

Miss Bulalacao: A Kineikonic (Re) configuration of Queer and Social Spaces

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Abstract

This study is concerned with how moving images linguistically participate in the meaning-making of queer and the theoretical prospects of New Queer Cinema. The material under investigation is Ara Chawdhury's regional film *Miss Bulalacao* (2015) which illustrates the dynamic interactions between its queer character and the three social spaces the character navigates – the family, the community and the Church. Mobilizing Burn's kineikonic method of metamodal analysis, the study reveals how these spaces are configured with oppressive heteronormativity, but are also actively challenged by the queer's subversive possibilities, ultimately articulating how the film, as a kineikonic text, renders these spaces as dense sites of resistance and negotiation.

Keywords: kineikonic mode, queer, heteronormativity, social spaces, New Queer Cinema

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Introduction

The study of identity markers has been at the forefront of Philippine queer film scholarship, drawing from various theoretical insights that problematize how moving images facilitate queer significations. With Michael Inton's (2017) work being one of the most recent developments in theorizing the homosexual *bakla* in Philippine cinema, and among its preliminary counterparts such as the *palengkera-mujera* (Soler, 1988), the *parloristang-bakla* and *Brokeback Mountain* type (Payuyo, 2012), and the indigenous Filipino *lalake* with same-sex desires (Catalan, 2010), critical intersections of gender and media studies have been preoccupied with identitarian issues and how they are made visible, represented, and (re) imagined in the ubiquitous frame.

On the periphery of this academic terrain lies the queer's uncharted "multiplicitous spatialities of social life" (p. 52), to borrow the words of political geographer Edward Soja (1996), that when given attention, would radically shift our interest away from queer identity to sociality, from visibility to spatiality (Psarras, 2015). Both filmmakers and the academic community now engage in conversations that go beyond traditional concepts of depicting gay cultures, homophobia, and queer authorship and spectatorship. These conversations open up to the theoretical propositions of the emerging New Queer Cinema, a new critical lens germane to the topic at hand: queer films are no longer limited to a discussion on how they represent identities, but on how they frame and situate gender in the greater spatio-temporal (space-time) politics that govern everyday life.

To address this turn, the paper investigates the novel articulations of Ara Chawhury's debut feature *Miss Bulalacao* which premiered in the 2015 installment of Cinema One Originals Film Festival. The film is topbilled by Russ Ligtas, playing as the queer character Dodong (herein referred to the pronoun *she/her*) who joins the titular gay pageant and miraculously gets pregnant after a mysterious extraterrestrial visit in her town. Set in the idyllic seaside of Biliran, *Miss Bulalacao* tells the story of Dodong as she struggles to find meaning in the unexplained phenomenon that elicits polarized reactions from the townspeople. At the heart of this independent and regional film is the socio-geographic illustration of Dodong's salient queerness as she navigates the trifecta of social spaces onscreen: the household, the public, and the Church. This study argues that the construction of these social spaces hint at New Queer Cinema's attempt at organizing a "broader theoretical turn towards the notions of time and space" (Psarras, 2015, para. 10).

Facilitating the spatio-temporal thinking in this study requires an analytical framework that not only expounds the visual language of

precursory media, but also attends to a grammar that operates uniquely across the spatial and temporal contexts of film. This warrants a multimodal approach in moving images by using the kineikonic mode proposed by Andrew Burn (2013). This mode pertains to the collection of meaning-making resources specific to moving-image texts that form signifying systems (Burn, 2013) to become discursive tools across various scholarly disciplines. Drawing pertinent links from the semiotic tradition of moving-images against the configurations of gender and social spaces is the corpus of this study. Thus, the question: How does the kineikonic mode of the film *Miss Bulalacao* articulate the dynamic relationship between the queer and these social spaces? The present paper intends to excavate the modes enmeshed in the material and explicate how these modes linguistically participate in reinforcing or challenging the hegemonic spatialities of gender.

But First, Gender Performativity

To understand the queer is to examine gender as a function of performativity, as argued in the seminal work of Judith Butler who critiques gender as socially shared and historically constituted acts. For Butler, the acts here add up to a process of construction reiterated over time, all-encompassing of gestures, utterances, and any other mode of representation done in everyday life (Butler, 1990).

Butler starts with a premise that a person has no definite gender identity to begin with — it is only produced through a repetitive enactment of conventions shaped by discourse that varies from context to context. It follows here that there can be no intrinsic and predetermined identity, since the conventions one is *performing* may change from one time to another (Butler, 1990). For her, if gender is constructed then its performative nature also gives it possibilities of revision and deconstruction. Sara Salih (2006) notes, however, that Butler is “not suggesting that the subject is free to choose which gender she or he is going to enact” (p. 56) because it is done “within a highly rigid regulatory frame” (Butler, 1990, p. 43). This regulation, Butler argues, operates within the “confines of already existing directives” (Butler, 1988, p. 526) which dictate society to “regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (1990, p. 178). It is established in this sense that these genders governed by social sanctions constitute what is essentially called heterosexuality, which functions under the “regulated production of hyperbolic versions of “man” and “woman” (Butler, 1993, p. 257). She finally asserts that these enactments of the man-woman binary are “compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate” (p. 257).

The gender binary of man/woman informs what is called heteronormativity, the hegemonic regulation of heterosexuality. As Saachi Bhatia (2017) puts it, heteronormativity is more than a belief that heterosexuality is the correct sexuality — it governs people’s navigation throughout their gendered lives. For Butler, heteronormativity ultimately aims to expel or subjugate those who do not act according to the heterosexual matrix that men should be “masculine,” women should be “feminine,” and that one should desire for his or her counterpart (Wieringa, 2015).

At this point, the notion of *queer* becomes a “site of resistance” (Butler, 1993, p. 231) to what has already been established as heteronormativity. The term *queer*, first used to mean strange or peculiar, gained its derogatory set of meanings in the twentieth century (Dawson, 2016) to refer to people not conforming to gender norms, like effeminate men. In the 1980s, it became an umbrella term for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community and sexual deviants. In response, Butler (1993) opens a possibility of reclaiming the term by “enabling social and political resignification” (p. 231) that would reveal the arbitrary construct of gender. For her, the queer is afforded the possibility to “overcome its constitutive history of injury” (p. 223) by subjugating the very same system that represses it. Furthermore, the queer in “resistance to, or subversion of, the regulatory process of gender production” (Schippert, 2005, p. 96) ushers in an approach at destabilizing the underpinning hegemony of the man-woman binary. As Butler (1993) puts it:

For, if to identify as a woman is not necessarily to desire a man, and if to desire a woman does not necessarily signal the constituting presence of a masculine identification, whatever that is, then the heterosexual matrix proves to be an imaginary logic that insistently issues forth its own unmanageability. (p. 239)

Social Space

The inquiry on how hegemonies are maintained has embraced a spatial thought in the late twentieth century, a significant turn that believes space “can and must play a major role in the very nature of being critical of how hegemony is produced and reproduced” (Allen, 1997, p. 27).

The articulations of Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) social space and Soja’s (1996) “thirdspace” have further rallied contemporary critical studies towards a geographical imagination that puts spatiality on the same degree of academic rigor given to the epistemologies of history and society. This is in response to the dualisms that persisted in the authors’ time, especially

that of a real/imagined binarism of spaces that emphasizes, on one hand, the material or perceived spaces that are meant to be physically mapped out and empirically examined, and on the other hand, the mental or conceived spaces that construct our conceptions and interpretations of our environment (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). Henri Lefebvre's material/mental dualism, to which Soja (1996) refers to as "firstspace-secondspace," confined critical theories to its "formidable rigidity" (p. 11) and limited spatial thinking from fully exploring the meshwork that is social life.

Drawing from the earlier spatial reevaluations of Lefebvre (1991), whose approach calls to study "not things in space, but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it" (p. 89), Soja (1996) proposes the concept of thirdspace to account for a space that is distinct from the material and the mental, but also encompasses both and extends beyond the binary. This third space is the production of social space that Lefebvre (1991) had already hinted at — social space is lived space is third space. It is an amalgam of the perceived and the conceived, the real and the imagined, but is also so much more than the two (Soja, 1996). In Soja's elaborate work, Lefebvre's social space is approximated as the "space of radical openness, the space of social struggle" (p. 68).

Through the lens of Soja (1996) and Lefebvre (1991), *Miss Bulalacao* can then be contextualized as a geographic practice, a way of locating the queer in Chawdhury's cinematic configurations of Butler's dominant binarisms of man/woman and other persisting gender dualities such as father/mother and masculine/feminine. Corollary to this, the queer film as a regional product can be viewed as a response to the hegemonic spatialities of gender production that would guide our "attention to the margins, which are the locations of 'creativity' and social transformation" (Allen, 1997, p. 22).

Heteronormative Spaces and Queer Cinema

The three social spaces salient in *Miss Bulalacao* are not endemic to the film at hand. These spaces — the household, the public, and the Church — have already been in fact cinematically surveyed in queer films and scrutinized for their hegemonic productions of man/woman binaries and heteronormativity.

For instance, Libay Cantor's (2012) reading of Danny Zialcita's *Si Malakas, si Maganda, at si Mahinhin* (1980) and Aureus Solito's *Tuli* (2005) reveal that characters are forced to negotiate their deviance against their expected genders to accommodate heteronormative gender roles in the household. The former features an "openly out soft butch lesbian and a swishy openly gay man" (Cantor, 2012, p. 98) whose accidental sexual encounter leads to a pregnancy, and in turn, forces the two to abandon their

queerness in order to project themselves as heterosexual parents to the child. The latter involves a lesbian who falls in love with a feminine woman but has to bear a child just so she could gain acceptance from her townsfolk (Cantor, 2012). Butler (1993) would argue that this negotiation is not arbitrarily motivated but may be traced to heteronormativity's economic function in families. For her, it is especially important in the survival of cultures that occupants of household spaces are cultivated into discrete sexes so that reproduction of kinship will be guaranteed. She argues that such reproduction will be made possible and maintained only if members of the family have "heterosexual dispositions" — a man, for instance, must embody a masculine character and must desire for the opposite sex for a home to be productive. The queer, then, becomes a negating agent against what Lee Edelman (2004) calls the "reproductive futurism." Without these heterosexual dispositions in the household, queer characters would strip families of their economic viability for kinship, thus rejecting a generational future.

Spaces outside the household setting reveal much more complex processes of heteronormativity. Yvette Lim's (2016) reading of another opus of Solito, *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* (Lang & Solito, 2005), illustrates how Maxi, the lead gay character, thrives in public spaces that prescribe heteronormative values, particularly within the interstices of the cityscape. Lim proposes the phrase "locality of contests" (p. 95) which pertains to a space where gender norms are expected to be performed, whereas queerness situated in the same space is not. This makes a configuration of "queer spaces" possible, where boundaries of normative spaces are violated or challenged by the queer (Lim, 2016). She argues that Maxi's "performance of cross-dressing and overt displays of conventional femininity" (p. 97), as he moves in and out of public spaces, becomes a sign of symbolic subversion against the masculine character he is expected to embody. Meanwhile, a thematic analysis of the controversial Filipino soap opera *My Husband's Lover* reveals that its gay characters are depicted to be open to displaying affection towards each other in the public, but are shown to be more sexual and intimate only when given privacy (Jabonero et al., 2014). Moreover, public urban spaces such as stores and malls can configure queer moments only at certain spatio-temporal conditions, like with smaller crowds during the evening, which situate the queer "away from the normative gaze" (Lim, 2016, p.11).

Meanwhile, cinematic conventions of public spaces operating within rural contexts have developed under a "long and arduous process of making Philippine rural landscapes visible" (Campos, 2016, p. 83). These rural landscapes in films are better understood in the pastoral and provincial

sense, drawing from Patrick Campos' spatial distinctions of the marginal *taga-bukid/taga-bundok* or those who "clung to their land and resisted colonial power" (p. 70), as opposed to the central *taga-bayan* or those whose spaces are situated in the economic locus of development. Evocative of this urban/rural binary of public spaces is Cristobal Catalan's (2010) post-colonial reading of Joselito Altarejos' *Ang Lalake sa Parola* (2007) where he relocates the gay characters in the global/local discourse of gender production. Catalan appropriates urban space, where globalization and cosmopolitan life are central to the lives of its occupants, as the place of the *global gay* who is afforded the "indexes of material wealth, social mobility, and consumerism" (p. 77). In contrast, rural space provides a dense site of resignification where the queer dislocates the construct of these metropolitan characteristics, but at the same time anxiously disengages from the discreet conceptions of the provincial *bakla*. As a result, the queer assumes an "indeterminate position of indigenous self that is neither fully local nor global" (p. 88).

Cinematic intersections of gender and religious spaces, on the other hand, have an enduring discussion, mostly pointing to the Catholic Church as the nation's dominant religious group that contributes to the institutionalization of gender roles (Payuyo, 2012). While heteronormativity is prevalent in these religious spaces, Inton's (2017) analysis of Gil Portes' *Markova: Comfort Gay* (2000) reveals how the queer turns to the annual Filipino Catholic pageant rite of *Santacruzán* as an avenue to "challenge the laws of traditional masculinity and patriarchy by embodying womanhood and femininity" (p. 76). This certain religious event has become a marker of religion in Filipino diaspora communities in foreign territories like Europe (Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014), whereas in the Philippine streets, it has become a spatial practice for the queer to perform cross-dressing and drag as both gendered and intercultural (Manalansan, 2003). This then opens a critical reevaluation of the queer as a symbolic agent of resistance: how can such a practice of "queering" emancipate from heteronormativity when it succumbs to the same "gendered" heterosexual matrix it aims to subjugate? While Claudia Schippert (2005) cautions that the queer resistance must also "examine their own production of norms" (p. 4), Butler (1990) reiterates that the very notion of its performance does not lie in its opposition, but in its "allegorization" of heterosexuality, that is to reveal its "imaginary logic," as already mentioned, and expose its instability as a hegemony.

Alert to the hegemonic standards of the spaces aforementioned, the cartography of Philippine queer films is not limited only to the dominant industry binary of mainstream/independent filmmaking. Underexamined in the peripheries of the nation's cinematic landscape lies the space for

alternative cinema, whose political articulations of queer subjectivities have been aggressively addressed. Xeph Suarez's narrative short *Si Astri maka si Tambulah* (2017) and Beverly Ramos' short documentary *Dory* (2017), for instance, uncover the persisting geocultural environments inextricable to the exploration of their lead characters' trans identities. Screened in the Quezon City International Pink Film Festival, these queer films introduce to their contemporary audiences alternative voices often emanating from the margins, further expanding the vocabulary of queer geographies in the cinema of the country.

As discussed, queer films' heteronormative regulation in the spaces of the household, the public, and the Church indeed engages in a reconstitution of cinematic spatialities that the queer must navigate and negotiate. The legitimization of these hegemonic spaces must be reimagined not only as a monolithic, one-way production of norms, but as sites of complex contestations which continue to construct dynamic relationships between the normative and the non-normative. As problematized in the *Markova: Comfort Gay's* appropriation of Catholic *Santacruzian* activity, queer performance and process cannot be simply described conclusively as truly subversive, because "there is always the fear that (re)citing the performative either re-inscribes the heteronormative hegemony or falls outside of the intelligible" (Young, 2016, para. 10).

The brand-new challenge of the futures of New Queer Cinema (originally dubbed by American film critic B. Ruby Rich), lies in its capacity to address the "existential need to keep in and up with queerness and its radical, polemical cry against the violent structures" (Psarras, 2015, para. 13). In this regard, to locate the regional film *Miss Bulalacao* in the articulations of this cinematic frontier is to depart from the plain ambitions of visibility and representation of queer identities, and instead, elaborate its active exposé of the "artificiality" of hegemonic socialities and spatialities that govern everyday life.

Film as a Kineikonic Text

That a queer film is not an indifferent medium or a "neutral host" of representations (Schnoover & Galt, 2016) is telling of its active engagement in the production of gender, especially the semiotic configuration of the spaces the queer occupies. The study, then, of these meaning-making processes in films calls for an understanding of the medium's grammar while integrating it "coherently with an analysis of other frames, laminates, contexts" (Burn, 2013, p.13).

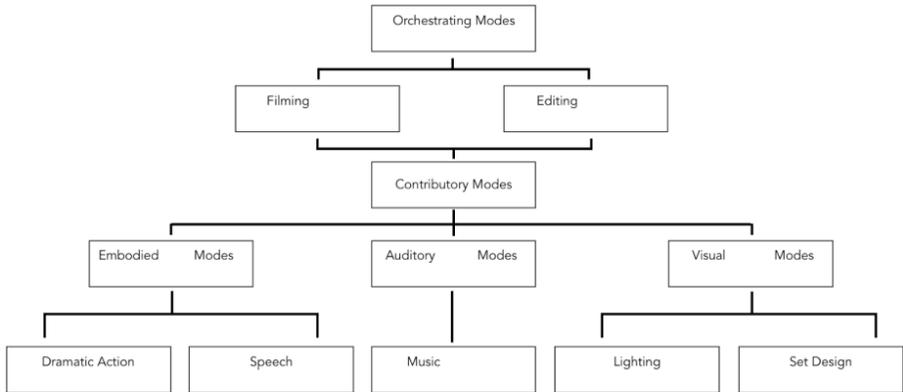
Contemporary media texts have been characterized as a multifaceted practice, as Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2001) argue that the

increasing use of various materials in media production has become impossible to textually analyze under one discipline. The moving image is a testament to this, such that it employs a wide range of elements to produce a material like a short film or an educational video. This becomes the foundation for multimodality, as the present context calls for a need to account for all these elements and their potential of meaning-making. For a multimodal text like film, this investigation draws from the following theoretical assumptions set by Burn (2013): 1) representation and communication draw on multiple modes present in the film, 2) these modes that become meaning-making resources are continued to be redefined within the social context they operate and, 3) modes are negotiated and understood in a collective sense by people in order for a mode to become a mode. Since it is imperative to recognize moving images as a multimodal text, the modes present in the film essentially become the derivable units to be analyzed.

What modes can then be derived from a film? Burn and David Parker (2003) have come up with a theory on how to account for multiple modes present in moving images, referring to it as the kineikonic mode – the term birthed from the Greek words *kinein* (to move) and *eikon* (image) (Burn & Parker, 2003). According to Burn (2013), in order for the kineikonic mode to figure, the modes must be investigated across their interrelationships with one another, that is, to examine how the modes connect and work together to produce meanings.

The kineikonic mode is stratified into two groups – the contributory mode and orchestrating modes. The former refers to the modes put into the scenes such as lighting (manipulation of the direction, color, and intensity of the lights in a shot, which Burn (2013) had shown to contribute to the framing of a subject), set design (architecture, color, and props depicted in the scenes which construct the filmic spaces), diegetic and non-diegetic sounds (the former referring to sounds produced from the filmic world [e.g. dialogue, footsteps], and the latter referring to sounds edited into the scene [e.g. scoring, narration]), speech (delivery of the dialogue), and action (actors' gestures, facial expressions, movements). The contributory modes or content of the scenes are then subsumed into the orchestrating modes, which refer to the “overarching framing systems in space and time” such as editing techniques (transitions and segmenting of the shots), and positioning of the camera which is the angle and distance from which the characters or subjects are filmed (Burn, 2013). The diagram below illustrates the composition of the kineikonic mode.

Figure 1. Framework of Kineikonic Mode (Burn, 2013)



The level of granularity in this analysis will not go beyond the modes present in the contributory and orchestrating modes and will not extend to individual “finer granules” of analysis, i.e. rhythm of music, instrumentation, lexis, metre, timbre, grammar, focus of lighting, texture of set design. All these modes will not be examined individually, but will be studied under their respective contributory modes, e.g facial expression falls under dramatic action. This is to avoid the myopic tendency of “decomposition,” as Burn (2013) illustrates in his kineikonic framework:

It is not simply a matter of decomposing larger semiotic modes into progressively smaller elements, though this may be a valuable analytical route for some researchers; and all analysts need to decide at what level of granularity they want to work. (p. 8).

The kineikonic mode is therefore not concerned with the comprehensive taxonomy of multiple modes in film, but the salient modes that address the theoretical concerns of the topic at hand, “asking how they connect to make meanings, and what semiotic principles work across them” (Burns, 2013, p. 4).

Kineikonic (Re)configurations of the Queer Across Social Spaces

Before diving in detail into the analysis of *Miss Bulalacao*'s kineikonic mode, we preface this discussion by addressing the overarching orchestrating mode apparent throughout the film which is the screen space, or in industry parlance, the aspect ratio. *Miss Bulalacao* is specifically shot in the classic Academy aspect ratio or commonly known as the 4:3, or in some cases, the 4x3. Critical attention towards this ratio has been focused on its technical limitations, mainly as a response to industry demands and economic factors

at the time when the subsequent widescreen counterpart was introduced as a more immersive experience than the former (Bordwell, 1985).

For all the things that preliminary critiques on the widescreen and the 4:3 missed, it is the idea that aspect ratio as a spatial practice itself, herein treated as an orchestrating mode, that is underdeveloped. Alert to the ideological underpinnings of spatial thought, one must problematize aspect ratio as a geographic dimension that locates and orchestrates the diegesis of the film and as a way of “presenting, shaping, and manipulating space” (Cardwell, 2015, p. 90). For Steven Roberts (2019), the widescreen has an “alluring horizontality” that has grown to be associated with high-brow cinema, thus, cementing itself as some form of aesthetic norm for what can be called cinematic. Correspondingly, Sarah Cardwell (2015) argues that when seeing a film, aspect ratio can hardly be noticeable “unless what we are watching differs from the norm or radically exploits alternative ratios” (p. 84). In this regard, the usage of the outdated 4:3 in *Miss Bulalacao* underscores the resistance to the dominant cinematic conventions of the widescreen. With the panoramic viewing that widescreen offers stripped off in *Miss Bulalacao*, we are able to zero in on the interstices, on the spaces confined in the margins, and on the sense of restriction that is otherwise subdued in the widescreen. As a result, the orchestrating function of the 4:3 constricts the composition of the film so as to heighten the tension of the characters and spaces within the frame.

With the restrictive framing in *Miss Bulalacao* established, we are now able to set our attention on the interplay between the modes apparent in the frame or what Burn (2013) calls the kinekonic method of metamodal analysis. Our specific focus is on elaborating the “nesting” of contributory modes and how the rigid boundaries of the spaces are framed by orchestrating modes, as examined in the following three subsections.

The Household as Space for Gender Binary

The first scene which introduces the space that situates the queer’s familial relationship occurs right after the titular *Miss Bulalacao* pageant sequence, where Dodong has taken part as a contestant (Chawdhury, 2015). It starts with an extreme close-up shot of the crown she now wears after winning the beauty competition (Table 1). When a low-tone wind instrument matched with a high-toned string instrument plays in the background, the shot vertically moves down to Dodong’s disheveled face with her eyes wide open and eyebrows scrunched together as she looks at a point beyond the visible area of the frame i.e. beyond the viewer (Table 1). The shot blurs out as Dodong runs farther from the frame (Table 2) which then reveals her father Poldo chasing after him, shouting and flailing a wooden stick at the former

(Table 2). The shot remains static, yet the embodied mode of the characters (Poldo chasing Dodong away) makes possible for the change in the shot size and clarity – even with the absence of camera motion, the close up shot has changed to a medium shot. The shot further remains immobile when Dodong has already fled the space, her father closely tailing her. The persistence of the orchestrating mode (static framing) and how it configures the embodied modes (the fleeing of the queer) in this introductory sequence configures the space as a firm, stable, and bounded territory where a heterosexual regime denies access to deviations of normative gender: that a man cannot be a woman.

Table 1. A close-up shot of Dodong, her crown, and her makeup smeared after the pageant. (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:06:55- 00:07:07).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Dodong's eyebrows are scrunched. She seems to be looking at someone beyond the frame. She takes a few steps back.</p>	<p>Subtle, suspenseful musical score from a wind instrument. Sound of crickets. Dogs barking.</p>	<p>Only a part of Dodong's face is illuminated by a street lamp directly above her. Dodong's eye makeup is smeared by tears.</p>	<p>From a close-up shot of the crown, the camera vertically moves down and lands on a close-up of Dodong's face.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

Table 2. Dodong darts off away from the shot as Poldo runs after her (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:07:08-00:07:15).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>After slowly taking a few steps back, Dodong darts off in her dress as Poldo runs after her.</p>	<p>Subtle, suspenseful musical score from a wind instrument. Sound of crickets. Dogs barking. Poldo's heavy footsteps can be heard. Poldo curses at Dodong.</p>	<p>Dodong is clad in her evening dress. Her pageant sash dangles from her body. The street lamps dominantly illuminate the environment.</p>	<p>Wide shot. The camera is immobile. The focus doesn't follow Dodong and Poldo as they rush away from the frame.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

In the marketplace scene, the visual modes of set design show an abundant display of several knives and sharp objects in various sizes and forms (Chawdhury, 2015). The medium, fixed shot frames the space as Dodong and Poldo walk towards the store. (Table 3). Dodong picks up a small *bolo* knife from an array of knives and house tools. As Poldo takes notice of Dodong’s choice of tool, he picks up a *sundang*, a bigger machete knife, and demonstrates how it is bigger and sharper. Dodong hesitantly places the smaller knife back on the table as she observes Poldo turning the machete over and over in his grip, reiterating that the bigger and sharper the tool is, the more it suits “man’s work” (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:23:35). This exertion of boundaries serves to reify the prescription of gender binary (Seif, 2017) such that only those who subscribe to this system of masculinity and femininity can enter the space and those who do not should be expelled (Wieringa, 2012) or else, a “correctional” figure like the father interferes to make such a “correction” happen.

Table 3. Poldo brings Dodong to the market (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:22:58- 00:24:08).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Poldo brings Dodong to the town market, leading her to a store of knives, machetes and various house tools. Dodong picks up a small <i>bolo</i> knife from the array of tools. Poldo tells her the <i>bolo</i> knife is for “pansies” and that she should instead choose the sharper, long-bladed machete knife, which he refers to as the tool for “man’s work.”</p>	<p>Market ambience. In the background, a version of the Waray song <i>Tinidor Kutsara</i> plays from a radio.</p>	<p>There are several stalls in the market full of different local products such as weaved mats, brooms and knives. The lighting comes from a combination of daylight and lamps from the stores.</p>	<p>Full shot. Poldo and Dodong enter the frame from left. Both characters are positioned at the center.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

While the father serves as the disciplinary and “correctional” figure in familial spaces, the mother also fulfills her function by how the framework of heteronormativity in the household is imposed. Through proximal positioning of the characters, the performance of these parental roles are made visible, such as in the scene where the sick Dodong is attended by the two (Chawdhury, 2015). The foreground shows Lisa who assumes the role of the mother, bathing Dodong to cool down her fever, while at the background is Poldo idly watching over the two. The distance is made visible

by the foregrounding and backgrounding of the parents to emphasize the difference of their traditional roles – the man residing at the top-background of the frame, watching over as he embodies the tough policing figure; the woman residing at the bottom-foreground, caressing Dodong as she embodies the nurturing and caring figure (Table 4). This reinforces gender binary as a normative concept in the household setting, where the distinct borders of masculinity and femininity make for the only two acceptable and impassable categories (Seif, 2017).

Table 4. Lisa nurses Dodong as Poldo watches over (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:26:13-00:27:11).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Lisa nurses the sick Dodong as Poldo watches over from behind.	Ambient sound of the evening. Crickets and sea breeze can be heard.	Makeshift petrol lamps light the scene.	Full shot. The camera is immobile. The composition of the characters is triangular: Poldo takes the topmost position, towering over Lisa and Dodong.	Straight cut

The Public as Space for Othering

“Overt displays of conventional femininity” (Lim, 2016, p. 97) manifests in the opening scene of the film where Dodong, along with other contestants, compete in a pageant, where a number of visual modes are employed to glamorize the queer — wardrobe (undergarment and dresses in bright colors), hair (synthetic hair wigs), accessories (shimmering crown and hair clip) and make-up (false eyelashes and thick eyeliners) (Chawdhury, 2015). The kineikonic mode emphasizes the “nesting of modes” and how these modes work together in the meaning-making process (Burn, 2013). The aforementioned visual imports then need to be orchestrated in order for the kineikonic mode to figure - this is where the role of filming comes in by framing the visual modes in medium to extreme close-up shots. The frames are orchestrated in such a way that wardrobe and make-up is made salient in the spaces the queer occupies (Tables 5 and 6). The salience is further elaborated when the following shots distinguish the separation between the pageant stage (where the queer resides) and the audience area (where the spectators reside). This is again made possible by how contributory modes are orchestrated by framing devices. These devices include 1) spatial orientation such that the stage is elevated from the crowd, and 2) lighting such that the stage is illuminated, separating it from the darker zone of the audience (Table 7). This configuration of separate spaces makes possible

for the queer characters in drag—Dodong, the pageant host and the other contestants—become the subject of public gaze as viewed from the space of the crowd.

As the mode of filming and visual mode of production design play a huge role in elaborating these spaces, the mode of editing forwards these findings. The temporal aspect of the scene progresses as the order of cuts alternate the shots of the audience and those of the queer characters onstage. This becomes an editing device to seclude the queer from the crowd—the starting shot showing the queer characters from the side of the audience followed by a reverse shot showing the audience from the side of the queer. Reverse shots, when repeated over a period of time, make possible a sequence of shots where lines of sight or perspectives, both from the queer and from the crowd, are alternated so as to bring the film viewer to and from each side. The role of editing here then becomes an orchestrating function to mark a distinct line that separates the space of the queer from the crowd.

While it is made clear that the pageant night reifies the salience of queer characters glamoured for the spectacle, the morning after shows otherwise. This scene shows that visual modes can change in accordance to the temporal unit of the film—as the film progresses, modes can modify and thus allow for resignification over time. Here, Dodong walks slowly along a narrow street in the idyllic neighborhood the morning after the pageant (Table 8) (Chawdhury, 2015). The shot is slowly “pedding” (moving the camera vertically while maintaining the horizontal axis) down as it follows

Table 5. Dodong introduces herself as a contestant in the pageant (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:04:28-00:04:57).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Dodong, fronting the microphone, introduces herself.	A quirky musical scoring plays as Dodong speaks. Her voice has a subtle reverb as heard from the microphone.	Makeshift stage lights and flickering multi-colored disco lights illuminate Dodong onstage.	Medium close-up shot. The camera slowly pans right as Dodong speaks to the microphone.	Straight cut

Table 6. A contestant gets ready for the pageant (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:02:02-00:02:14).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	A pageant candidate gets her makeup done in preparation for the pageant.	A Waray song <i>Tinidor Kutsara</i> plays in the background.	Light is directly casted on the face of the character. Subject is placed on the lower left side of the frame.	Close-up shot	Straight cut

Table 7. The contestants present themselves onstage (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:03:52-00:04:16).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	The contestants make their way to the stage and take their places as they present themselves to the audience. Dodong walks up to the microphone.	A combination of audience and environment ambience can be heard. The crowd applauds for the contestants at the onset of a quirky musical scoring.	Light is densely focused onstage while the audience and the rest of the environment remains in the dark. The contestants are garbed in bright hues.	The shot pans right, as if surveying the whole environment of the event.	Straight cut

Dodong walking and moving closer to the shot. The orchestration is used to show the residents around her mocking the now filthy-looking Dodong—her hair has dried, the make-up smudged and the gown tainted with mud—entirely opposite to the glamour she has had in the pageant. This puts the queer character in a position of gaze, evident in the wide shot where the spatial layout situates Dodong in the center while the rest of the people on both sides call her out for being dirty. This reveals that in both scenes, despite the changes in visual modes (whether Dodong is glammed or not), she still receives the same “othering” treatment from her townsfolk. The stark contrast between the everyday and the spectacle does not guarantee the community’s *undoing* of the othering towards the queer.

Table 8. A disheveled Dodong walks along the street (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:11:36 - 00:12:17).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Dodong drags her feet as she walks down the street. A few characters, residents of the coastal community, poke fun at her but she seems to be drained of energy to care.	The sound of gentle waves from the nearby shore can be heard. A subdued musical scoring sets the tone of the scene.	Dodong’s dress is covered with dirt, her hair is frizzy and dry, and her makeup is smudged.	Wide shot. The camera vertically moves down in an unhurried manner until it settles down to an immobile shot.	Straight cut

The use of spatial orientation in the scenes where the queer navigates outside spaces is further made visible by how it is orchestrated by embodied modes. This is evident in the scene (Table 9) where Dodong’s mother takes her to the Ob-Gyn (obstetrician-gynecologist) center to confirm her pregnancy, the shot following the two characters, panning past a line of pregnant women waiting for their consultation (Chawdhury, 2015). The shot stops moving just as Dodong and her mother take the rightmost part of the frame, while the said group of women takes the opposite side. The frame uses spatial layout (right from left) to distinguish the space and border that

separates the queer and the women, which is then elaborated by embodied modes like the pregnant women bursting into laughter, apparent in their body movement and rapturous voices, while Dodong gestures meekly and remain silent. The shot then pans left as Dodong’s mother drags her out exiting the frame, with the remaining shot now only occupied by the group of women. These modes—filming of spatial layout and embodied modes of gesture—establish the bounded space of these women by exerting the process of “othering” while Dodong has traversed and “violated boundary and space” (Lim, 2016, p. 97): that Dodong, in her attempt at booking a consultation with the Ob-Gyn, can never be a true woman.

Table 9. Lisa takes Dodong to the Ob-Gyn center (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:31:53-00:32:31).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Lisa hurriedly drags Dodong to the door of the Ob-Gyn center as they walk past a line of women. She calls the attention of the doctor. The women burst into laughter. Head down, Lisa takes a few steps back and flees the center, dragging Dodong.</p>	<p>Rounds of laughter from the women.</p>	<p>Hues of yellow, orange, and light blue are splashed all over the set decor.</p>	<p>Camera tracks right upon the entrance of Dodong and Lisa, then halts as the two enter the door.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

Table 10. Dodong and Peter meet in the waters (Chawdhury, 2015, 01:01:33).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Dodong dips her body into the water. She faces straight-on right. A naked Peter emerges on the surface across her. Dodong is taken aback as she attempts to cover her naked body. Peter exits right.</p>	<p>A subdued musical scoring can be heard over the ambient sound of the wind and the waters. When Peter appears, a new score begins, superimposed over the first track.</p>	<p>The color grading resembles that of magenta, as if the landscape is alien-like.</p>	<p>Wide shot. The camera is immobile. There is an apparent distance between the two characters.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

The use of framing and embodied modes is further exemplified by the scene (Table 10) where Peter, (Dodong’s object of affection) suddenly surfaces from the waters where Dodong bathes (Chawdhury, 2015). The first shot shows the solitary Dodong half-submerged in the waters, where she remains in an idle fashion. When Peter appears all of a sudden opposite

Dodong, the latter backs off, immediately covering her chest area with her hands. The shot now shows the two situated on opposite sides, with a space between them occupied by nothing but water. The shot remains static as Peter finally exits the frame. The frame then is used as a device to display the space that sets them apart while the embodied modes (Dodong backing off and Peter exiting) are used to widen this space.

So far, the scenes that were established are those that show how orchestration and contributory modes work together to create ideological distance between the queer and these public spaces, as well as how they construct the idea of othering. However, in the last scene to be examined for this section, modes reveal how this distance and the ideological boundaries that maintain this distance can be challenged.

In the months leading to Dodong’s labor, the tension in the values of the townspeople has destabilized their long-held, heteronormative views as they come to witness the seemingly outlandish pregnancy of the queer (Chawdhury, 2015). This culminates at the point where Dodong exclaims in pain, signaling she is about to deliver her baby. When she is brought outside the house for her to be taken to the emergency vehicle (Table 11), the wide panning shot shows a flock of men and women scrambling towards Dodong. The embodied mode of gesture apparent in the crowd lifting her body now illustrates the absence of distancing in the frame. There is no more apparent division between the two spaces, such that there has become a single space now shared by the queer and the public.

Table 11. Frantic devotees carry Dodong as her labor begins (Chawdhury, 2015, 01:21:08 - 01:21:45).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	A crowd of frantic devotees carries Dodong as she is about to go into labor.	A suspenseful track heightens the tension of the scene. The clamor from the crowd is palpable.	Members of the crowd are clad in various shades of pink.	Full shot. The camera pans left at the first half of the shot and pans right at the second half as it follows Dodong.	Straight cut

The kineikonic mode reveals the contestation in these spaces – their notions on heterosexuality force them to otherize the queer and actively expel her from the boundaries of their space, yet their deep-rooted religious values reinterpret her pregnancy as an “immaculate conception” and thus, worthy of reverence. This tension exposes the “incoherence, instability and artificiality of social codes and discourses of sexuality” (Psarras, 2015, para. 2) because their decisions and values can be reconfigured. Since they cannot

accommodate the idea of the queer’s pregnancy as a normal phenomenon, they negotiate with their values to reinscribe such phenomenon as a divine intervention in the hopes of being consistent with their religious beliefs.

The Church as Space for Power Production

This section examines the use of modes in scenes that constitute the interactions between Dodong and the religious spaces where power production is central to their relationship. This starts with the emphasis of the social distance of the Church from ordinary members of the town. In the scene where Mercy, a rich matron and prominent member of the community, organizes a social gathering, the sequence opens with a wide shot of her living room where most of the guests are situated—eating, conversing, and interacting with one another (Chawdhury, 2015). However, overlaid in this shot is the auditory mode amplifying what seems to be a conversation of Mercy and a different set of guests. The scene jumps to a medium shot of the dining area, adjacent to the living room, revealing these guests to be important figures from the Church such as Sister Marlina and the town’s parish priest (Table 12). The visual modes of set design separate their table from the rest of the gathering through what appears to be a proscenium-like structure of the dining room (Table 13). Despite the background positioning of these characters in the frame, the camera is sharply focused on their set-up, suggesting that despite all the other guests’ presence in the shot, the religious figures become the objects of prominence.

Table 12. Mercy and the town priest converse over lunch (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:16:08-00:16:26).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Prominent members of the community are gathered around the table. They dive into the feast of food. Mercy and the town priest dominate the conversation.</p>	<p>A quirky soundtrack plays over the dialogue between Mercy and the town priest.</p>	<p>The table is abundant with food. Mercy is wearing jewelry. The expanse of the window fills most of the frame.</p>	<p>Full shot. Positioning and blocking are classically composed: the foreground, the subjects in focus, and the background.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

Table 13. A gathering is held in Mercy's residence (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:15:59-00:16:07).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>Visitors flock to the living area of Mercy's house. Some seated, some lining up for food.</p>	<p>A quirky soundtrack plays over the dialogue between Mercy and the town priest. The interactions among the visitors in the foreground are used as ambient sound.</p>	<p>Daylight from the door and the windows naturally diffuse through the shot. A proscenium-like border in the house separates the living area in the foreground and the dining area in the background.</p>	<p>Wide shot. Positioning and blocking is classically composed: the foreground, the subjects in focus, and the background.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

This prominence is further reinforced by scenes where the social space of the Church is physically configured as a structure: the parish. In the introductory scene of the chapel, the erect structure is shown in all its glory with a wide shot, the visual modes of its exterior emphasizing the structure's sturdy walls made of concrete hollow blocks. The gates of the parish are open so as to invite its goers to enter the space; the proscenium-like doorway recurs as the center of the shot leading to the altar where the parish priest stands (Table 14).

Table 14. The entrance of the parish (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:20:59-00:21:16).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	<p>The town priest stands upright. He addresses the parishioners, partially seen in the shot.</p>	<p>A church bell rings at the onset of the shot.</p>	<p>Iconographies of the Catholic church such as the modest altar of the parish and the crucifix are present.</p>	<p>Full shot. The door of the parish centrally frames the town priest. The lines of the gates, the floor, and the ceiling all lead to the town priest in focus.</p>	<p>Straight cut</p>

In the subsequent scene of the parish, orchestrating modes can be derived that reveals the positioning of the camera angle as integral to constructing ideologies of power (Dezheng, 2011). The priest is shot from a low camera angle i.e. above one's line of sight; the churchgoers from a high camera angle i.e. below one's line of sight. Drawing from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphors, this difference in orientation entails oppositional perspectives such that when a subject is positioned above one's line of sight, it ideologically affords the subject the possession of power. In simplest terms, these camera angles position the priest as a purveyor of power (Table 15) and the churchgoers at the receiving end of power.

Table 15. The town priest delivers his sermon (Chawdhury, 2015, 01:00:10-01:00:20).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Priest delivers his sermon.	Priest talks in a firm manner as he projects his voice. An ominous soundtrack plays in the background.	There's a slice of light that partially illuminates the priest and the crucifix behind him.	Medium shot. The camera is immobile but is slightly tilted up, placing the action of the subject on the lower half of the frame.	Straight cut

These two devices of orchestration—central framing and camera positioning—become discursive tools to enforce the space of the Church as an edifice of authority, where regulatory frames of society emanate from. The modes articulate the monolithic, unsurpassable normative territory of the Church that participates in the “constant process of expulsion and subjugation” (Bhatia, 2017, Chapter 3.3) of those who do not fall under the hegemonic heterosexual matrix. Consequentially, to situate the queer in this regulation of social spaces is to recognize its “linguistic sign of affirmation and resistance” (Butler, 1990), enabling the queer to construct tensions in the institutional fabric of hegemonic society.

When Dodong, now pregnant, enters the parish, she elicits reactions from the churchgoers as expressed through their embodied modes: the people sniggering and whispering to each other (Chawdhury, 2015). She, however, continues walking to her seat and listens to the homily despite being at the receiving end of gaze and mockery (Table 16). Dodong explicitly challenges the power afforded to the space by penetrating through these boundaries and injecting her own non-normative imports, her “doing” (Butler, 1990) of her *queerness*, to be performed across the space.

Table 16. Dodong enters the parish in the middle of the town priest’s sermon (Chawdhury, 2015, 00:59:49-01:00:10).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Dodong enters right in the middle of the sermon. Lisa gently assists Dodong as the latter caresses her baby bump. Their entrance startles the parishioners. People laugh in ridicule and scorn.	The priest delivers his sermon in the background. An ominous soundtrack can be heard.	The inside is dimly lit as most of the light only illuminates the exterior of the parish.	Full shot. The camera tracks right as it follows Dodong. It is slightly tilted down.	Straight cut

This is further elaborated when Sister Marlina confronts Dodong at Mercy’s residence in response to the rumored immaculate conception (Chawdhury, 2015). The editing arranges the straight cuts such that a shot solitarily frames Sister Marlina and another shot separately captures Dodong, as if their spaces are irreconcilable and can never be merged. Their respective shots are temporally alternated so as to appear as a sequence of distinct spaces, emphasizing the impossibility of “one-ness” in their values and practices. At the apex of the confrontation, Sister Marlina starts spattering holy water all over Dodong to embody an act of exorcizing to drive off what the Church believes to be a demonic possession (Tables 17 and 18). Upon learning that the townspeople now elevate the queer to a venerated position to accommodate their long-held values, hegemonic institutions like the Church now have to forcibly exert an opposite force to correct the queer and affirms its dominance in the maintenance of heteronormativity (Payuyo, 2012), akin to Butler’s “anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction” (Butler, 1993).

It is in this negotiation and resignification of boundaries within these spaces that reveal the “failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully legislate or contain their ideals” (Butler, 1993, p. 257) to which the queer agency draws from.

Table 17. Sister Marlina spatters holy water all over Dodong Chawdhury, 2015, 01:15:53-01:16:03)

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Sister Marlina execrates and spatters holy water all over Dodong.	Sister Marlina projects her voice.	Light is much brighter behind the subject.	Medium shot. The camera is immobile but is positioned in a much higher level than the subject so that the headroom becomes bigger than the usual profile shot.	Straight cut

Table 18. Dodong retaliates to Sister Marlina’s actions (Chawdhury, 2015, 01:15:45- 01:15:52).

Shot	Embodied Modes	Auditory Modes	Visual Modes	Filming	Editing
	Dodong mocks Sister Marlina's vilification and pronouncements. She then gives her a sarcastic, sharp stare.	Sister Marlina projects her voice in the background.	Common items in the house are shown in the frame. Dodong is clad in a light yellow dress.	Medium shot. The camera is immobile. Dodong is in the background while the rest of the characters are placed behind her.	Straight cut

Conclusion

The kineikonic mode, i.e. the nesting of orchestrating and contributory modes examined in Chawdhury's *Miss Bulalacao* (2015), becomes a discursive device to construct the spaces as bordered. In the scenes under scrutiny, the metamodal relations of the modes illustrate how these spaces exert normative boundaries, and in turn, demarcate these territories with heteronormativity, specifically in the spatio-temporal configurations of 1) the household's gender binary system, 2) the public's othering, and 3) the Church's power production.

However, the modes also become vessels for complex negotiations—the hegemonic spaces that legitimize Butler's "compulsory heterosexuality" are actively challenged by the queer's non-normative imports. Dodong trespasses these boundaries and reinscribes her queerness in the margins as a symbolic subversion of the "social and spatial domination in an ever-shifting, multiple-bordered milieu of hegemonic territories" (Allen, 1997, p. 22). In turn, the queer fulfills the promise of social space—at the very interstices of the household, the public and the Church, Dodong transforms these spaces as dense sites of social struggle. The film, thus, radically accords the queer with counter-hegemonic agency. What *Miss Bulalacao* ultimately succeeds at is its articulation of the emerging propositions of New Queer Cinema, both as a cultural movement and a theoretical possibility. Preeminently at the disposal of Western film criticism, the moments and happenings of this new critical lens must always be consciously reimagined when transcribed into the Global South's cinematic products.

This study set out to examine a full-length film under the kineikonic framework, a relatively new analytical tool in understanding moving images. The analysis assumes as a precursory investigation on how contemporary linguistic materials, like kineikonic texts, participate in meaning-making vis-a-vis social discourse. The prefatory nature of this paper has brought forth limitations in its exploration, which is largely informed by the seminal gender theory of Butler and the spatial thoughts of Soja and Lefebvre, especially that the academic intersections of queer and space can be primarily traced back to the academic territory of Anglo-American scholarship (Penney, 2014). Alert to the many possibilities brought by Burn's (2013) kineikonic mode, this paper warrants the need for further studies on the intersections of moving-image texts and gender in all its native and hybridized Philippine articulations and nuances, where kineikonic configurations of other social spaces, such as recreational areas, the workplace, and public transportations, continue to redefine notions of queer.

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