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Semiological Discourse Analysis of Image Order and Functional Dialectics in Bernal's 1980 Film, *Manila by Night*

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Abstract

The paper explores the dynamics of semiotic, historical, and ideological discourses in Ishmael Bernal's 1980 film Manila by Night. Through the semiological and critical approach fostered by functional dialectics, the undercurrents in this film and their expression through its cinematic language are synthesized in the paper. Using a semiological approach informed by film-theory debates on enunciation and hegemony, I analyze how mise-en-scène, sound, and montage in Manila by Night (1980) structure spectatorship and encode ideology. The reading shows consistent image orders—religious iconography, spatial compositions, and musical motifs—that both reveal and conceal power relations under authoritarian rule. I also trace how censorship reshaped the film's diegesis and afterlives. The article clarifies how Philippine popular cinema mobilizes codes of morality and modernity to negotiate social contradiction.

Keywords: *cinematic language, culture, ideology, Manila by Night, semiology*

INTRODUCTION

Since cinema's introduction to the Philippines in 1897, film texts have been entangled with competing ideologies and projects of social order. In *Manila by Night*, Bernal orchestrates images and sounds that are at once realistic and paradoxical, inviting viewers into a complex field where signification and ideology are co-produced. This paper's central claim is that *Manila by Night* constructs an image order—a patterned interplay of mise-en-scène, sound, and montage—that conceals the ideological mechanisms of enunciation even as it exposes the contradictions of urban life under authoritarian rule. The analysis specifies how devices of representation (iconography, spatial composition, aural motifs) structure spectatorship and aligns or distance the viewer from characters and their fates. The argument proceeds as follows. I first outline the theoretical

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lens (Barthes; Metz; Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni; Dayan; Gramsci/Foucault on hegemony). I then detail the analytic procedure used for the scene-coded reading. The core sections track three intertwined systems: (1) iconography and space, (2) sound and song, and (3) montage/spectatorship—followed by a discussion of censorship's imprint on diegesis and the film's afterlives. I close by drawing the philosophical implications for ideology and enunciation.

This reading addresses three questions:

(1) How do religious iconography and spatial composition operate as an "image order" that renders moral discourse legible?
(2) In what ways do diegetic and extra-diegetic sounds (songs, motifs, foley) align or distance spectators from characters and their fates?
(3) How do montage and point-of-view structures produce (or frustrate) a stable mode of enunciation under conditions of censorship?

I call the procedure used here functional dialectics: a scene-coded analysis that links close formal description to the ideological functions those forms perform. The analysis works and notes mandated alterations present in the publicly distributed copy (see "Cinema versions" below). To aid replicability, time-stamped scene descriptors (shot/scene/sequence) are maintained in analytic memos on file. I treat shots as primary descriptive units, sequences as interpretive units, and character arcs as thematic units. For each scene I coded three layers: (a) iconography and space (religious images, blocking, lensing, framing, set/prop motifs); (b) sound and song (diegetic/non-diegetic cues, lyric fragments, foley and ambience); and (c) montage/spectatorship (POV, alignment, voyeuristic or distancing framings, transitions).

For every coded item I asked: what function does this device perform in structuring spectatorship and ideology? Functions include alignment, irony, legitimation, masking, and rupture. I then traced patterns across scenes to identify "image orders" that both articulate and conceal ideological address. Coding and interpretation were conducted using memoing and return-to-scene triangulation rather than inter-coder reliability. Claims concern how the film organizes looking and listening relations in this version; they do not assume a single "intended meaning." Because the manuscript references numerous stills, I either (a) cite timecodes in lieu of images or (b) include only stills cleared for reproduction at 300 dpi with source credit and permissions. Where stills are omitted, precise timecodes anchor description for verifiability.

Film is both art and social discourse. Read through cultural structures, it shapes and reflects ideology. This article argues that *Manila by Night* constructs an image order—through miseendscène, sound, and montage—that at once reveals urban contradictions and masks the mechanisms of enunciation. The societal

makeup of cultures affects perception through geographic societies that include nationalities, casts or religious sects and tribes, as well as through professional engagements; elite or ideological, racial or religious. Within the bounds of a defined semiotics of cultural ideology, the realization of a film's artistic vision through the cinematic language opens conversations. Located within semiological planes where connotations and denotations are (re) produced in the discourse, films create insightful impacts on societies. Within this footing, diegesis as introduced by Étienne Souriau becomes significant as it assigns the film's represented order. This embodies not only the film's narration, "but also the fictional space and time dimensions implied in and by the narrative, and consequently the characters, the landscapes, the events, and other narrative elements, in so far as they are considered in their denoted aspect". The set of ideas that arise from the filmmaker explains an experience of a social world and, as a result, indicates explicitly or implicitly the manners by which power has existed and should be distributed within this world. These ideologies while providing the concepts of separation, isolation, simplification of personal identity, imagination of easily defined interest, discouragement to participation and creation of opposition, however, may also be viewed as enablers for the concept of change and unity.

Clifford Geertz and Evans-Pritchard posit, "cultures were no longer metaphorical 'grammars' to be figured out and written down; they were languages to be translated into terms intelligible to members of other cultures". According to Keesing, the interpretation of cultural meanings is of no significance towards the comprehensions of the processes by which meaning is influenced. Thus, there is a need for investigations of societies and the cultural procedures that the symbolic and interpretive present. There are three ways to understand the interpretations that have gone through symbolic generation through cultural meaning. According to him, these three are 1) the sociology of knowledge, the claim that things need to be understood in terms of knowledge as controlled and distributed; 2) the 'webs of significance', this is the distinction between the considerations of symbolic anthropology and origins of contexts in cultural ideology. These are the inquiries that lead to the understanding of the creator of significance, power, and control while ascribing the subject to distribution of power; and 3) ideas that pertains to the texts within interpretative perspectives that allows for the alternative ways of 'reading' the interpretations and/or translation Accordingly, this paper seeks to understand this very process of generating the symbolic through the various cultural meaning in the film, *Manila by Night* in its cinematic (linguistic) discourses — through which the film had established a minuscular of the 1980's city of Manila (and Philippines') character and history through semiological and ideological conversations.

For Barthes, photographic denotation is limited and always already organized by connotation; lighting, angle, and effects do not escape coding. It

is not codified and has no innate organization. Thus, the application of proper lighting, suitable camera angles and photographic effects, only affects the level of connotation. Accordingly, it is the denotation itself that is being constructed, organized, and to a certain extent codified. Additionally, he states: The reader is born from the death of the author. Thus, the reader is the destination for all stories, all myths, and all texts.[1] Kim (1996, 212) asks:

> What can be expected from the readers? Can they discover the original authors, or can they interpret the texts in accordance with what was intended by the unknown original authors? Or, can they enjoy their own enriched interpretations of the texts supposedly around or even beyond the boundaries of the authors' intentions, or are they flowing out themselves with the floods of the texts? [2]

While the cinematic language displays a picture of reality, it also overpowers that intention by the very inherent paradox, sarcasm, and limitation of the form. Thus, the understanding of the form's aesthetic effects plays an important role to decode the discourses suggested in the texts. Within the ambits of criticality, this serves as a method to gather a clearer perspective of the creative statements, as well as the webs of significance that may be spun across the audience. In view thereof then, the readers (viewers) are also subjected to abstract and cultural points-of view. Commoli and Paul Narboni points out that, "If one reads the film obliquely, looking for symptoms; if one looks beyond its apparent formal coherence, one can see that it is riddled with cracks: it is splitting under an internal tension which is simply not there in an ideologically innocuous film. The ideology thus becomes subordinate to the text. It no longer has an independent existence: It is presented by the film".[3] Through the ideological lens, the cinema may be viewed to (re)produce the world as it is experienced. The captured reality becomes an expression of an ascertained ideology. Given that these expressions of ideologies are based on the conditions of existence, they thus reproduce the prevailing reality for people as it allows the expressions of peoples' daily lives to proceed. As the camera registers formless and indistinct world of prevailing ideologies, filmmakers display the representation of reality through cinema, after all the "cinema is one of the languages of the world that communicates itself to itself",[4] thus implicates for the transitions of understanding the texts — from the filmmaker to the reader.

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1 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen*, nos. 5–6 (1967), https://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes.

2 Kyong Liong Kim, *Caged in Our Own Signs: A Book about Semiotics*, 212.

3 Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," 817.

4 Comolli and Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," 817.

Later readerresponse and poststructuralist accounts accentuate the reader's role without collapsing authorial and contextual determinants. Relatedly, Hilary Putnam mounts insights through the genre of translation which as has been illustrated provides the process through which the notions held in social theories are translated into meanings. Hence, the alterations of geographical translation of everyday impressions into geographical concepts, effecting the relativity of beliefs to become a geographical idea. Beliefs turn into meanings that are by location. Retrospectively in cinema, there are two categories involved in this translation, first is the plastics of the image which includes styles of the sets, makeup, and performance, lighting, and framing (that achieves composition). While the second category conveys the foundations of montage where in the interim, the geography of the action (or the changing of dramatic interest), verify the director's viewpoints regardless of the rationality in the ordering of images in time.

Beyond its worth as metaphorical codes, pictorial discussions infer features through semiological systems that allow for the translation of a 'painted' object into a sign. Lacan shares, the representational painting is already unified, and the act of reading has already been made possible through the emphasis on the unifying function of the imaginary. (Dayan, 2004). Part of the process of sharing meaning in film are the significant concepts of signs, symbols, icons, meaning, referent codes, language, medium and (mis)understanding that borders between the objective and interpretive. Meanings do not reside in words but in people. The semiotic understanding is that societal worlds itself are the processes of translation, where the latter occur between various modes of discourses in cultural worlds.

However, at levels of more institutionalized social discourses, interpretation bears more diverse sense of impressions that rely on inner semiotic rules. This allows for the promotion of certain constructs and the neglect of others. Interpretations are creations and enactment of social reality. As people talk, they produce and reproduce culture. Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis provides the structure of a culture's language as shapers of what people think and do since language is not neutral conduits of meaning. Geertz (1973) theorizes that culture is not something that occurs in human heads. Culture is public, because meaning is, he states. Despite the different symbols people use to communicate, discernment and appreciation is similar throughout humanity. Within this view, symbols may be studied as patterns of social phenomena and not as ways to penetrate the mental processes.

Semiology as both theoretical and methodological, addresses film in two ways. One is through studying its level of fiction that organizes the content. While the other deals with studying the conundrums of the cinematic language

which deals with enunciation. Filmic enunciation operates within a technique that negotiates the viewer's access to the film. This is the articulation of the fiction which however far less studied, is equally important since the technique provides to conceal the ideological origin and nature of cinematographic statements.[5] In addition to, Gramsci and Foucault's hegemony which is an articulation of a process within which particular discourses and images adjoin within particular institutional and governmental structures, is a significant view in cultural studies. Correspondingly, hegemony has been involved in transformations of elements and content. This transformative process is a creation of alliances and connections that liberates power, rather than a conservation of stationary set of values and knowledge. Dayan mentions an assertion from Jacques Lacan how individuals are constructs of ideology, where ideology means not beliefs that are (dis)approved, but the set of discourses and images which constitute the most widespread knowledge and values. This becomes significant as Dayan also infers that

> The cinematographic system for producing ideology must be hidden and the relation of the filmic message to this system must be hidden. Message must appear to be complete in itself, coherent and readable entirely on its own terms. Filmic message must account within itself for those elements of the code which it seeks to hide. Viewer's attention will be restricted to the message itself, and the codes will not be noticed. [6]

Relative to is Kracauer's discussion of Griffith's take on large images of simple occurrences as exposés of new aspects of physical reality, and how these are simply not essential elements of the narrative, but rather contributors in raising awareness of the material origins, consequences, and undertones of all emotional and rational events which make-up the plot to make the cinema more cinematic. After all, films depict the physicality of truth as it appears to individuals in intense states of mind that is generated by both external or internal causes and mental disturbances.

DISCUSSION

Pictorial Discourses

Bernal saturates the frame with readable icons and spatial codes. Virgie (actor: Charito Solis) possesses the strength in character amidst a back-story of a former prostitute. She is a character that has, as a consequence, a constant need for cleanliness. The religious figures presented in scenes referring to Virgie could either reflect repentance, or salvation from this prostituted past. The

5 Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," 106.

6 Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," 114.

story names her Virgie, identifiably to mean the (Blessed) virgin (Mary), which her character make-up ironically provides. In the same light, it is observable that a bright red nurse's bag paradoxically complements Adelina Macapinlac's (actor: Alma Moreno) immaculate white nurse's uniform for someone who is later revealed to be a prostitute who operates at night in the guise of a nurse. The film's Febrero named character (actor: Orestes Ojeda) meanwhile is made analogous to a Valentino character that refers to one who embodies someone who is teeming with intertextual charges suggestive of either love/trust or lust/betrayal. Febrero is Loverboy to Adelina, Baby and Manay Sharon.

Emblematic dialogues such as *"sakay lang nang sakay"* (just keep on riding) and "*pati ikaw sasabog"* (you will also explode) bore undertones within the (film) space and time *Manila by Night* was released — more specifically when one inspects Adelina's speaking line to Baby (actor: Lorna Tolentino) in sequence 41, where emphasis is supplanted in the line-dialogue, *madampot kang nakatakip ng peryodiko?* This line (may) refers to dead bodies found covered in newspaper in Metro Manila during the 1970s, presumed to be a consequence of being an activist.

> Leche ka, subukan mong magsumbong sa asawa ko kung hindi babaliin ko lahat ang buto sa katawan mo! **Gusto mong madampot kang nakatakip ng peryodiko?** Malandi ka rin, ano? Hah?!" (*Just try to tell my husband and I will crack every bone in your body. Do you want to be found dead with newspapers all over you? You're also naughty girl, huh?)*[7]

Religious icons surround Bernal's *Manila by Night*. It begins with the prominent The Last Supper painting in Virgie's dining area-sequence to Febrero's worn scapular as he and Adelina were shown in sexual acts in sequence 25 (see Figures 1a and 1b). Observably, another of this nature is a shot of an image of Jesus Christ on a flyer being shown by a religious mercenary to Vanessa (actor: Gina Alajar), which was immediately followed by a shot of her and Alex (actor: William Martinez) in a kissing/sex scene at a motel room's shower (see figure 2). Some other related significant scenes that follow, are a rosary hanging by Febrero's taxicab as he gives Baby empty promises in sequence 4a. (Cocktail lounge row on M.H. del Pilar St.) and in sequence 18. (Parking lot behind PICC. Ext. Night); a statue image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is seen behind the character Virgie as she prepares to to see her visitor Miriam, a former colleague in sexual prostitution (see figure 3); and many others intermittently shown throughout the film. However, it may be noted that there was no religious image during the

7 Ishmael Bernal, director and screenwriter, Manila by Night (Regal Films, 1980), sequence 41; English translation and emphasis supplied by the author.

sexual foreplay sequence of Kano (actor: Cherie Gil) and Bea (actor: Rio Locsin) on a pushcart parked by the street canal in sequence 27 (see figure 4).



Figure 1a: The prominent 'Last Supper' painting in Virgie's dining area. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (*Seq. 1a: Int. Dining room)* Timestamp:4:18



Figure 1b: Febrero's scapular, as he and Adelina were having sex. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (Seq. 25: Adel's house. Int. Night) Timestamp: 19:44



Figure 2: The image of Jesus from the flyers preceding Vanessa and Alex' kissing scene in the shower. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (Seq. 8: Girls' school. Ext. Day.) Timestamp: 35:30



Figure 3: The statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is seen behind Virgie as she prepares to meet her visitor, Miriam, a former colleague from her time in prostitution. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (Seq. 6d: Living Room) Timestamp: 28:10



Figure 4: Absence of a religious image during the sexual foreplay of Kano and Bea on the kariton (pushcart), parked by the street canal. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (Seq. 27: Bambang St. by an open canal. Ext. Night) Timestamp: 1:28:09

Semiological and ideological discourses abound in Bernal's Manila by Night, which presents a narrative involving multiple characters. The film's use of cinematic language allows for multilayered interpretations. For example, the film draws attention to women's use of brassieres. Baby wears one in sequence 4b (see Figure 5), while Adelina does not in sequence 5 (see Figure 6). This contrast, even at the first level of filmic articulation, is rich in social meaning. While Baby wears a white brassiere and removes it in front of a religious statue, Adelina is shown without one. After removing her nurse's uniform, Adelina faces Febrero with her breasts exposed. Furthermore, Baby's name aptly reflects her portrayal as an innocent *provinciana* (a naïve woman from the countryside). Like a baby, she is inexperienced in the ways of city life, making her vulnerable to exploitation by city dwellers and the city itself. Meanwhile, the two characters are presented through a deliberately constructed binary opposition. While Baby is characterized through the film's *mise-en-scène*, Adelina is given the surname Macapinlac, which bears a phonetic resemblance to *pilak*, the Filipino word for a silver coin.

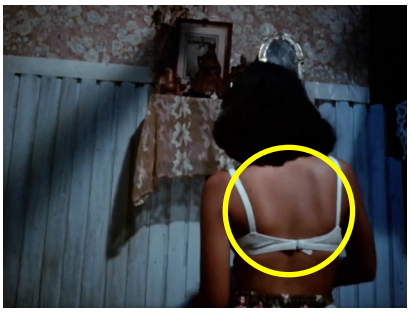


Figure 5: Enunciation of women's use of brassiere. Baby wears a white brassier. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (sequence 4b: Baby's house, a crowded tenement on Harrison Blvd) Timestamp:16:10



Figure 6: Enunciation of women's use of brassiere. As Adelina undresses her work clothes, it is revealed that she does not wear any brassiere underneath. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night* (Seq. 5: Adel's house in San Nicholas. Int.-ext. Night) Timestamp: 19:10

The film also juxtaposes poetic commentaries on romantic relationships through the use of revered religious images and portraits. Portraits and images of the crucified Jesus Christ are incorporated as significant elements of the film's mise-en-scène. One such image appears during the intimate scenes involving Alex and Vanessa, as previously discussed and illustrated in Figure 2. Other examples include scenes featuring Bea and Greggy (see Figure 7A) and Febrero and Manay Sharon (see Figure 7B). In the latter scene, Febrero and Manay Sharon engage in a whispered repartee, exchanging seemingly forbidden declarations of "I love you." As they do so, a calendar bearing a portrait of Jesus Christ hangs on the wall in the background (sequence 11), seemingly positioning Christ as a witness to their exchange. Through these poetic cinematic articulations, *Manila by Night* presents scenes depicting illicit affairs, some of which are framed through point-of-view shots that position the audience as observers. This technique invites viewers to witness these intimate encounters, creating a voyeuristic or "peeping Tom" effect (see Figure 8).



Figure 7A: The Crucifix and portrait of Jesus Christ as props and significant *mise-en-scène* devices while Bea and Greggy engages in a sexual act before Greggy sets off to fulfill his dreams of working abroad. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night*. Timestamp: 43:20



Figure 7B: Portraits of Jesus Christ are visible as Febrero and Manay Sharon secretly whisper "I love you" to each other while Adelina prepares to leave for work. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night*. Timestamp: 47:22



Figure 8: Shots suggestive of the peeping-tom effect. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night*. Timestamp: 44:39; 46:07

Manila by Night has maximized the use of the film's space, especially when highlighting where the characters are physically and narratively in. Long shots within the film space to mean the character's equal footing for Baby and Adelina, despite their (emotional and physical) 'investments' with Febrero — both are in a non-binding situation with him. The decision for these kinds of cinematographic articulation has been clearly understood even within the film's discoursal examination of (Manila's) societal conditions (see figure 9 below).

Similarly, the film observably has presented character-icons within some sequences suggestive of textual readings. These were through the character-icons of Doña Vita, the transwoman in heart-shaped costume; and the old man and woman (see figure 10 below). They were located at significant spaces within the narrative that largely contributes to the film's socio, economic, and political commentary.



Figure 9: The use of film space and long shots to signify character and societal relationships/relevance Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night*. Timestamp: 1:42:10



Figure 10: The character-icon device in sequences with constrained sexual innuendos, as devices for poetic social, cultural and political comments. Bernal, I. 1980, film *Manila by Night. Timestamp: 32:22; 2:26:22; 54:34; 1:11:57*

Music functions as motif and commentary, suturing character arcs and political allegory. It has used the song *"Tukso"* (Temptation) by Didith Reyes as a lyrical script where the element not only musically scored that introductory sequence for Baby but has also her character as she would be teased as narratives about her unfold throughout the film. Later on, Bernal ties-in her story through the lyrical song, *"Taksil"* (Traitor) by Didith Reyes with lyrics edited to only include … *"Kailangan kita sa buhay ko/Taksil ka man sa sumpa mo/Kailangan kita sa buhay*

ko" (I need you in my life, even if you betrayed your promise, I need you in my life) as she takes a jeepney ride, alone and pregnant.

The film's use of parallel technique in music as a film element and in others (such as props or property, among several others) has not only enabled a foreshadow for the development of its multiple-character narrative but has also served as a motif in the build-up of the entire film's *mise-en-scène*. A clear indication of this would be in Bernal's manners of telling through Alex's (William Martinez) singing engagement in a folk music nightclub. As he sang with a guitar accompaniment "Teach Your Children" by Crosby and Nash in sequence 2 (Folk music nightclub. Int.-ext. Night), the film later uses this song again, being guitar-strummed by a man seated on a concrete seaside-wall at the Luneta Park. Alex came and sat beside him to listen as he ends his wandering chase from the policemen through the night towards the end of the film (Seq. 51: Alex's wandering. Ext. Night thru morning). The song (see Table 1 below) while in sequence 2 was used to introduce Alex's character, poetically foreshadows the entire cinematic narrative as well. In other words, this song's lyrics (and music) was not only used to show a parallel characterization for Alex, but also of the entire film, *Manila by Night*. This lyric-driven motific parallel came to its close in sequence 51.

TABLE 1. *Song Lyrics of Teach Your Children Well by Crosby and Nash (1970)*

[Verse 1]

You, who are on the road, Must have a code that you can live by
And so, become yourself, Because the past, is just a goodbye

[Chorus]

Teach, your children well, Your father's hell, did slowly go by
And feed, them on your dreams,
The one they pick's, the one you'll know by

[Post-Chorus]

Don't you ever ask them why, If they told you, you would cry
So just look at them and sigh, And know they love you

[Verse 2]

And you of tender years (Can you hear, and do you care?)
Can't know the fears (And can you see?),
That your elders grew by (We must be free)
And so please help (To teach your children)
Them with your youth (What you believe in),
They seek the truth (Make a world),
Before they can die (That we can live in)

'Teach Your Children Well', the song known for its immutable implication of intergenerational mentorship, speaks volumes of the importance of, after reflection, one becoming a reagent of change. Its use in the film as a lyrical script not only illustrates music as a film element that's creatively manipulated, but also an element that could poetically articulate a stance about the socio-economic and political hardships Manila (Philippine) was facing (then). Through the song's integration into operations of the film elements and the entire narrative, the political message has been made clear — there is a need for the incoming generation/s to understand what currently goes on, witness its current hell, and hopefully this drive empowers them — enough to break cycles that surely will make more generations suffer the same. Stam and Spence (2000, 889) states that the "music track can also play a crucial role in the establishment of a political point of view and the cultural positioning of the spectator". Due to film music's competence to motivate an emotional dimension, it "can regulate our sympathies, extract our tears or trigger our fears." While aural, sound remains rooted from its image counterpart/s. Hence, when the film's image order and its functional dialectics is considered with music and other aural elements, the discourse becomes sharper. In cinematographic language, music and other aural elements are taken inclusively with the pictorial discourses. Table 2 below lists the diegetic and non-diegetic sounds incorporated in Bernal's *Manila by Night* which relatively further enhances the film's image order for representation.

TABLE 2: *Diegetic and Non-Diegetic sounds in the 1980 film, Manila by Night*

Diegetic	Non-Diegetic/Extradiegetic
car sounds	synthesized sound
hammering sounds	jazz/sensual trumpet sound
undecipherable murmurs	sweet music
sound of running water from shower	electric guitar music
murmurs	high pitched bell
clink of glasses and plates	folly music
gunshot	bell ringing
shouts of surprise from club audience	trumpets
people shouting/talking	romantic piano music
jeepney horns	guitar playing
drumbeats	melo-dramatic music
game sounds (synthesizer)	"dramatic Music"
angry girl talking over phone: "Hindi ko nga maintindihan kung anong gusto, matapos akong bugbugin tsaka ako duduhin. Minsan nga, nasa simbahan kami, sa Sta. Cruz pa, gusto akong hipuan, sinipa ko ngang bigla"	high Pitched, thriller-like Music

Diegetic	Non-Diegetic/Extradiegetic
"Tukso" song by Didith Reyes	sounds of sirens
sound of a lady and her lover arguing	
dance music	
people humming/singing with guitar	
sound of children playing	
"Nang Dahil sa Pag-Ibig" song, By Anthony Castello (background music)	
party music	
faint upbeat music in the park	
"Funky Town" song, by Lipps	
slow background music	
Religious processional sounds	
Night club music	
"Taksil Ka Man Sa Sumpa mo" song, Imelda Papin	

Montage and Spectatorship

Cross-cutting among Virgie, Adelina, Baby, and Alex repeatedly produce unstable alignments: point-of-view framings lure us into complicity, then a cut to religious iconography or public noise (sirens, bells) repositions us at arm's length. The effect is not simply moral contrast; montage keeps spectators negotiating between empathy and judgment while the film's enunciation—its "voice"—remains masked by the very codes it deploys.

Moments of voyeuristic framing (e.g., partial occlusions, door-frame compositions) stage looking like a social relation. Yet the film also punctures that relation through interruptions—crying children, whistles, sirens—so that desire repeatedly collides with social regulation. In this sense, montage operates as a dialectical hinge: it shows social contradiction not by stating it but by organizing how and when we are allowed to look and listen.

Cinematic Staging

Manila by Night clearly details the artful arrangements of film elements and has maximized its control over them. In this film's setting and shooting environment, Bernal has created moods and introduced themes and ideas through mise-en-scene. For instance, it has eloquently identified a well-lit and spacious area (master's bedroom) for the sequence where Virgie and her husband engaged in a sexual foreplay. The same well-lit, in a medium long shot of a room

in a motel was also where Alex and Vanessa consumed a sexual intercourse. In both sequences, the decision to light the room well naturally shows the socially acceptable relationship between these characters. Contrastingly, it has articulated a dissimilar take when showing the barely lit sequences of the sexual scenes of Kano and Bea by the open canal, and Adelina and Febrero in their tiny space at a slum area in Manila. Both of which are sequences whose characters are engaged in socially questionable relationships.

As the film explicitly handles control over props as a cinematic device, some were clearly used within narrative contexts. It assigns specific props to characters while using these very same props for a narrative development — marking it as one of its motific elements. As objects proved influential when attached as props to characters, the specificity of certain props held symbolic importance which largely contributed to exploration, establishment, and the creation of motif. Some of these are: Adelina Macapinlac's red nurse's bag, Manay Sharon's hand fan, Febrero's religious scapular, the gold necklace with a triangle pendant Alex has given to Vanessa, among many others. It is most important to note that the film used the bicycle wheels at the beginning and the end of the film, where symbolically taken to suggest the cyclical nature of the film's theme and statement.

Referring to this paper's discussion of character-icons, its use as poetic-characters clearly has also been tied to other elements in the film — such as its circling back to the film's lyrical music that is Teach Your Children Well by Crossby. Identifiably, this song was not only used as a parallel lyrical script, but also a motific element for the whole narrative as well. These linkups are illustrated in the following sequences: 1) the old man in white robe who was shooed away after Alex and his friends had bought drugs in Seq. 13b (Streets of Sta. Cruz district); 2) a doddering old woman who passed by while Bea and Manay Sharon offered prayer in front of a religious grotto in Seq. 21 (Misericordia. Ext. Night); 3) an old man peering from a hole at a display of an upright roulette wheel being turned in Seq. 39 (Carnival. Ext. Night); 4) an old man Alex sees as he was walking toward Luneta in Seq. 51 (Alex's wandering. Ext. Night thru morning); and 5) the transwoman in a heart-shaped costume who loiters at the park while Alex listens to a guitarist strum the song "Teach your Children Well" in the same sequence.

The film's cinematic staging extends to the ways it introduces its characters. As Adelina Macapinlac is presented in Seq. 5. (Adel's house in San Nicholas. Int.-ext. Night) dressed in an all-white nurse's uniform, she carries a glossy red handbag. As she walks home along the dirty and dark streets of the slums, she passes across a garbage truck and at the exact moment she is beside it, its worker throws piles of garbage into the open top of the garbage truck. While Adelina has yet to be given the slightest dialogue, her unusual red bag hanging

beside her immaculate white nurse's uniform has said much about her already. The whiteness of her uniform contradicts the filth. The glossy elite red handbag seems refuted by the shantytown.

Meanwhile, the matriarch of an upper-middle class family, Virgie is first shown as the busy housewife, engaged with the repair of their house's roof in sequence 1. She waits for her husband's car to arrive after work hours. Her dining-area is well-decorated with the iconic (Jesus') Last Supper painting. Virgie is enigmatically busy with taking care of her household, husband, and children. She is character drawn to order and cleanliness who consistently uses disinfectant alcohol whenever dirt comes near her. The film names her Virgie, identifiably an association to the (Catholic's) Blessed Virgin Mary. However, as the story progresses, the irony has been laid since Virgie's former life was in sexual prostitution. Relatedly, when an old acquaintance from her past prostitute life came to visit her at home asking for help (*Seq. 6d: Living Room),* Virgie was shown in her blue and white willowy night gown. Ather back the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. While halted at this point, seeing Mirriam, a visitor from her past prostituted life, she reached out from her pocket and squeezes her holy rosary. As Mirriam impressed of now Virgie's life expresses her delight and hands over some Indian mangoes in a dainty plastic bag, Virgie, in jolt, quickly calls out to her maid for a disinfectant alcohol as 'dirt' comes her way.

The lighting techniques *Manila by Night* articulated has also signified much about its narrative' s development and cinematographic differentiations. Much of the images clearly emphasize to suggest its thematic statements through lighting directions, where the lighter and darker areas within frames carefully create the overall composition of shots. *Manila by Night*'s lighting techniques illustrates its director's judgment sketches. There was lighting choreography in the foreplay scene of Virgie with her (policeman) husband in the master's bedroom — that is brightly lit (Seq. 6c: Bedroom). As semilit in the before, during and after sex scene of Alex with Vanessa in the motel room (Seq. 9: Motel. Int.). While barely lit to the prelude to the sex scene of Adelina with live-in partner Febrero in the shanty. (Seq. 5: Adel's house in San Nicholas. Int.-ext. Night). Later, this activity stopped when one of the children (formerly included as a backdrop in their sex scene shot) cries for milk. Another of this sort where the same kind of activity was halted was the suggestive quick sex encounter of Baby with boyfriend taxi driver Febrero. In this scene where she loses her virginity, it was interrupted when a man blew his whistle to disperse couples doing what should be private acts in public spaces.

Across these scenes, lighting and color code social legitimacy: bright, even illumination in the master bedroom and motel associates heteronormative or sanctioned coupling with order, while semi-lit and under-lit spaces (canal,

shanty) mark desire as precarious, interruptible, and policed. Warm hues saturate scenes of sensual charge (sauna, disco), whereas a cooler blue bathes Greggy's aspirations, cueing distance and deferral. Rather than a simple good/evil binary, the palette maps which bodies are allowed visibility and which are kept at the edge of legibility.

Cinema versions

Under the Board of Censors for Motion Pictures, films were vetted not only for explicit content but for perceived political effects; producers commonly submitted altered versions to secure release. The establishment of the BCMP through Proclamation No. 1081 also authorized it to immediately ban the public exhibition of the following in any local theater:

> Films which tend to incite subversion, insurrection or rebellion against the State; films which tend to undermine the faith and confidence of the people in their government and/or duly constituted authorities; films which glorify criminals or condone crimes; films which serve no other purpose but to satisfy the market for violence and pornography; films which offend any race of religion; films which tend to abet the traffic in and use of prohibited drugs; films which are contrary to law, public order, morals, good customs, established policies, lawful orders, decrees or edicts; and any or all films which in the judgment of the Board were similarly objectionable and contrary to the letter and spirit of Proclamation No.1081.[8]

In the widely circulated copy of *Manila by Night*, a male voice-over at the end retrospectively "corrects" the characters' fates into a didactic moral ledger (rehabilitation, marriage, religious renewal). This overlay does not merely tidy the narrative; it rewrites the film's enunciation by imposing a paternal authority that neutralizes social contradiction and recodes transgression as a problem of individual reform.

Reading the un-narrated final images against the imposed sermon—Baby boarding a jeepney pregnant; Kano struggling against arrest; Virgie staring blankly into a mirror; Bea refusing exploitation; Adelina dying in the street; Vanessa pulled away from Alex; Manay Sharon still circulating in night spaces—clarifies what censorship occludes: the film's investment in rendering precarity visible rather than resolved.

8 "Letter of Instruction No. 13," September 29, 1973, *Supreme Court of the Philippines E-Library*, https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/34/20239.

Further, the Letter of Instruction No. 13 also empowered the BCMP through the Chairman, to enforce its decisions, such that:

> Any violations of this Order shall mean the outright cancellation, withdrawal and revocation of the permits of the films, the closure of the theater or theaters involved, as well as the arrest and prosecution of any persons concerned. In the implementation hereof, you shall coordinate with the Department of National Defense and other proper agencies of the government. [9] (De Vega 41- 42)

Given these orders, film producers provide necessary (re)versions. Due to this, *Manila by Night*'s has had a version that included scenes/sequences where the characters all ended up where they should, in a good society as that government's regime ascribe it to be. After the scene where Alex joins and loses his tracks in the Kano-police chase sequence, viewers hear a voice-over narration of a man who describes the after-fate lives of each of the film's multiple characters. In this narration, Alex was said to be detained at D.A.R.E., a drug rehabilitation institution (of that time) in the hope that he will become a good citizen someday; Baby was said to have been lucky as she has gotten married to a medical doctor who has accepted all her problems; Virgie meanwhile was recounted to have become a social worker for women who went astray in life just like her; Bea, the blind masseuse, having been disgusted in her 'dirty' kind of work, has turned her back on evil deeds and has become a food server in a deaf and blind restaurant; while Manay Sharon was reported to have turned to a 'normal' thinking after attending a *kursilyo* (cursillo) that is a Catholic activity for spiritual renewal aimed at deepening a person's faith and involvement in the Christian community. Since then, Manay Sharon, the voice-over narrates, has avoided the worldly 'call' of lust for the same gender; and lastly, Vanessa was told to have remained to be a good student and a beacon of hope to help 'cleanse' people so that they will be prevented in giving 'darkness' in Manila.

A disregard to the consequences of the requirements of the Letter of Instruction No. 13 in Proclamation No. 1081, reveals a specific ending of the film observable in how *Manila by Night* have seemingly closed its characters' narratives and this is through the following: Baby who holds a flowery yellow umbrella while pregnant takes a jeepney ride; Kano's character ended struggling to break loose from the policemen about to arrest him after a long chase by an intersection road; Virgie takes a pill and stares blankly at a bathroom mirror; Bea's last scene was her vehement refusal to be the main spectacle in a *toro* (or live sex show) in an outskirt in Manila; Adelina died a tragic death by the streets on a New Year's eve; Vanessa was last shown being saved by her mother from Alex who has been

9 Guillermo C. de Vega, *Film and Freedom: Movie Censorship in the Philippines*, 41–42.

insisting, almost strangling her, to give back the gold necklace he formerly gifted her; and Manay Sharon continues to frequent gay bars where in the last instance shoo aways and lectures on Alex as the former continuously begs for (drugs) money.

CONCLUSION

As films are analyzed in different frameworks, from the stricter technical perspective to the more embedded ideological and semiological suggestions in the film, it is significant to be attentive. While film is a tool to communicate, film is an art and arguably a language that is exposed to readings. The interface of the *mise-en-scène* with elements such as props, costumes, setting, lighting, color, and compositions among others may be looked at in terms of imagery, representations and ideologies. Film's direction of lights, creation of shadows, decisions on camera angles, shots or music— whether made diegetic or extra diegetic, as a motif or not, illustrates valuable visual and aural understanding and articulations when compounded. *Manila by Night*'s revelations for sequential breaks, causality, opposing relationships, outcomes, spatial nearness or remoteness, succession and precession, establishes the masterfully interlaced film and cinematic texts in its cinematographic language. Through it, film statements and themes have been enunciated.

This article has shown how *Manila by Night* organizes an "image order" across iconography, space, and sound that both renders moral discourse legible and masks its own ideological address. Religious images, staged within scenes of desire and danger, function less as contradictions than as respectability codes; diegetic and extra-diegetic cues align or distance us from characters; and montage regulates looking, producing a dialectic of empathy and judgment. Censorships-imposed voice-over exposes how state power sought to overwrite that dialectic by converting social contradiction into a tale of individual reform.

Methodologically, functional dialectics link close formal description to ideological function in a way that travels beyond this case. Future work might compare export and restoration versions or extend the coding scheme to other Bernal films and to contemporaneous urban melodramas. More broadly, *Manila by Night* clarifies how popular Philippine cinema mobilizes codes of morality and modernity not to resolve contradiction but to make it visible—precisely the visibility that mandated revisions attempted to neutralize.

On the political side, perhaps most dangerous in the eyes of that regime, was an inclusion of select motifs relating to the current political climate. For example, when Adelina threatens Baby, she utters the line *"Gusto mong madampot kang nakatakip ng peryodiko?!"*, alluding to the common reality at the time of

many disappearing only to be found dead on the street, covered only by sheets of periodical newspaper. Adelina's red bag that she carries home after prostituting herself shown immediately preceding her meeting Febrero wearing nothing but yellow briefs perhaps serve as commentary to both red (administration) and yellow (opposition) political parties at the time. The film tackled in smaller scales various problems in many other sectors, such as that of struggling artists like Alex, a folk music hopeful and Gregory, who failed to secure a permanent job both in the Philippines or as an OFW. All in all, it was a masterfully woven multi-narrative work with entwining stories. As the "masks" worn by characters from different walks of life came off and their true individualities, struggles, and crushed dreams were exposed; so was the character, history, and truth of their society in that space and time.

Unfortunately, the powers that be in that most relevant space and time recognized this power that art held. Through censorship, the unique ideologies expressed in works has not only been butchered in films like *Manila by Night* but in many other works serving as reflections of the negative world many Filipinos endured and saw under that regime. Though many had negative experiences, even more had gone blind due to the strategy of distracting the masses from their everyday sufferings through unintellectual entertaining propaganda and suppressing all meaningful discourses — films like *Manila by Night* persists if to position a spark for a revolution and change.

Manila by Night speaks volume about how after the night comes dawn as Alex after the long chase with the policemen comes across a transwoman in a big valentine's heart costume. Alex walked towards nearer the seaside wall, where he then sits to listen to a man guitar-strumming the song 'Teach your Children Well'. After which, he left and continued to walk along the road that leads him through Luneta park. While walking around, he's shown to be part of the people around him — jogging, having bicycle rides, doing routine exercises, and walking to and from the grand landmark of the city of Manila. After a bit, Alex lies on the grass, puts his arm on his forehead seemingly to shun his eyes from the glisten of the rising sun, and eventually closes his eyes to sleep. While the people around continued to be in the previous activities, it is not necessarily a new day but just another day. Simply implicating that after a *Manila by Night*, is a Manila by dawn. *Manila by Night* was an illustration of Manila on a minuscule scale. Directed by Ishmael Bernal, the film was set in the extravagant, yet enigmatic city of Manila. People from different walks of life all exist accordingly in society. As their stories entwined, the "masks" they wore soon came off and their true individualities were exposed; and so is the character, history, and truth of a society in a particular space and time. The semiological, along with ideological discourses in image order and functional dialectics, analyzed the film; in finding meaning through the

film and cinematic language, not only in what was said and shown, but also in how they all came together.

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