theater-to-film crossover actor when Bernardo decamped for the US in 2002; there, he continued to reap accolades and awards for his stage work, notably for his direction of and performance in *The Romance of Magno Rubio*. Also exceptional is Bernardo's ability to be frank, gregarious, and playful in his interview responses—a throwback to his years as a journalism major and editor-in-chief of the student paper at the University of Santo Tomas, as well as his later specialization in witticism-laden dinner-theater



FIGURE 32. The interviewee, after his US sojourn. Photo: Courtesy of Bernardo Bernardo.

blockbusters. Since his return to the Philippines, he has kept busy onstage and onscreen, with theater roles (including Shakespeare's *Haring Lear* [*King Lear*]) and prominent film projects. The latter list include 2015's multi-awarded *Imbisibol* (*Invisible*), directed by Lawrence Fajardo, and the 2016 film, *Hele sa Hiwagang Hapis* (*A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery*), directed by Lav Diaz, which won the Alfred Bauer Award at the Berlin International Film Festival—where *Manila by Night* had been slated to participate in 1980 until it was banned from export by the martial-law censors. He has also been neck-deep in what we

might recognize as “legacy” projects, including teaching at the newly minted MINT College and the University of the Philippines Film Institute, as well as memoir-writing.

Q: You mentioned on your *Facebook* page that you and Ricardo Lee were consulted by Ishmael Bernal regarding the plotline of *Manila by Night* (*MbN*). The final film also includes Ricky, Peque Gallaga, Mel Chionglo, Jorge Arago, Jose Carreon, Toto Belano, and George Sison as “script consultants.” Were you the only *MbN* performer who participated in conceptualizing the film during (pre-production) or at any other stage?

A: I was among the last actors to be cast in *Manila by Night* and, consequently, was not privy to the pre-production discussions regarding the script of the film. However, I did have a meeting prior to the first day of shooting with the film’s production designer Peque Gallaga and film director Ishmael Bernal to discuss the character’s look and to clarify the character arc of Manay Sharon, the gay couturier I was cast to play.

Manay, I soon found out, was a self-confessed neurotic and well-intentioned meddler (with a “Rosa Rosal” [motherly-martyr] social-worker complex) who also happens to have a penchant for juggling multiple lovers on the side; and, as written in the script, Manay would not only link the lives

of several key denizens of the seamy underbelly of Manila’s nightlife, he would also function in the narrative, in Bernal’s own words, as “the conscience of the city.”

Curious, I asked Bernal, “Why a gay character as the conscience of the city?” And Bernal’s breathtakingly direct response was: “Why not?”

Queer vision at work; unblinkingly defiant. Spoken like the true conscience of a country in turmoil during the Martial Law years. (I am now reminded of an article written by Pablo Tariman years later, after the demise of Ishmael Bernal and Lino Brocka, where he quotes Marilou Diaz-Abaya on the artistically incisive roles that [the] two great Filipino film directors had played in Philippine cinema and history. As Diaz-Abaya succinctly stated: “They both made films in the most challenging times, and they responded with valor. Their kind of artistic nobility is now dead.” And, of course, they both happened to be gay.)

Additionally, Bernal explained that his approach to filming *MbN* was going to be ensemble-focused and improvisation-driven. And in so many words, Bernal pointed out that Manay Sharon was not going to be a variation of the stereotypical flaming queen then in vogue in Filipino movies. The tenor of the discussion suggested rather strongly that Manay’s character was going to be complex and that a certain gravitas was going to be required.

The closest I came to being consulted directly regarding

the *MbN* narrative was during an informal post-production meeting convened by Bernal. He wanted to weigh the pros and cons of scenes that could be “sacrificed” in order to trim *MbN* to a more suitable running time (eventually, around two hours and thirty minutes). Bernal found the film a bit long.

Bernal invited script consultant Ricky Lee and me to the informal assessment of the film over coffee at the lobby of the Manila Garden Hotel. I felt so flattered and honored to be sitting with these creative geniuses in a group discussion, I did not dare ask why I was even invited. Still, I have to take some credit for saving one of the crucial scenes of William Martinez. At one point, Bernal announced that he was thinking about editing out the monologue of William Martinez (Alex)—an intoxicated Ode to Manila, delivered during an All Souls’ Day midnight swim along the breakwater of Manila Bay. It was evident [from] Bernal’s face that he was not particularly fond of William’s acting in that scene.

I reminded Bernal that other key characters in the film share their personal “Ode to Manila” and that since William’s journey, that of a young man losing his innocence in the dark streets of Manila, was central to the story, it would be important to hear William/Alex’s voice (regardless of the fact that it was dubbed by character actor Dante Castro to give it more, uh, character).

Bernal thought about it for a while with that signature “inscrutable Bernie” expression on his face, and then calmly decided that he would instead trim the scene of Charito Solis

with Johnny Wilson, one he obviously liked—where the loving parents tearfully worry about their troubled son. It provides [a] stark contrast to the scene where Charito and Johnny go on a moral rampage and nearly beat their son Alex to death for taking drugs.

Bernal announced he would trim to the quick Charito Solis’s tender but longish monologue about the birth of Alex that concludes the scene. And then, with a dramatic Bernal sigh, he said, “I will deal with Chato [Charito Solis] later.”

Q: Bernal once mentioned that because of the absence of a shooting script, all the scenes in the film were to be improvised, a method he first attempted in *Aliw (Pleasure)*. To what extent did he enact this improvisation? For example—did he provide you with lines or were you allowed to propose dialog before or during the shoot?

A: Although it is true that there were no conventional shooting scripts provided, there were definitely scraps of paper on the set with key dialog for the film character’s objectives for the day. On a typical shoot, with Bernal’s approval, I would ad-lib during blocking rehearsals to bookend Manay’s philosophical riffs that Bernal wrote. Bernal understood that this process helped me to give the dialog a more conversational, spontaneous feel.

A striking example of this collaborative improvisation method at work can be seen in the Misericordia Street scene. This was

an ambitious, visually complicated tracking shot with long dialog between the characters as Manay walked Bea (Rio Locsin) and Gaying (Sharon Manabat) home (see Flores 2012, 71). The movement of the characters and their dialog had to be timed accurately for continuity. My rehearsed ad-libs allowed for timing adjustments as the camera followed us down Binondo Street lined with prostitutes, beggars, funeral parlors, funeral-wreath shops, and delivery services, a real-life curbside altar for Catholic streetwalkers, and for a touch of humor, Virgie's friend Miriam (Aida Carmona), an aging prostitute, haggling with a prospective client about the price of a blowjob while munching on a fried banana.

I am convinced that even with the absence of an actual shooting script, all the film's sequences and key dialogs were very well thought-out in advance. There must have been a lot of pre-prod[uction] work because many of the setups tended to be complicated, and the visuals layered with societal references. Consequently, with this meticulous preparation, we were provided with a solid structure that allowed room for improvisation on location.

Q: Was Bernal's level of improvisation consistent in the case of the other actors? Meaning, for example, was everyone allowed or encouraged to provide lines or modify their characters' behavior?

A: I was not involved in many of the shooting days and may have missed out on some improvisations on the set. But on the other location shoots of *MbN* that I did visit, the actors stuck pretty much to what was rehearsed, hewing close to the words that Bernal would "feed" the actors. There was hardly any improvisation, although occasional paraphrasing would occur. Usually the adjustments were contextual, depending on the location, situation, or who was involved.

I am inclined to think that Bernal gave me more leeway in improvising lines because of my background in theater and scriptwriting.

Q: The exchanges you had with Kano (Cherie Gil) at Sauna Turko, with Bea (Rio Locsin) in Misericordia, and with Febrero (Orestes Ojeda) in Luneta were detailed, witty, and occasionally philosophical. The standard expectation is for the writer—in this case, also the director—to provide some pages for the actors to memorize before the shooting schedule. Was this the case for these specific scenes?

A: The core elements of the dialog came from Bernal. Without question, all of the philosophical forays in the *MbN* scenes were entirely Bernal's. However, I will shamelessly admit that most of the punchlines in the scenes I was involved with were mine—resulting from my improvisations under the director's

watchful eyes. Sometimes, Bernal would even come up with a “topper” to end a scene that he was already editing in his mind.

For instance, in the Sauna Turko scene. The accidental first encounter of Kano and Manay somehow evolved into something reminiscent of an ironic vaudeville routine with Kano as the “feeder”/straight man and Manay as the comic who delivers the punch lines. What previously began as an exploratory repartee led to a philosophical discussion about “True Love,” done in a single long take; and then, for Bernal’s cherry of a philosophical “topper,” a tighter medium shot favoring Manay saying: *“Alam mo yan, ilusyones lang yan. Ang sey nila pag natu-true love daw, gumaganda ang buhay. Pero ako pag umiibig ako, nagkaka-puta-puta!”* [“You know, it’s all an illusion. They say when you fall in love, life becomes beautiful. But me, when I fall in love, life gets all fucked up!”].

Q: Among the rest of the major characters, only Evita Suarez (Mitch Valdes) was the closest, circumstantially speaking, to Manay. They moved in the same milieu, shared some friends, and displayed literate references in their lines of dialog. Yet *MbN* also positions Evita differently. She disparages the working-class men that Manay and his friends prefer, and name-drops the rich and powerful—the types of people that Manay presumably

avoids. In the Luneta scene with Febrero, we see a different circle of friends, also non-upper crust, but mystics or bohemians. This invests Manay with the ability (not available to any other character) to cross class boundaries. What type of “character background” did Manay possess, and was this background provided by you or by Bernal? For example, was he born rich, did he migrate to the city, and so on; was he intended to resemble people in the Malate circle—Ernest Santiago,²¹ for example?

A: You’re right in saying that Manay has the ability (not available to any other character in the story) to cross class boundaries. Apart from the fun company of the 1970s “fag hag” Evita, Manay appears to avoid the rich and powerful. I had no scenes with the “*sosyal*” [upper-crust] types even if these moneyed folks would logically be the clientele of Manay’s spacious Malate atelier. As written, Manay was more at home with the people of the streets, the working class, and night creatures.

In a telling manner, Bernal did not provide me with a

²¹ Ernest Santiago was a fashion designer who set up Coco Banana, Manila’s most famous disco during the martial-law period (Leviste 2013). After retirement, Santiago lived in Pagsanjan, known among gay foreign tourists for a thriving male-prostitution scene. In December 2007, he was found murdered in his room.

character background. All I had was the sketchiest overview of the plotline. On our first meeting, I was expecting that I would at least be given a complete script for text analysis and character study. There was none. Other than some notes about coloring my hair a lighter tone, shaping my eyebrows, and wearing casually stylish outfits that had to be white, I was pretty much left on my own. It was like, “That’s it, we’re done.” Things basically evolved in real time, unfolding as we moved forward.

Significantly, Bernal gave me the freedom to cast my personal friends to play my “*barkada*” [entourage cum confidantes] in the movie. He knew I would be myself, feeling more at home and relaxed in my ensemble scenes with people I really knew. Heeding the director’s orders, I chose long-time friends who weren’t “butch types,” whom a couturier like Manay wouldn’t mind hanging out with, namely choreographer Bobby Ongkiko, character actor Manny Castañeda, and designer Ube Abeleda. Additionally, Bernal threw in a bit player, whose name escapes me,²² as the designated *alalay* [gofer]—a logical choice since this character also works for Manay as a seamstress in his Malate shop.

Now, why would Bernal give me so much freedom? At the risk of sounding presumptuous, I feel it’s because Bernal

really knew me. Before Bernal cast me in *MbN*, we’d been friends for seven years, sharing jokes and drinks and the company of eccentric friends at bohemian watering holes and gay bars (Los Indios Bravos, Dutch Inn, Coco Banana) and at the Luneta [Rizál Park]—all considered notoriously gay hangouts during the martial-law years.

Maybe Bernal saw in me a reflection of his own or Manay’s personality—that we were actually sisters under the skin, so to speak, with a shared capacity to display barbed *taray* [bitchiness], droll humor, reckless promiscuity, bullheadedness, and irrational distrust of love relationships. Or, maybe he realized I was what he had in mind all along. Maybe. I am reminded of what Hollywood acting coach Larry Moss once said: “Ninety percent of directing is casting. So, if you cast someone that you believe can do the role, then get out of their way ... Trust your actor” (“Acting Coach Larry Moss,” posted April 13, 2010 on *YouTube*).

I felt Bernal trusted me. I noticed that he was very sparing with words when he was directing me. He only said what was needed; with a lit cigarette between his fingers, he would flick his wrist to punctuate a directorial phrase such as: “Bernie, too macho” (regarding the New Year scene where I angrily attack Alex outside the Sumpak Gay Bar) or, with arms akimbo while thinking deeply, “it has to be a cathartic cry—of Greek Tragedy proportions” (as a preparation for my nervous breakdown scene outside the funeral parlor).

²² Identified as Jun Macapinlac in Bernardo Bernardo’s July 4, 2016, Facebook query.

The only time I think I disappointed Bernal as an actor was in my final scene at my atelier when he asked me to go crazy while carrying a small image of the Santo Niño as a prop (see Manalansan 2003, 163–64). Manay finds religion? I asked myself. This coda follows my climactic breakdown scene at the funeral parlor. I didn't know where to go from there. Being a fairly well-adjusted queer person at that time, my range of crazy was rather limited. All I could give Bernal was a tired "Sisa" [a mad woman character in Rizál's first novel] moment with the wild eyes. I heard Bernal mutter: "*Ay, hindi siya marunong maloka!*" ["He does not know how to act crazy!"]. I couldn't. And since the short scene was being shot in a rush, we had to settle for depression.

Of course, since that time, my spectrum of crazy has expanded considerably.

Q: Because of your character's intensive interaction with certain key characters, a few friends suggested to Bernal that Manay might be *MbN*'s central character ("author's mouthpiece," according to one critic during the Urian deliberations). Bernal insisted, however, that all the characters were of equal importance. Yet there's also the background story of Bernal picking you out from the-ater, unlike the other lead actors who were part of the Regal stable—plus possibly a shared nickname (Bernie,

for both Bernardo and Bernal). What is your take on this issue of Manay's centrality in the narrative?

A: In a sense, I would agree with Bernal's insistence that "all the characters were of equal importance" because to me, I see all of the characters in *MbN* as his "mouthpieces"—all aspects of Bernal, if you will, with each character verbalizing Bernal's varied thoughts on what is seductive and repellent about life in Manila.

However, by insisting on the equal importance of all the characters, Bernal could have been deflecting attention from Manay's role as the central character in *MbN* precisely because he did not want people to perceive Manay as "Bernal's alter ego."

I must confess that, even now, I am convinced that Manay *is* the alter ego of Bernal—the director/scriptwriter. Bernal was very specific. He told me directly during our first production meeting that this gay character is "the *conscience* of the city."

Out of all the characters in *MbN*, Bernal chose Manay to be his inner voice. In the film, Manay chooses to be a guide for the people he cared enough for, ostensibly to lead them toward a sense of what is morally right or wrong. As fleshed out, Manay became a hopeful, helpful, but ultimately helpless guide doomed by his own hubris—blind to his own flaws, he betrays those who fail to meet his expectations while he himself is eaten up by his own addiction, promiscuity, and lies.

Manay was a flawed conscience. But more (Robert) Altman-esque than I expected. Beyond the celebrated Hollywood director's influence on Bernal's ensemble-focused and improvisation-driven films, it seems like the two directors shared the same thoughts about human behavior. In a tribute to Altman in 2007, a telling insight shared by Robert's son Michael seemed to resonate strongly with Bernal's conflicted creation Manay, the hater of lies. Michael revealed that his father was "not so much a lover of truth as a hater of lies" (David Carr, "A Very Altmanesque Tribute to Altman," *New York Times*, February 21, 2007).

This Altmanesque thought echoes in Bernal's Luneta scene where Manay betrays the duplicitous Ade/Alma Moreno to Febrero/Orestes Ojeda: "*Hoy, hindi ako nagmamalinis, ha? Sa lahat ng ayoko sa tao yung nagsisinungaling. Nanloloko! Aba the minute na magsinungaling sa 'yo kalimutan mo na. Ano ka, loka?... Ano bang klaseng babae yang kabit mo? Saang impyerno mo bang napulot yang putang demonyitang yan?... Talagang sa panahong ito, wala kang mapagkakatiwalaan*" ["I'm not saying like I'm Mr Clean, okay? If there's anything I hate, it's a two-faced hustler! A liar! The minute a person lies to you, get rid of her. Are you crazy? ... What kind of tramp is your lover? ... From what hellhole did you dig up that devil of a whore? ... I'm pretty sure, these days, there's no one you can trust."]

Manay's lines here practically mirror his more playful

caveat to Alex/William during their first tryst: "*Alam mo naman ako, nyurotika at tensyonada. Sa lahat ng hindi ko ma-take yung nanloloko at nandadaya, eh. Marami nang masasamang tao sa mundo, huwag na nating dagdagan pa*" ["You should know that I am neurotic and intense. Of all the things I hate in this world, what I really can't stand are cheaters and liars. The number of evil people in this world has multiplied, let's not add ourselves to their numbers."]

It is tempting to oversimplify and risk calling Manay a gay Jiminy Cricket who is tragically blind to the errors of his ways. But I think it is more telling of Bernal than Manay that the character seems above reproach and is blind to his own flaws. Bernal makes Manay's promiscuity funny and attractive; his drug addiction [was] unexposed (although Bernal had me behaving more neurotic and looking "increasingly wasted" on screen as my relationship with Alex soured, Manay's addiction was never shown; by contrast, Virgie, Alex, and even Vanessa were shown indulging in drugs); and, his innate distrust of people coupled with his penchant to manipulate relationships [are portrayed] as almost acceptable quirks of a neurotic.

Thus, in the Binondo scene, it was as if the blind were leading the blind. When Manay walks Bea and Gaying home, Manay professes in Bernal's words: "*That is the tragedy of my life: lahat nakikita ko. Mga hindi ko dapat makita, nakikita ko. Maski wala namang dapat makita, nakikita ko pa rin.*"

Loka.... Lahat ng tao sa mundo luko-luko, 'di ba? Ang mga mukhang inihaharap nila sa atin, hindi naman yan ang tunay nilang mukha eh, 'di ba?... Maraming mukha 'yang mga tao... iba yan ng iba, 'di ba? Patong-patong [“I see everything. Things that I shouldn't see, I see. Even when there's nothing to see, I see something. Crazy ... All the people in the world are crazy, aren't they? The faces they confront us with, those aren't their real faces, right? ... People have lots of faces ... they keep changing, don't they? ... One on top of the other.”]

Was life overlapping with art? Was Bernal in denial? Only his friends who lived with him would know.

Q: Some critical commentary noted how Bernal was an effective director of women mainly because he insisted that they mimic him (notably in the case of Elizabeth Oropesa). This could have accounted for a critic's “author's mouthpiece” comment. Considering that you had played a range of roles, this depiction of a dominant campy character, which hewed close to Bernal's personality—was this something you consciously modeled on him? For example, did Bernal say outright, “I want you to play someone like me?”

A: There may be some truth in the story that Bernal insisted that his actresses mimic him. I can see Bernal in Charito Solis's movements (the comically aborted lovemaking with

Johnny Wilson), her stage business (the Bernal twist on the Joan Crawford fetish for cleanliness), and the rat-a-tat delivery of her lines, broken by sudden shifts of mood.

In my case, Bernal did not outright say, “I want you to play someone like me.” To begin with, we were both “butch” types who have a flair for camping things up for fun. And so that part was a no-brainer. I just intuited that maybe I should copy some of his mannerisms, such as the way he smoked cigarettes and used his arms when making a point. Bernal's body language was that of an educated person who was proud and sophisticated, controlled; but during unguarded moments he tended to be effeminate and a few notches short of verging on the hysterical. I could see me in him.

You see, when Bernal gave me his favorite white shirt to wear in the movie, I did not see it as just a kind gesture. Somehow, I thought Bernal wanted me to be him.

Q: Manay came out, as it were, during a time when these types of characters were considered objects of ridicule (dominated by Dolphy, with Roderick Paulate starting to emerge with his Rhoda persona). Manay's predecessors in film are two gay characters in Lino Brocka's films, Eddie Garcia's character in *Tubog sa Ginto (Dipped in Gold)* and Dolphy's in *Ang Tatay Kong Nanay (My Mother the Father)* (plus peripheral characters like Soxy Topacio's in *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa [Three, Two, One, 1974]* and Orlando

Nadres's in *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* [Weighed but Found Wanting]). Did you sense anything in Bernal and his friendly rivalry with Lino, where he set out to "improve" on these weak/tragic predecessors by presenting a strong, out gay character for a change?

A: No idea on this one. It would have been interesting to hear Bernal's views on *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (*Manila: In the Talons of Light*) or even *Tubog sa Ginto*.

Q: Manay's most intense non-sexual bonding was with the lesbian couple (Kano and Bea). It's probably easier to argue based on these two, plus Manay's relationships with straight men (Febrero and Alex), that queerness is the central gender position of *MbN*. As far as you could tell, did Bernal deliberately set out to create a queer text, or did *MbN* turn out that way simply because that was the nature of underworld, late-night denizens in Philippine urban culture?

A: When asked whether or not I consider queerness is the central gender position of *MbN*, I am tempted to echo Bernal's testy blanket rejoinder about the virtues of queerness: "Why not?"

In Bernal's *Manila by Night*, gay rules. And in this queer world, you can't take the gay out of the city *and* you can't

take the city out of the gay. Queerness propels the narrative of *MbN*. It is Manay—Bernal's designated conscience of the city—whose queer interests drive him to insinuate himself into people's lives as the city's well-intentioned meddler, who takes it upon himself to guide people toward bettering their lives. Ultimately, however, Manay reveals himself to be a flawed conscience, a duplicitous do-gooder who betrays the people he supposedly cares for because they failed to meet his moral standards (from which he appears to be exempt).

For the Queen of Denial, drug addiction and infidelity are unforgivable, but the worst sin of all is deceitfulness. After all, Manay does not lie; he just does not tell the truth.

Q: Manay (the character) was also observed—or criticized, by conservative sectors—as promiscuous. Were these elements of his character (a preference for casual sex and straight-identified men, for example) part of Bernal's personal character?

A: I was not witness to Bernal's promiscuity, although I heard interesting stories. We both caught the tail-end of the Free Love movement of the 1960s and in the relative innocence of the 1970s, we weren't quite ready to give up being Flower Children. I was thirty-three years old when we filmed *MbN*. It was the pre-AIDS/HIV period, and we were fearless. And from what I heard, yes, we both liked our straight-identified men.

Q: Your success in performing Manay might have also delimited your prospects in film assignments (as it did Roderick Paulate's), since a lot of your future significant roles demanded that you use a similar persona. Did this predictability and media stereotyping contribute to your decision to take an extended leave from Philippine performing arts?

A: For some time, I was doing mostly "macho" straight roles in plays and musicals on stage for theater companies such as Julie Borromeo's TOP Productions, Lamberto V. Avellana's Barangay Theater Guild, and Zeneida Amador's Repertory Philippines. After essaying back-to-back butch parts in *The King and I*, *Tatarin (Fertility Ritual)*, and *They're Playing Our Song*, I took on a couple of high-profile gay roles because I felt left out when Lino Brocka cast some of my friends (Soxy Topacio, Larry Leviste, and Orlando Nadres) with Dolphy in *Ang Tatay Kong Nanay* in 1978.

I appeared as Fidel in Orlando Nadres's *Hangganang Dito na Lamang at Maraming Salamat (Only Up to Here and Thank You)* with Dennis Roldan (as Efren) and Fanny Serrano (as Julie) at the Metropolitan Theater under the direction of Mario O'Hara. And, close on its heels, as the outrageous lead role in *Boys in the Band Part II* at the Century Park Sheraton—a performance that Bernal caught, where I was flaming enough to burn the ballroom down. My decision to

change camps, as it were, proved to be propitious. Within the week, he had *MbN*'s project coordinator Douglas Quijano call me to tell me that the role of Manay was mine if I was interested. And, after some drama with a take-it-or-leave-it pittance-of-a-talent fee and a subsequent heart-to-heart with Bernal, I took the role.

At about this time, some of my theater friends were already expressing their concern that I might get typecast, which was a threat I had avoided for the past six years in theater. I was aware that public perception by the mass audience could delimit my prospects for a variety of roles in films, especially after the tabloid brouhaha about my torrid kissing scenes with Orestes Ojeda and William Martinez. Soon after the initial previews of *MbN*, I sensed stereotyping was rearing its head when film director Maryo J. de los Reyes and scriptwriter Jake Tordesillas kept wooing me to essay another controversial gay role in their next film, *Pag-Ibig Ko, Hatiin Niyo (My Love, Please Share, 1980)*. Not wanting to dip in the same pool twice in a row, I said "No," and the role went to Orlando Nadres. I did not mind. I felt Bernal and I had created something truly special in the queerness of Manay, and I did not want to compete with myself.

After I won the Urian Award for Best Actor for the role of Manay, I found myself stereotyped for good. Although Bernal was set on casting me in a complete turnaround role as a macho butcher in *Belyas [Belles]*, a passion project for Jesse

Ejercito's "seven belles" for Seven Star Productions (Chanda Romero, Alma Moreno, Lorna Tolentino, Amy Austria, Daria Ramirez, Beth Bautista, and Elizabeth Oropesa), the film was shelved.²³ Instead, Bernal cast me in a cameo in his next movie, *Pabling (Playboy)*, as a ditzy gay couturier. Other offers for TV and film were predictably for the same persona.

Luckily, the era of dinner theater comedies had begun, and I appeared in a succession of "sex comedy" hits with Chanda Romero, Gloria Diaz, Pinky de Leon, and Cherie Gil. For legit theater, I ended the decade with lead roles in the musical *Katy!* for Musical Theater Philippines, and *La Cage aux Folles* for Repertory Philippines. However, due to the economic crisis in the Philippines in the late 1980s, I had to migrate to Singapore to work as artistic project manager for Haw Par Villa theme park, and I lived in the city-state for two years.

Upon my return to the Philippines, I found that my gay persona was still in demand. I was cast as the comic nemesis of the Philippines' Charlie Chaplin, the iconic Dolphy, in the TV sitcom *Home along da Riles (Home along the Rails)*, which was a major hit that ran for eleven years on ABS-CBN Channel 2. This outstanding and profitable partnering with the King of Comedy subsidized my low-paying theater work in Tagalog with Tanghalang Pilipino of the Cultural Center of

²³ A pre-Belyas buildup titled *The Belles Are Swinging* was presented as a variety stage treat directed by Bernardo. See Figure 25, p.127.

the Philippines, where I appeared in landmark productions of *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)*; *El Filibusterismo (The Subversive)*; *Kalantiaw*; *Mac Maliksi, TNT (Mac Maliksi, Illegal Migrant)*; and *Ang Balkonahe (The Balcony)*, among others.

I thought I finally found the formula for a balanced life. Unfortunately, showbiz was assuming a corporate face, increasingly being run by suits and, as a result, overall decisions for productions were being turned over to "creative committees." Dissatisfied, I left for the US and lived there for twelve years.

Q: The usual motherhood-statement questions: First, would Bernal, in your opinion, still have any importance in today's digital-independent scene? Why or why not?

A: Bernal was brilliant. A gifted director and scriptwriter like Bernal would have been awesome in today's digital-independent scene, liberated from antediluvian constraints. Unstoppable! For me, Bernal's breathtaking talent for storytelling and creating compelling characters remains unsurpassed. I feel like life simply overtook him. He was going through a low period but he could have bounced back. Easily.

Q: Second, is *MbN* still significant in a future (which is our present) where there has been increasing acceptance

of non-normative lifestyles?

A: I will sound biased, but I remain unapologetic. I believe *MbN* will remain significant because it is a classic that showcases the formidable creative talents of a film director at his peak. Film may be a product of its time, but *MbN* is more than just about a city or a particular time. It is more than just queerness. I saw it recently, and it still looks and feels contemporary, unlike other films of the '70s that haven't aged well. With *MbN*, Bernal has woven timeless cinematic magic with his unique gift for storytelling and an uncanny ability to create believable, flat-out fascinating characters.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodor, and Hans Eisler. 2003. "Prejudices and Bad Habits." In *Movie Music: The Film Reader*, edited by Kay Dickinson, 25–36. London: Routledge.
- Almario, Virgilio S. 2014. *Madalas Itanong Hinggil sa Wikang Pambansa (Frequently Asked Questions on the National Language)*. Translated by Marne L. Kilates. Manila: Commission on the Filipino Language.
- Arago, Jorge. 1996. "Pro Bernal, Anti Bio." *Stuart Santiago* blog (June 2, 2010). <http://stUARTSANTiAGO.COM/ishmael-bernal-1938-1996>.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Anderson, Warwick. 2006. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ariel, Avraham, and Nora Ariel Berger. 2006. *Plotting the Globe: Stories of Meridians, Parallels, and the International Date Line*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing.
- Azcona, María del Mar. 2010. *The Multi-Protagonist Film*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Barthes, Roland. 1977. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." In *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, 79–124. New York: Noonday.
- Bautista, Mario E. 2001. "They Said It Couldn't Be Done." In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson, 153–58. Manila: Tuviera.

- Benigno, Nena C. 2015. "What Lies Beneath." Interview by Tats Manahan. *Rogue* (November): 86–93.
- Bernal, Ishmael. 1970. "The Nouvelle Vague and the Anti-Hero." Roving Eye column. *Manila Chronicle* (July 24). Reprinted in *ProBernal AntiBio* Facebook page.
- Bernardo, Bernardo. 2012. Responses to Sonny Lim Jr.'s post on "Cinephiles!" group page, Facebook (July 4). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/pinoycinephiles/>.
- . 2016. "Manay Revisits *Manila by Night*." Interview by Joel David. (See Appendix.)
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1992. "Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt." In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, 56–68. New York: Routledge.
- Bordwell, David. 2008. "Mutual Friends and Chronologies of Chance." In *Poetics of Cinema*, chapter 7. New York: Routledge.
- Burch, Noël. 1985. "On the Structural Use of Sound." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, 200–09. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.
- Byron, Stuart, and Elizabeth Weis, eds. 1977. *The National Society of Film Critics on Movie Comedy*. New York: Grossman.
- Campos, Patrick F. 2017. "Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night* as Thirdspace." In *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century*, 28–77. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

- Cantor, Libay Linsangan. 2012. "To Conform or Not to Conform, That Is the Genderqueer Question: Re-Examining the Lesbian Identity in Bernal's *Manila by Night*." *Kritika Kultura* 19 (August): 90–114. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13185/1384>.
- Capino, José B. 2010. *Dream Factories of a Former Colony: American Fantasies, Philippine Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Carballo, Bibsy M. 2010. "Ishmael Bernal: Up Sound—and Fury," in *Filipino Directors Up Close: The Golden Ages of Philippine Cinema, 1950–2010*, 30–41. Pasig City: Anvil.
- Chung, Hye Seung, and David Scott Diffrient. 2015. *Movie Migrations: Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Comolli, Jean-Luc, and Jean Narboni. 1971. "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism." Translated by Susan Bennett. *Screen* 12 no. 1: 27–36.
- Cruz, Isagani. 1980. "Review: *Manila by Night*." *TV Times* (October 5–11): 45.
- Culler, Jonathan. 1975. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- David, Joel. 1986. "The Fantasy World of Rey de la Cruz." *New Day* (October 6): 12, 14.
- . 2011. "Primates in Paradise: Critical Possibilities of the Milieu Movie." *Kritika Kultura* 17 (August): 70–104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13185/1420>.
- . 2016. "Annual Filipino Film Production Chart." *Amauteurish!* (blog), February 25. <http://amauteurish.com/2016/02/25/annual-filipino-film-production-chart/>.

- , and Melanie Joy C. Garduño. 1990. "The 10 Best Filipino Films." *National Midweek* (July 4): 125–36.
- Deocampo, Nick. 2003. *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines*. Manila: Cinema Values Reorientation Program, National Commission for Culture and the Arts.
- Esthus, Raymund A. 1959. "The Taft-Katsura Agreement: Reality or Myth?" *Journal of Modern History* 31 no. 1 (March): 46–51.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. "Racism and Culture." In *Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)*, translated by Haakon Chevalier, 31–44. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Farber, Stephen. 2005. "A Half-Dozen Ways to Watch the Same Movie." *New York Times* (November 13). <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/13/movies/a-halfdozen-ways-to-watch-the-same-movie.html>.
- Faris, James C. 1992. "Anthropological Transparency: Film, Representation and Politics." In *Film as Ethnography*, edited by Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton, 171–82. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Fleisher, Mark S., and Jessie L. Krienert. 2006. "The Culture of Prison Sexual Violence." National Institute of Justice Research Grant No. 2003-RP-BX-1001. *National Criminal Justice Reference Service* (November). <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/216515.pdf>.
- Flores, Patrick D. 2012. "The Long Take: Passage as Form in the Philippine Film." *Kritika Kultura* 19 (August): 70–89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13185/1383>.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1959. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. New York: Norton.
- Gabriel, Teshome H. 1989. "Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a Third Aesthetics." In *Questions of Third Cinema*, edited by Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen, 53–64. London: British Film Institute.

- Gallagher, Ryan. 2016. "Lino Brocka's *Manila in the Claws of Light* to Join the Criterion Collection in 2017." *Criterion Collection News* (October 25). <http://criterioncast.com/news/lino-brockas-manila-in-the-claws-of-light-to-join-the-criterion-collection-in-2017>.
- Hernando, Mario A., Nicanor G. Tiongson, and Carolina Malay. 1994. "Bernal, Ishmael." In *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, vol. 8, Philippine Film*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson, 210–11. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Jacob, Ave Perez. 1975. "A Brief on *Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (Or Why *Maynila* Should Ever Be Masculine)." *The Literary Apprentice* 48 no.1 (December): 63–78.
- Jameson, Richard T. 1994. "Genre Classics." In *They Went Thataway: Redefining Film Genres—A National Society of Film Critics Video Guide*, edited by Richard T. Jameson, 347–54. San Francisco, CA: Mercury House.
- Javellana, Rene B. 1994. "Retablo." *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, vol. 3: Philippine Architecture*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson, 156–57. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Karnow, Stanley. 1989. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Kim, Molly Hyo. 2014. "Genre Conventions of South Korean Hostess Films (1974–1982): Prostitutes and the Discourse of Female Sacrifice." *Acta Koreana* 17 no.1 (June): 455–477. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18399/acta.2014.17.1.017>.
- Krugman, Paul, James Alm, Susan M. Collins, and Eli M. Remolina. 1992. *Transforming the Philippine Economy*. Manila: United Nations Development Programme.

- Langford, Barry. 2005. *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lawrence, Amy. 1991. *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lee, Ricardo. 1982. *Moral*. Screenplay of the Marilou Diaz-Abaya film. [Quezon City]: Seven Stars Productions.
- (as Ricky Lee). 2012. *Sa Puso ng Himala (In the Heart of a Miracle)*. Quezon City: Philippine Writers Studio Foundation.
- Lenin, V. I. 1971. "Directives on the Film Business." In *Lenin Collected Works, October 1917–March 1923*, vol. 42, 388–89. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Leviste, Larry. 2013. "Coco Banana: Where Manila Boogied the Night Away." *Inquirer.net* (September 29). <http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/127963/coco-banana-where-manila-boogied-the-night-away/>.
- Lico, Gerard. 2003. *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Lim, Bliss Cua. 2015. "Sharon's Noranian Turn: Stardom, Race, and Language in Philippine Cinema." In *Stars in World Cinema: Screen Icons and Star Systems across Cultures*, edited by Andrea Bandhauer and Michelle Royer, 169–83. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Lumbera, Bienvenido. 1990. "Critic in Academe." *National Midweek* (April 4): 20–22, 46.
- . 1997. "Problems in Philippine Film History." In *Revaluation 1977: Essays on Philippine Literature, Cinema, and Popular Culture*, 177–87. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House.
- . 2011. "Bernal's Manila in *Manila by Night*." In *Re-Viewing Filipino Cinema*, 121–23. Pasig City: Anvil.

- Maglipon, Jo-Ann Q. 1993. "The Brocka Battles." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, edited by Mario A. Hernando, 113–54. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Manalansan, Martin F. 2003. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mannoni, Octave. 1964. *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. Translated by Pamela Powesland. New York: Praeger.
- Mijares, Primitivo. 1976. *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos—[Part] 1*. San Francisco, CA: Union Square.
- Nichols, Bill. 1988. "The Voice of Documentary." In *New Challenges for Documentary*, edited by Alan Rosenthal, 48–63. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 1991. *Representing Reality*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Nornes, Abé Mark. 1995. "Nippon ... Philippines ... Peace." In *Symposium on Gerardo de Leon*, edited by Ishizaka Kenji, 63–79. Tokyo: Japan Foundation & ASEAN Culture Center.
- Pareja, Lynn. 1995. "City after Dark/Manila by Night." In *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, vol. 8, Philippine Film*, edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson, 151–52. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Pinoy Kollektor. 2011. "48. Dawn of Freedom—Philippine World War II Japanese Propaganda Movie." *Pinoy Kollektor: Pinoy with a heart of a collector* blog entry, (October 12). <http://pinoykollektor.blogspot.com/2011/10/48-dawn-of-freedom-philippine-wwii.html>.
- Rice, Mark. 2010. "His Name Was Don Francisco Muro: Reconstructing an Image of American Imperialism." *American Quarterly* 62 no. 1 (March): 49–76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aq.0.0117>.
- . 2014. *Dean Worcester's Fantasy Islands: Photography, Film, and the*

- Colonial Philippines*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Richardson, Diane. 1992. "Constructing Lesbian Sexualities." In *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience*, edited by Ken Plummer, 187–99. London: Routledge.
- Rotea, Hermie. 1983. *Marcos' Lovey Dovie*. Los Angeles, CA: Liberty Publishing.
- Ryan, Michael, and Douglas Kellner. 1988. *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Santos, Bayani Jr. 2012. "Bernal as Auteur: Primary Biographical Notes." *Kritika Kultura* 19 (August): 14–35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13185/1381>.
- Scott, A. O. 2007. "Murky Emotions Floating to the Surface." *New York Times* (April 27). <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DEED9153EF934A15757CoA9619C8B63>.
- Schreger, Charles. 1985. "Altman, Dolby, and the Second Sound Revolution." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, 348–55. New York: Columbia University Press.
- SEI-DOST (Science Education Institute, Department of Science and Technology). 2011. *International Migration of Science and Technology (S&T) Manpower*. Taguig City: SEI-DOST.
- Smith, Anna Marie. 1992. "Resisting the Erasure of Lesbian Sexuality: A Challenge for Queer Activism." In *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience*, edited by Ken Plummer, 200–13. London: Routledge.
- Sotto, Agustin L. 1982. "Entretien avec Lino Brocka à propos de *Manille*." *Positif* 250 (January): 31–34. Reprinted as "Interview with Lino Brocka on *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*" (1993), translated by Agustin

- L. Sotto, in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, edited by Mario A. Hernando, 223–26. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Stuart, Jan. 2000. *The Nashville Chronicles: The Making of Robert Altman's Masterpiece*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Stuart-Santiago, Angela. 2016. *ProBernal AntiBio*. <https://www.facebook.com/ProBernalAntiBio/>.
- Suvin, Darko. 1988. "Can People Be (Re)Presented in Fiction? Toward a Theory of Narrative Agents and a Materialist Critique beyond Technocracy of Reductionism." In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 663–96. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. 2001. "Cityscape: The Capital Infrastructuring and Technologization of Manila." In *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, edited by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, 158–70. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Vasudev, Aruna. 1995. "Cast in Another Mould." Interview with Ishmael Bernal. *Cinemaya* 27 (April–June): 16–23.
- Vaughan, Dai. 1992. "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity." In *Film as Ethnography*, edited by Ian Crawford and David Turton, 99–115. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Velasco, Johven. 1993. "Brocka's Theater: Something from the Heart." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, edited by Mario A. Hernando, 23–37. Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas.
- Wood, Robin. 1986. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Worcester, Dean C. 1914. *The Philippines: Past and Present*. vol. 1. New York: MacMillan.

- Yecies, Brian, and Aegyung Shim. 2016. *The Changing Face of Korean Cinema: 1960 to 2015*. New York: Routledge.
- Yuson, Alfred A. 1986. "Monologue for Ishmael Bernal's *City after Dark*, after Cavafy." In *Dream of Knives*, 34. Manila: Philippine Literary Arts Council.

FILMOGRAPHY AND THEATER PRODUCTIONS

- Aguila*. Eddie Romero. 1980. Philippines. 240 mins.
- Aliw (Pleasure)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1979. Philippines. 115 mins.
- American Graffiti*. George Lucas. 1973. USA. 110 mins.
- Apocalypse Now*. Francis Coppola. 1979. USA. 153 mins.
- Batch '81*. Mike de Leon. 1982. Philippines. 100 mins.
- La Battaglia di Algeri (The Battle of Algiers)*. Gillo Pontecorvo. 1966. Italy/Algeria. 121 mins.
- The Big Chill*. Lawrence Kasdan. 1983. USA. 105 mins.
- Bihagin: Bilibid Boys (Capture: Jailhouse Boys)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1981. Philippines. 118 mins.
- Bona*. Lino Brocka. 1980. Philippines. 85 mins.
- Brokeback Mountain*. Ang Lee. 2004. USA. 134 mins.
- Brutal*. Marilou Diaz-Abaya. 1980. Philippines. 105 mins.
- Burlesk Queen*. Celso Ad. Castillo. 1977. Philippines. 129 mins.
- Crash*. Paul Haggis. 2004. USA. 112 mins.
- Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon (Two Nests, One Bird)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1977. Philippines. 121 mins.
- Daluyong! (Storm Surge!)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1971. Philippines. 96 mins.
- Dawn of Freedom* (a.k.a. *Liwayway ng Kalayaan; Fire on That Flag!; Ano Hata o Ute*). Yutaka Abe with Gerardo de Leon as asst. dir. 1944. Philippines/Japan. 106 mins. [final reel missing].
- Eric*. Armando Garces. 1969. Philippines. [lost film.]
- Ganito Kami Noon ... Paano Kayo Ngayon? (As We Were)*. Eddie Romero. 1976. Philippines. 136 mins.

- The Graduates*. Ishmael Bernal. 1986. Philippines. 117 mins.
- Gumapang Ka sa Lusak (Dirty Affair)*. Lino Brocka. 1990. Philippines. 120 mins.
- Himala (Miracle)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1982. Philippines. 124 mins.
- Hubad na Bayani (Naked Hero)*. Robert Arevalo. 1977. Philippines. [lost film.]
- Huwag Tularan: Pito ang Asawa Ko (Bad Example: I Have Seven Wives)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1974. Philippines. 124 mins.
- Ikaw Ay Akin (You Are Mine)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1978. Philippines. 123 mins.
- Ina, Kapatid, Anak (Mother, Sister, Daughter)*. Lino Brocka. 1979. Philippines. 93 mins.
- Insiang*. Lino Brocka. 1976. Philippines. 95 mins.
- Ito Ba ang Ating mga Anak? (Are These Our Children?)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1982. Philippines. 120 mins.
- Jaguar (Security Guard)*. Lino Brocka. 1979. Philippines. 100 mins.
- Jindabyne*. Ray Lawrence. 2006. Australia. 123 mins.
- Kamatayan sa Hugis ng Isang Rosas (Death in the Form of a Rose)*. Anton Juan (also playwright). 1991. Philippines. [stage play; runtime approx. 120 mins.]
- Kisapmata (In the Wink of an Eye)*. Mike de Leon. 1981. Philippines. 90 mins.
- Ligaw na Bulaklak (Wildflower)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1976. Philippines. 110 mins.
- Lunes, Martes, Miyerkules, Huwebes, Biyernes, Sabado, Linggo (Monday through Sunday)*. Lino Brocka. 1976. Philippines. 125 mins.
- Mababangong Bangungot (Perfumed Nightmare)*. Kidlat Tahimik. 1977. Philippines. 93 mins.

- Macho Dancer*. Lino Brocka. 1988. Philippines. 136 mins.
- Malvarosa*. Gregorio Fernandez. 1958. Philippines. 101 mins.
- La mariée était en noir (The Bride Wore Black)*. François Truffaut. 1968. France. 107 mins.
- Markova: Comfort Gay*. Gil Portes. 2000. Philippines. 97 mins.
- Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag (Manila: In the Talons of Light)*. Lino Brocka. 1975. Philippines. 125 mins.
- Menor de Edad (Underage)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1979. Philippines. 119 mins.
- Miguelito: Batang Rebelde (Miguelito: Rebel Child)*. Lino Brocka. 1985. Philippines. 116 mins.
- Mister Mo, Lover Boy Ko (Your Mister, My Lover Boy)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1975. Philippines. 113 mins.
- Moral*. Marilou Diaz-Abaya. 1982. Philippines. 150 mins.
- Nashville*. Robert Altman. 1975. USA. 159 mins.
- Nunal sa Tubig (Speck on the Water)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1976. Philippines. 118 mins.
- Orapronobis (Fight for Us)*. Lino Brocka. 1989. Philippines. 94 mins.
- Pagdating sa Dulo (At the End)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1971. Philippines. 115 mins.
- Si Popeye Athp. (Popeye, etc.) "Popeye" episode*. Ishmael Bernal. 1973. Philippines. [lost film.]
- La regle du jeu (The Rules of the Game)*. Jean Renoir. 1939. France. 110 mins.
- Return of the Secaucus Seven*. John Sayles. 1979. USA. 104 mins.
- La ronde (The Roundabout)*. Max Ophüls. 1950. USA. 97 mins.
- De Stilte rond Christine M. (A Question of Silence)*. Marleen Gorris. 1982. Netherlands. 92 mins.
- Sunset Boulevard*. Billy Wilder. 1950. USA. 110 mins.
- Sybil*. Daniel Petrie. TV series. 1976. USA. 198 mins.

- Ang Tatay Kong Nanay (My Father the Mother)*. Lino Brocka. 1978.
Philippines. 116 mins.
- The Three Faces of Eve*. Nunnally Johnson. 1957. USA. 91 mins.
- Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang (Weighed but Found Wanting)*. Lino Brocka.
1974. Philippines. 126 mins.
- Uhaw (Thirst)*. Ruben Abalos. 1970. Philippines. [lost film.]
- Wating (Street-Smart)*. Ishmael Bernal. 1994. Philippines. 86 mins.
- Working Girls*. Ishmael Bernal. 1984. Philippines. 118 mins.
- Zoom Zoom Superman!* "Episode 3." Ishmael Bernal. 1973. Philippines. [lost film.]

INDEX

- Abalos, Ruben, 39
- Aliw (Pleasure)* (Ishmael Bernal),
95–97, 101, 107, 110, 112, 129–31,
167
- Altman, Robert. *See* *Nashville* (Robert Altman)
- Amazing Show*, 82
- Aquino, Benigno S., 40n7, 125
- Arago, Jorge, 42–43, 97
- Aspillera, Paraluman Santos, 43
- Avellana, Lamberto V., 42
- Barthes, Roland, 77–78
- Beams, Dovie, 37, 39
- Berlin International Film Festival, 18,
40, 54–55, 160
- Bernal, Elena, 44–45
- Bernal, Ishmael, 23, 87–89
and Lino Brocka, 44, 60
career and life, 40–50, 181
as filmmaker and critic, 18,
54–55, 93–96, 93–101,
110, 114–15, 128–33,
138–40, 165–81, 185.
See also film titles, e.g.,
Aliw,
- Bernardo, Bernardo, 64, 143, 149–50,
162–64, 182–85
on *Manila by Night*, 164–86. *See also* *Manila by Night*, characters,
Manay Sharon
- Bernardo, Sigrid Andrea, 73
- Bhabha, Homi, 146–47
- Bihagin: Bilibid Boys (Capture: Jailhouse Boys)* (Ishmael Bernal), 140
- bomba* films, 39–40, 124
- Bordwell, David, 78–79, 116, 123–24
- Brocka, Lino, 44, 60
and Ishmael Bernal, 44, 60
films of, 47–48, 50–53, 68–69,
70–71, 74–75, 87–89, 94–95,
98–99, 144, 150, 165, 179–80,
182. *See also* titles of films,
e.g., *Maynila*
- Butler, Judith, 155
- Camera Politica*, 91–93, 134
- Campos, Patrick F., 147
- Cannes Film Festival, 98–99
- Castro, Jade, 74
- Chionglo, Mel, 71, 73, 141–42
- City after Dark*, 19, 21, 57
- Comolli, Jean-Louis, 134–35
- Crash* (Paul Haggis), 76–77
- Crown Seven Film Productions,
48–49
- Culler, Jonathan, 77
- Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon (Two Nests, One Bird)* (Ishmael Bernal),
94
- Dawn of Freedom* (Yutaka Abe and Gerardo de Leon), 83–84
- de Guzman, Constanancio Canseco,
43–44
- de Guzman, Susana Canseco, 44
- de Hadeln, Moritz, 18, 54–55

- de Leon, Gerardo, 82
 de Leon, Mike, 94–95, 98–99
 Delgado, Marissa, 104
 Diaz-Abaya, Marilou, 138, 165
 Dolphy, 72, 150, 179, 182, 184
- ECP. *See* Experimental Cinema of the Philippines
 Edison, Thomas Alva, 31
 Ejercito, Jesse, 48–49, 124, 138–39
 Estrada, Joseph, 48
 Estregan, George, 48
 Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, The, 23, 39
- Fajardo, Lawrence, 71–72, 143
 Filipino film. *See* Philippines, cinema of
 First Golden Age. *See* Philippines, cinema of, First Golden Age
- Gabriel, Teshome H., 99–100, 104
 Gaghan, Stephen, 76
 Gallaga, Peque, 97, 111, 142, 164
 Gosiengfiao, Joey, 73–74
- Himala (Miracle)* (Ishmael Bernal), 87, 96, 100, 101, 140
- Ikaw Ay Akin (You Are Mine)* (Ishmael Bernal), 94, 96
Ina, Kapatid, Anak (Mother, Sister, Daughter) (Lino Brocka), 51
 Interim Board of Censors for Motion Pictures (IBCMP), 18, 49, 53–54, 57–59. *See also* Philippines, cinema of, censorship
 Johnson, Nunnally, 77
 July, Miranda, 76
- Kellner, Douglas, 91–93, 134
Kritika Kultura, 43, 54
- Lamangan, Joel, 73–74, 142–43
 Lawrence, Ray, 76
 Ledesma, Pacifico, 44
 Lee, Ricardo, 97, 138–40, 142
 lesbians, 154–55
Ligaw na Bulaklak (Wildflower) (Ishmael Bernal and Jesse Ejercito), 48–49, 104
 Lope, George Canseco, 44
 Lumbera, Bienvenido, 35
 Lumière cinematograph, 28–29
 Lumière, Louis, 27–28
- Magnatech Omni Studio, 110
Malvarosa (Gregorio Fernandez), 84–85
Manila by Night
 and *Maynila* (Lino Brocka), 50, 52–53
 as multi-character narrative, 21–23, 90n13, 128, 131–33, 131–34, 135, 160
 as queer text, 111, 134, 144–45, 150–54, 155–58, 160–61, 165, 180–81
 audiences, 79–81
 censorship of, 18–23, 49, 53–55, 57–59
 characters
 Manay Sharon, 58–59, 103–04, 109, 113–14, 148–50, 153, 164–65, 167–68, 170–83. *See also* Bernardo, Bernardo
 queer and straight, 108–09, 147–50, 151–54

- speech patterns, 108
 coda, 55–56
 critique of patriarchy and colonialism, 155–58
 dialog in, 169–70
 documentary elements, 97–98, 100–01
 improvisation in, 167–69
 origins, 47, 53–54
 reflexivity in, 102–06
 scholarly reception, 159–60
 script consultants, 97, 164, 165–67
 soundtrack, 106–07, 110–14
 transcription, 18–20, 56–57
 Manila Film Center, 57–58, 82–83
 Manila International Film Festival, 37, 39, 125
 Mannoni, Dominique-Octave, 145–46
 Marcos, Ferdinand E., 18, 23, 36–37, 39, 87, 160
 Marcos, Imelda, 19, 36–39, 80, 113, 160
 Martinez, William, 166
Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag (Manila: In the Talons of Light) (Lino Brocka), 50, 52–53, 60–68
 Mendoza, Brillante, 73
 Monteverde, Lily, 47, 51, 124
 Moreno, Alma, 105
 multiple-character films, 75–79, 89–93, 110, 116–23, 134–38. *See also* film titles e.g., *Nashville* in Philippine cinema, 123–33
- Narboni, Jean, 134–35
Nashville (Robert Altman), 21, 77, 87, 90–93, 100–01, 103, 107, 116, 122–24, 159
 Nichols, Bill, 100
Nunal sa Tubig (Speck on the Water) (Ishmael Bernal and Jesse Ejercito), 48–49, 89, 96–97, 100–01
- Oedipus complex. *See* Prospero complex
- Pagdating sa Dulo (At the End)* (Ishmael Bernal), 40–42
 Pasion, Francis, 71
penekula films, 40, 48
 Perez, Elwood, 73–74
 Pertierra, Francisco, 27–28
 Petrie, Daniel, 77
 Philippines
 and United States, 27, 29–32
 cinema of, 27–29, 30, 33–40, 124–27, 143–44, 150–51
 censorship, 18–19, 21, 39–40, 49, 53–59, 95, 127, 129n19, 141, 159. *See also* Interim Board of Censors for Motion Pictures
 First Golden Age, 34–35, 83, 85, 124
 milieu films, 129n19, 135–38, 140–43
 queer cinema, 70–75
 Second Golden Age, 36, 83, 87, 126n18
 social-realist, 85–87, 135–36
 women in, 124–27
 cultures and history, 25–26, 28–32
 languages, 25–26, 33–34n1
 Portes, Gil, 73

- Prospero complex, 145–46
- Ramos, Antonio, 28
- Regal Films, 47–49, 51–52, 124, 140–42
- Reyes, Jose Javier, 142
- Rissient, Pierre, 98
- Rizal, Jose P., 28
- Roco Jr, Rafael (Bembol), 62–63
- ronde, La (The Roundabout)* (Max Ophüls), 121, 123
- Ryan, Michael, 91–93, 134
- Sampaguita Pictures, 36, 87–88
- Santos Jr, Bayani, 43
- Santos, Lope K., 43–44
- Santos, Vito Canseco, 44
- Scorsese, Martin, 60
- Second Golden Age. *See* Philippines, cinema of, Second Golden Age
- Sine Pilipino, 46
- Sison, Jose Maria, 46
- Siyete Belyas (Seven Beauties)* (Jesse Ejercito), 124–25
- smorgasbord movie, 87–89, 123–24
- Softdrink Beauties, 126–27
- Solis, Charito, 166–67, 178–79
- Solito, Aureus, 71
- Sotto, Agustin, 98
- Stars '66, 87–88
- Stuart-Santiago, Angela, 43
- Tantay, Al, 105–06
- Tewkesbury, Joan, 100–01
- The Graduates* (Ishmael Bernal), 140
- Third Cinema, 99, 104
- Torres, Mar S., 72
- Valenti, Jack, 37
- Wating (Street-Smart)* (Ishmael Bernal), 140
- When It's a Grey November in Your Soul, 46
- Wood, Robin, 90–91, 123
- Worcester, Dean C., 31
- Working Girls* (Ishmael Bernal), 140
- Yapan, Alvin, 71
- Zialcita, Danny L., 72

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOEL DAVID is Professor of Cultural Studies at Inha University in Korea and winner of the Filipino Arts & Cinema International Festival's Gawad Lingap Sining (art nurturer) life-achievement award in 2016. He formerly taught at the University of the Philippines Film Institute, where he was founding Director. He holds a PhD in Cinema Studies from New York University and maintains an archival blog titled *Amauteurish!* (at <https://amauteurish.com>). He has written a number of books on Philippine cinema, including *Fields of Vision* (first winner of the Manila Critics Circle's National Book Award for Film Criticism) in 1995, *Wages of Cinema* (UP Centennial Book Award) in 1998, and the recently launched *SINÉ: The YES! List of 100+ Films that Celebrate Philippine Cinema*. His articles and reviews have appeared in (among others) *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *Asian Studies*, *GLQ*, *Humanities Diliman*, *International Journal of Asian Studies*, *Kritika Kultura*, *Manila Review*, *Plaridel*, and *Unitas*. His interests include genders and sexualities, Orientalism, narrative, and new media.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

MATTHEW HAYS is a Montreal-based critic, author, and university and college instructor. His articles have appeared in a broad range of publications, including *The Guardian*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Vice*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Walrus*, *Macleans*, *The Advocate*, *The Toronto Star*, *Cineaste*, *Cineaction*, *Cinema Journal*, and *Xtra*. His first book, *The View from Here: Conversations with Gay and Lesbian Filmmakers* (Arsenal Pulp Press), was cited by *Quill & Quire* as one of the best books of 2007 and won a 2008 Lambda Literary Award. He is the film instructor at Marianopolis College, and also teaches courses in journalism, communication studies, and film studies at Concordia University, where he received the Concordia Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence in 2007 and the President's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2013.

THOMAS WAUGH Thomas Waugh is the award-winning author or co-author of numerous books, including five for Arsenal Pulp Press: *Out/Lines*, *Lust Unearthed*, *Montreal Main: A Queer Film Classic* (with Jason Garrison), *Comin' At Ya!* (with David L. Chapman), and *Gay Art: A Historic Collection* (with Felix Lance Falkon). His other books on queer cinema and erotica, Canadian film and video, and political documentary include *The Conscience of Cinema*, *Challenge for Change*, *Hard to Imagine*, *The Fruit Machine*,

The Romance of Transgression in Canada, and *The Perils of Pedagogy: The Works of John Greyson*. He is Professor Emeritus at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, where he founded the Concordia program in sexuality studies, the Concordia HIV/AIDS Project, and Queer Media Database Canada Quebec (mediaqueer.ca).

Titles in the Queer Film Classics series:

NOW AVAILABLE:

Arabian Nights by Michael Moon (2016)

C.R.A.Z.Y. by Robert Schwartzwald (2015)

Death in Venice by Will Aitken (2011)

Farewell My Concubine by Helen Hok-Sze Leung (2010)

Farewell My Concubine by Helen Hok-Sze Leung (2010)

Female Trouble by Chris Holmlund (2017)

Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives
by Gerda Cammaer and Jean Bruce (2015)

Gods and Monsters by Noah Tsika (2009)

I've Heard the Mermaids Singing by Julia Mendenhall (2014)

L.A. Plays Itself / Boys in the Sand by Cindy Patton (2014)

Law of Desire by Jose Quiroga (2009)

Montreal Main by Thomas Waugh and Jason Garrison (2010)

Paris Is Burning by Lucas Hilderbrand (2013)

Strangers on a Train by Jonathan Goldberg (2012)

Trash by Jon Davies (2009)

Word Is Out by Greg Youmans (2011)

Zero Patience by Susan Knabe and Wendy G. Pearson (2011)

TO COME:

Scorpio Rising by Robert Cagle