

SAMPLE→ DOCTORAL THESIS PROSPECTUS

The Promise of Monsters:

Representing the *Bakla* in Philippine Literature and Film

a. Introduction

In order to appreciate more fully the questions of what a decidedly Filipino gayness means, how it has been presented in both literary and visual texts over the years, and what effects such representations may have had on the way homosexuality is constellated within the social and cultural landscape, it is important to present both a conceptual history of the limited and limiting phenomenon of “homosexuality” as it is utilized in the Philippines, as well as the evolution of artistic artifacts that depict such a phenomenon. Indeed, there have been numerous strides made in the overall visibility of LGBTQ individuals in various aspects of Filipino life, as evidenced by the popularity of gay fashion and beauty icons such as Ricky Reyes, Joel Cruz, and Rajo Laurel; Vice Ganda and Boy Abunda in television; Charice Pempengco and Aiza Seguerra in music; Danton Remoto and Geraldine Roxas in politics; J. Neil Garcia and Martin Manalansan in critical theory; and Carlo Vergara and Noel Alumit in literature, to name a few.

And yet there remains a stark dissonance between the ubiquity of queerness on one hand, and the supposed tolerance it inspires on the other. For while queerness in the broadest sense of gender and sexual non-conformity has existed as a fact of life and as a recurring trope in artistic undertakings over the years, one field that remains largely underproblematized concerns the relationship between aesthetic representations of queerness and their critical theorizations within the evolving landscape of Philippine culture. That queerness—and in the more specific context of this dissertation, male homosexuality—has been an acknowledged fixture in Philippine society hints at a mutually constitutive, if fraught, relationship between queer cultural production and the ideation of social

paradigms and attitudes. For example, a movie like *The Super Parental Guardians* (2016) that stars flamboyantly gay celebrity Vice Ganda and which revolves around a plot where he who co-parents an orphan child with hunky leading man Coco Martin holds the record as the highest-grossing Filipino movie of all time with ticket sales of approximately \$16M CAD, even as recognition of same sex marital rights remains taboo and a distant reality.

That LGBTQ individuals and queer cultural artifacts thrive vibrantly in the mainstream seems contradictory to the backdrop of institutionalized prejudice that still exists against gender and sexual non-conformity. After all, the correlation between the rise in queer visibility and tolerant social attitudes, as evinced for example by the Pew survey, would suggest a degree of positive translatability in such areas as civil liberty. Yet powerful ideological discourses continue to frame the local imaginary and inhibit “progress”—if we take progress to mean quantifiable measures such as authentic social acceptance and equal protection of civil rights. While it would be convenient to conclude, given this discrepant reality, that the Pew survey results were simply erroneous because the ideologies that underlie paradigms are structurally absolute, to do so would be a gross oversimplification of the complex relationship between discourses of power and the possibilities of creative resistance that arise from both the production and consumption of countercultural materials. One such way to facilitate a generative inquiry into the limits of present understanding would be to look at points where ideology and creative modes of resistance either imbricate or unravel to configure the social reality of Filipino male homosexuals. To this end, this Comparative Literature dissertation will engage with select literary texts and feature films from the Philippines in order to address three broad goals: first, to present a critical appraisal of how narratives of Filipino male homosexuality are constructed and propagated in local material culture; second, to problematize the discursive value of queer material culture in relation to the dialectical processes that normalize certain attitudes and behaviours towards male homosexuals; and third, to broach possibilities where queer material culture can be reconfigured into a potentially transformative social framework.

b. Review of Literature and Film

There have been numerous recent artistic endeavours that have sought to explore the “gay” theme, most notably Danton Remoto’s *Ladlad* anthology of gay writings; Carlo Vergara’s massively popular graphic novel *Zsazsa Zaturannah*; and a slew of successful films such as *Pusong Mamon* (“Soft Hearts”, 1998), *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* (“The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros”, 2005), *Masahista* (“The Masseur”, 2005), *Daybreak* (2008), and *Die Beautiful* (2016). The pervasiveness of these figures and artistic artifacts seem to reinforce the results of the 2013 Pew Research Center survey (UNDP), which claims that as much as 73 percent of Filipino respondents believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society, ranking the Philippines the most tolerant Asian country among those polled.

While the research on homosexual groups by such scholars as Fenella Cannell, Michael Tan, Vicente Rafael, J. Neil Garcia, and Martin Manalansan IV have been groundbreaking both in scope and subject, these works are primarily anthropological and ethnographic in nature. It was not until the 1994 publication of *Ladlad*, an anthology co-edited by professors Danton Remoto and J. Neil Garcia, that there has been a work that styled itself as the first collection of gay writing in the Philippines. Even then, *Ladlad* was more a collection of diverse genre writings about the Filipino gay experience than a true anthology of gay literature: it neither engaged on a hermeneutics of the “gay narrative” that underlay the anthologized works, nor did it encompass the historical tradition that has touched on such a narrative. J. Neil Garcia’s more recent publications, such as *Philippine Gay Culture* (1996, 2009 3rd ed.) and his own edited anthology *Aura* (2012), employ a more historical method in curating literary texts. While these works have been seminal in bringing Philippine gay literature to the fore, there has yet to be a complementary research done on attendant yet perhaps more widely circulated and consumed media such as graphic novels, *komiks*, and films. Even Garcia, in his historicization of the gay theme in Philippine media, hardly scratches the surface in his analysis of movies starring Dolphy,

the undisputed king of comedy in the Philippines, who was widely known for making a career out of transvestic and homosexual character depictions that began with his 1954 film *Jack en Jill*. Recent films from the 1990s to early 2000s that run the gamut from neorealist dramas to erotica to campy musicals are merely mentioned in his bibliography, and there is as-yet a dearth on scholarship on seminal contemporary movies like *Die Beautiful* (2016).

Carlo Vergara's graphic novel *Zsazsa Zaturannah*, which depicts the fantastic transformation of a timid trans beautician into a ravishing female superheroine, landed into national bestseller and critics' lists everywhere and spawned various intermedia spinoffs, while murders of trans women were being reported in local news. Novels by foreign-based writers such as Jessica Hagedorn and Han Ong champion the experiences of diasporic gay characters despite the fact that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and immigrants who live openly gay lives abroad are condemned by family and friends back home for succumbing to "Western immorality".

In *The Will to Knowledge*, Michel Foucault discusses the existence of discourses that not only distort but also *extort* the truth by creating fields of contestation about the nature and meaning of embattled concepts such as sex and gender, all the while also instrumentalizing them as tools of oppression. Such discourses reflect the nature of power as

the *multiplicity* of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the *process* which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the *support* which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the *strategies* in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (Foucault 92-93, emphasis mine).

Foucault's characterization of discourses highlights the challenge in understanding how the dynamics of hegemony and counterhegemony manifest within a given context. When power is neither a nonsubjective institution nor an external force with a central point but rather is the very sphere where dialectics of resistances take place and are systematically reproduced, its ability to dominate becomes

anonymous, insidious, and ultimately totalizing. As long as power exists in the relationships of force that manifest in mechanisms of production, institutions, and social groups, there can also only be a plurality of disconcerted resistances that are mobile and transitory. Of central interest then in this dissertation are the potential ways that literary and cinematic artifacts inform, deploy, or challenge the discourses of power surrounding native conceptions of male homosexuality and Philippine gay culture.

As Michael Sepidoza Campos observes, this anxiety-driven aspect of the *bakla* rhetoric accomplishes two apparently contradictory things at the same time: it acquiesces to the prevailing gender binary of *babae/lalaki* (female/male) while also exposing the limitations of a two-gendered conceptualization of human sexuality. Campos asserts that

by melding the social roles allotted for both the *babae* and *lalaki*, the *bakla* serves as a conduit for self-location: the *babae* and the *lalaki* recognize who they are (and are not) through the *bakla*'s parody of femininity and rejection of masculinity. Correspondingly, the *bakla* grounds his own meaning upon this very binary that leaves him bereft of category, at least superficially (171).

Because of this bifurcation, the *bakla* finds his “sense of self entrenched in the process of transformation... [so he] must evolve, change, and accommodate... [because] selfhood and self-making is primarily about locating oneself in a circle of social relationships and obligations” (171). This cultural matrix constellates the *bakla* in a precarious position where it appears that the only way he can achieve social capital is either by giving up his *baklaness* and aligning himself with one gender or the other, or otherwise exposing himself as an “*alanganin*” forever doomed to live an inferior life of unrequited love and service for others, typically one's family or a “straight” male lover. This need—and the subsequently inevitable failure—to “evolve, change, or accommodate” has ultimately come to be the tragic rhetoric of *bakla* depictions.

c. Research Questions

What are the roles, uses, or functions of literature and film in the discourse on gender and sexuality in the Philippines? This question, broadly conceived, takes into account two artistic genres as sites of creation of queer material culture where prevailing ideologies and social attitudes are not only being reflected but also reproduced. For the purposes of this dissertation, the focus will primarily be on the narrative literary genres of the novel, short stories, and graphic novel/comics, as well as the genre of the live-action feature film. While there are other genres that are recognized locally such as the *awit* (song) and epic, the decision to focus on narrative fiction and feature films was based ultimately on three reasons: first, ease of access because of relatively mainstream availability; second, the fairly well-established tradition of production in these genres that carries on to the present day; and third, the conventional utilization of these genres in depicting queer narratives and themes. Having been introduced by Western colonizers (the novel by the Spanish and the others by the Americans), these genres serve as an important index of discursive shifts in historical and cultural narratives in the Philippines.

Underlying my foremost research question is a secondary theoretical one: Does the category “Filipino gay culture” make any sense within the nativist context of Filipino culture? While the category “gay” has a certain universalist connotation, that is, as a signifier for the collective identity of anatomically male individuals who are sexually oriented towards other “genital males”, its nativist usage is fraught with two underlying problems. First, this “teleology of identity” (Garcia, *Philippine Gay Culture*, 6) remains predominantly fragmentary, divided along the lines of distinction between the arguably Western notion of being “homosexual” or same-sex oriented, and the native category *bakla*, which began as denotative of a gender-transitive identity that is now understood in terms of the attendant comportments of the flaming, effeminate, and/or cross-dressing male who is only attracted to straight, masculine men. Indeed, to speak of a *bakla* falling in love or having relations with another

bakla is considered “cannibalism”. While arguably the defining characteristic of gay identity is the focus on sexual object choice or who one has sex with, in other allegedly antecedent forms such as in Latin American and Asian countries, participation in same-sex acts is not the crucial standard for being labeled homosexual or identifying as gay; rather, gender performance (acting masculine or feminine) and/or one’s role in the sex act (being the bottom vs. being the top) form the standard. In other words, while the Western understanding of homosexuality is framed along the axis of sexual orientation and thus cuts across sexes, the Philippine notion of “gayness” or male homosexuality is primarily viewed as a kind of gender inversion: that the *bakla* psyche is rooted in a liminal space characterized by the “bursting forth” of a feminine interior subjectivity out of a male body. The linguistic appropriation of the decidedly broad English word “gay” to refer to the very narrow *bakla* identity thus reveals an epistemological aporia that much of the existing academic and social discourse on gayness in the Philippines has sought to bridge either by loosely adopting the ultimately incommensurable terminology, or by completely glossing over the nuanced distinctions altogether.

The second challenge in trying to make sense of a Philippine gay culture is the definitional precept of culture as the proverbial thread that binds together an imagined community. Given the epistemological divide between *gay/bakla*, the idea of a singular “Philippine gay culture” becomes especially contentious. For while there exists in the Philippines rampant discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in general—as evidenced for example by the lack of legal safeguards to civil rights and the presence of continued social and institutional stigma against being queer—the male homosexual community has been further cleaved into those who fall within the *bakla* category, and those who do not. Compounding the problem of the numerous barriers that disincentivize queerness in the Philippines is the existence of hierarchies of marginalization within the LGBTQ community itself. While the Pew survey points to the prevalence of gay tolerance among Filipinos, this pertains almost exclusively to the ubiquity of the *bakla* in various dimensions of everyday life.

d. Critical Approach

Judith Butler's theory of performativity is widely considered as the one of the most productive frameworks for exposing hegemonic conceptions about gender and sexual identity as fictions. Performativity describes the nature of identity as being socially constructed and culturally scripted, generated and propped up by power through repeated enactment and transgression of norms. Following Foucault, Butler's conception of performativity presents material structures as sites of resistance by embodied agents, whose subjectivity become both the victims and agents of the sedimentation of power. The possibility of subjectivity therefore arises out of the dialectical relationship between power and agency, or in how a precarious self must constantly locate itself in the spectrum of mainstream identities and its marginalized alternatives.

Butler's performative thesis has gained traction for its exposure of gender as ultimately an artifice without an independent natural reality, and whose binary conceptions (correlated with two sexes) are arbitrarily created. Butler also exposes the severe limits to our freedom that prevent us from freely reinventing genders as we like; she instead posits that subversion and resistance can take place through an artful parody of those categories of gender that we recognize as socially rather than biologically constructed. These parodic performances, no matter how small, thus become occasions of exercising one's agency within a supremely oppressive and regulatory environment.

Taking Butler's theory enables us to see *bakla* identities in the Philippines as emblematic of the limitations of the gender binary. For while binary heterosexism is the norm in understanding gender, this is complicated in the Philippines where *bakla* individuals exist in a liminal space between the two genders and delineate heteronormative identities precisely by not being fully one or the other. Furthermore, her widely accepted claims—that (1) there exists no integral agent behind or prior to the social forces that produce the self, and that (2) the body itself is socially constructed—reinforce the

erasure any kind of contextual difference wherein gendered performances take place as inscribed in unique material and corporeal experiences.

In the context of local reality, the *bakla* hardly seems to parody gender much less gender's lack of depth. Instead, the cultural focus and privileging of the *kalooban* (literally inside, or interiority) has resulted in the delineation of the outside (less important) from the inside (more important) and rendered the *bakla*'s external actions—his gender performance—as consequential but less integral than his outflowing internal desires. Sandy Stone's observations about dysphoria in *A Posttranssexual Manifesto* best echo the tragedy of local understandings of *bakla* and their representations: the undercurrent of angst that permeates their struggles is born out of the struggle to “go from being unambiguous men, albeit unhappy men, to being unambiguous women. There is no territory between” (Stone 5). Stone's astute observations about the need to recognize emergent polyvocalities of lived experience, rooted in a view of the transsexual (and by extension, the *bakla*) as “embodied texts”, leads to an imperative not only about how *baklas* could reclaim their silenced voices but also about how such voices can be made to speak their narratives in art:

To deconstruct the necessity for ‘passing’ implies that transsexuals must take responsibility for all of their history, to begin to rearticulate their lives not as a series of erasures in the service of a species of feminism conceived from within a traditional frame, but as a political action begun by reappropriating difference and reclaiming the power of the refigured and reinscribed body. The disruptions of the old patterns of desire that the multiple dissonances of the transsexual body imply produce not an irreducible alterity but a myriad of alterities, whose unanticipated juxtapositions hold what Donna Haraway has called the promises of monsters—physicalities of constantly shifting figure and ground that exceed the frame of any possible representation. (Stone 14)

It is this self-reflexive intentionality, aware of its unique rootedness as well as its own destabilizing potential, which has been elided in the wholesale adoption of an almost mechanical view of performativity, and is arguably what needs to be recuperated and resemanticized in *bakla*-oriented material culture to make it truly representational, textual, and transformative.

e. Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Kalaw, Villa, and the Genesis of an Ideology

Chapter 1 of this dissertation will examine the works of Maximo Kalaw and José Garcia Villa, two seminal writers from the 1930s who offered the first literary textualizations of gender and sexuality in the Philippines. I argue that against the background of strong colonial influence, Kalaw's nationalistic reproductive heteronormativity and Villa's attempts at the transcendent sublimation of same-sex desire provided the epistemological bases for conceiving modern sexuality in the Philippines that delineated the genesis of gay culture in the Philippines.

Over the years that American hegemony was fostered and continuing to this day with their apparent neocolonial influence, Filipinos were socialized in Western modes of gender and sexual identity formation, a sexualization that was based on various discourses of public hygiene, psychosexual development, guidance and counseling, health education, civics, LGBT advocacy, and the AIDS epidemic. The bombardment of native communities with the organizational principle of heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy, buttressed by both psychiatric medicalization and cultural stigmatization, led to a problematic zombiefication of the category "gay": the "homosexualization" of the effeminate, gender-transitive man—as a genital male primarily defined by his desire for other genital males—effectively reduced a liminal non-somatic identity into that of a mere sexual dysfunction category.

The implication of this slippage becomes more apparent when discussed in relation to the works of Maximo Kalaw and José Garcia Villa during the period of American acculturation. Kalaw and Villa represent the two earliest conceptualizations of homosexuality in the Philippines, although it is arguably Kalaw's views on reproductive and national heterosexuality that has been more visible in the discourse on Filipino sexuality over the years. Because scholarship on Villa's works focused primarily on the formalism of his modernist poetics, his decidedly transcendent views on sexuality have been

largely overlooked by local critics. While Kalaw and Villa seem to be at odds with each other, in reality the effects of their conceptualizations on gender and sexuality within the local imaginary seem to have been profoundly reconciled.

One of the biggest challenges that LGBT communities face in the Philippines is the dominant influence that the Catholic Church exerts on every aspect of life. While the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines guarantees the separation of the Church and State, such a separation only exists nominally; for example, politicians and legislators usually come into power through some form of Church endorsement, and as such are usually compelled to employ “conscience voting” when it comes to political and legal matters. This mode of enfranchisement effectively dismantles political freedom and virtually disables activist and civil rights movements, which are usually seen as going against traditional conservative moral values. Indeed, the views of the Catholic Church have been conflated with much of the discourse of law in the Philippines, with official statements forming the backbone of many court decisions and legal articles. The Church stance is firm in that there can be no moral justification for any and all homosexual acts, insofar as those acts “lack an essential and indispensable finality” (*Persona Humana*). In short, even though the Church acknowledges the very basic human desire to engage in relationships that approximate the “life and love analogous to marriage”, homosexual relationships remain viewed as inevitably incomplete by virtue of being non-reproductive.

Chapter Two: *Katutubong Bahaghari*: The *Bakla* in the Artistic Imaginary

Chapter 2 of this dissertation will evaluate the mechanisms by which the sexological discourses introduced in the previous chapter manifest themselves in literary texts and feature films produced over the years. No discussion of the role that literature and film play in the discourse on gender and sexuality can avoid the corollary questions: what have conventional portrayals of *bakla* identity been like in Philippine literary texts and films, and what have the effects been of such portrayals in constructing local social views?

In this chapter, I argue that while Philippine literature and film have validated the existence of the *bakla* as evidenced by the ubiquitous representations of their everyday lives, the tenor of these cultural artifacts have primarily oscillated between romanticized allegories of heterosexual binarism on one hand, and marginalizing narratives of internalized abjection on the other. The institutionalization of this angst towards one's psychosocial bifurcations—the myriad ways that the Self is cloven—has in turn normalized the *bakla*'s hitherto transgressive hypervisibility and ironically led to their domestication within the social fabric. Finally, it is important to note that these overarching themes do not exist in mutually exclusive ways; rather, they form concentric arcs of narrative discourses that overlap and reinforce each other long after Kalaw and Villa's first forays into the field.

The mainstream depiction of the *bakla* really began to take off in the 1950s and the 1960s, with the release of a series of movies starring Dolphy (real name Rodolfo Quizon, the erstwhile King of Comedy) that focused on stereotypical *bakla* characters.

There is little doubt that Dolphy paved the way not just for other actors to utilize cross-dressing and gender-bending as a specific brand of comedic performance, but also for placing the *bakla* at the forefront of mainstream media. However, as this chapter will further discuss, while it can be argued that Dolphy's roles merely reflected the mores of a time when *baklaness* was pathologized and considered taboo, his portrayals also functioned to cement the *bakla* in the social psyche as a flamboyant, weak, and "somewhat-woman" figure. An analysis of Dolphy's *bakla* portrayals brings to light the problematic ways that these individuals have been stereotyped and therefore minoritized. For one, as a cisgender heterosexual man, Dolphy's portrayals could only approximate the struggles of *bakla* individuals and arguably even compounded their oppression through the unintentional whitewashing of actual *bakla* actors. Second, Dolphy's portrayals were also centered around the tropes of the "screaming gay" and the "happy-go-lucky poor man" (in most cases, the *bakla* was both), and which "equated gayness with abnormality and mindless frivolity on the one hand, and romanticized or deodorized poverty on the other" (qtd. in Geronimo). Even in two of his movies where he portrayed

baklas embroiled in serious, dramatic narratives, Dolphy's films perpetuate the liminality of *baklas* by conflating their status as "somewhat-women" with effeminacy, weakness, and inadequacy. For example, in "*Ang Tatay Kong Nanay*" (dir. Lino Brocka), he plays a *bakla* beautician named Coring who falls in love with Dennis, a ("straight") man who eventually leaves him for a cis woman, but who returns later to entrust his son Nonoy to Coring's care so he can pursue his dreams of entering the US Navy. Years later, Nonoy's biological mother Mariana resurfaces and uses Coring's *baklaness* as grounds to claim custody over the child. Meanwhile, in "*Markova: Comfort Gay*" (dir. Gil Portes), Dolphy plays the real-life persona of Walter Dempster, Jr., an aging *bakla* who was forced into sexual slavery by Japanese Imperial Forces during World War II. As a "comfort gay" whose day job was to be female impersonator, Markova was made to suffer even more hellish experiences than the Filipino women who were in the same position as he. Given the epistemological divide between the *bakla* and the "real man" whom he is sexually oriented, it can be argued that the motivation among Japanese soldiers to rape a *bakla* such as Markova is out of a displaced sense of dominance over the Filipino-as-feminized race, marking the *bakla*'s oppression not only as an allegory of sexual domination but also as a colonial one.

This undercurrent of reproductive heterosexism is often represented in *bakla*-oriented films in the guise of two tropes: first, as a sense of unrequited love for the "straight" man; and second, as a narrative of desire to be "fully female" or "fully male". It very much ties in to portrayals of the *bakla* as "*alanganin*", speaking to his social perception as being "neither here nor there", inculcating a night-irreconcilable sense of otherness, and fostering feelings of alienation and self-loathing.

The force of this rhetoric can be clearly seen in the most important *bakla*-oriented works produced over the years, some of which will be discussed here. For example, Edith Tiempo's trilogy of short stories "The Dam", "The Dimensions of Fear", and "The Chambers of the Sea" (1964), depict *bakla* desire through three middle-aged male bachelors haunted by existential anguish and social estrangement because of their "half-submerged...half-expressed" homosexual feelings. While

Tiempo's protagonists are not overtly *bakla*, Tiempo's skill at understatement points not only to their reined-in sexual repression but also the torment this causes: manifestations of an unacknowledged interiority (both by themselves and by others) that is always threatening to overflow and overwhelm, as suggested by the short story titles themselves.

Chapter 3: Queering the *Bakla*: Towards Resistance in Representation

Chapter 3 of this dissertation hopes to expand the research field further by investigating texts that broach possibilities of challenging canonical representations and readings of Filipino queer and *bakla*-oriented artifacts. This chapter will engage the questions: what alternative rhetorical devices, processes of textual production, and paradigms of cultural representation can and should be employed in local literature and film, and towards what end? I argue that a turn towards both postcolonial and postmodern modes of representation could yield a subversive recalibration of the hegemonic local discourses on gender, sexuality, and *bakla* identity. This can be done specifically through (1) the critical deployment of irony and parody to expose the problematic idealization of gender binaries, (2) the strategic recontextualization of Western gender theories as neocolonial ideologies within the local worldview, and (3) the advocacy of translocality in cultural production as both a practical and ethical way to bridge together the multiplicity of identities present in the Philippines.

R. Zamora Linmark's diasporic novel *Rolling the Rrrs* (1995), about a number of Filipino-American queers living in Hawaii during the homophobic and racist 70s; Carlo Vergara's immensely popular graphic novel *ZsaZsa Zaturannah* (2002), about a timid *bakla* beautician who encounters a magical stone and is transformed into a female superheroine; Kanakan Balintagos' "*Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros*" ("*The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros*", 2005), coming of age film about a young urban *bakla* torn between his love for his criminal family and the policeman tasked to catch them; and Jun Lana's critically-acclaimed 2016 film *Die Beautiful*, about a *bakla* who dies unexpectedly while competing in a beauty pageant.

f. Language Preparation

The literary texts and feature films that will serve as primary sources for this dissertation are split pretty evenly between Filipino (Tagalog) and English, the two official languages of the Philippines. While there are a number of texts written in other languages, the decision to utilize Filipino and English was based ultimately on my own fluency in both. In actuality, many of the texts to be discussed in this dissertation (especially the feature films) involve some form of code-switching or another, which is a manifestation of the fraught and diglossic coexistence of multiple languages in the Philippines. As I've discussed elsewhere (see Ylagan, "The Broken Word", *Inquire*), hierarchies of language exist in the Philippines, with Tagalog as an L (low) language that serves as the lingua franca, and English as the H (high language) of education, commerce, and academia. Taglish, a creolization of both languages, is the language used by majority of the population in everyday life, and which figures in many of the informal linguistic examples in the primary sources. Swardspeak or *baklese*, the local gay lingo or *bakla* argot, also appears prominently in these texts. Insofar as texts that need to be quoted are in Filipino / Taglish / swardspeak and there are no official translations, I shall endeavour to provide my own though this may prove challenging especially in the case of swardspeak, which is replete with local cultural referents. Finally, in order to discuss related (pre)colonial and socio-historical precedents, I will employ my reading knowledge of the Spanish language to three texts, Cristian Berco's *Jerarquías Sexuales, Estatus Público*; Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vazquez Garcia's '*Los Invisibles*': *A History of Male Homosexuality in Spain 1850-1939*; and Juan A. Herrero Brasas' (ed.) *Ética y activismo: Primera Plana, La Construcción de una cultura queer en España*, which trace the parallel development of queer identities in Spain, the Philippines' first colonizer.

g. Bibliography

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