Between the Walls: The Shanty in "Hellow, Soldier" from Lino Brocka's *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* (1974)

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"Hellow, Soldier" is the second episode in Lino Brocka's *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* (1974). It is set in the slums of post-war Manila and follows a young slum dweller named Gina who lives with her mother, Lucia, as they attempt to work out the knots in their internal and domestic conflict. This paper attempts to illustrate how the shanty reveals the characters' nature through their use of their space, which leads to crafting their identity and their perception of society. The study inquires: how does the shanty reflect the characters' self-identity? How do they shape the space in relation to their perception of society?

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Introduction

Dwelling spaces in the urban landscape have varying faces represented in film—from old residential districts to stringent gated communities, decaying apartments, condominium complexes and slum areas. Although the range of domestic settings evokes different meanings for the moviegoer, the films that resonate with the audience are those that bear a sense of authenticity, where the technical and production components do not merely serve as backdrops, but effectively project images of a character's life set in a familiar space and landscape.

Over time, changes and events like industrialization, calamities, and war drastically alter the face of the city. Following the Second World War, a nationalist film movement called "Italian neorealism" emerged. Laura Ruberto (2007) comments on how these films, which flourished from 1948 to 1952, highlighted stories of urban life along with a "political agenda invested in exploring (and on occasion offering solutions to) social problems of the contemporary moment" (p. 244). Neorealist films are typified by

the location, sometimes casting non-actors, and focusing on the poor and working class whose daily lives are confronted with discrimination and desperation (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010). Therefore, survival becomes the main goal of the characters. In the Philippines, the effects of the war were visible through the ruins of Manila, which became the stage for significant cultural and social changes depicted in films such as Lamberto Avellana's *Anak Dalita* (De Leon & Avellana, 1956), Eddie Romero's *Manila: Open City* (1968), and the gritty nooks and shady characters prowling the city in Ishmael Bernal's *Manila by Night* (or *City After Dark*, Monteverde & Bernal,1980).

The connection between film and architecture often points to the location choice and its design, but this notion can be one-dimensional. In this vein, Juhani Pallasmaa (2001) emphasizes how cinema and architecture can "create and mediate comprehensive images of life" (par. 4). As architectural spaces share structures in time and space with cinema, it may be argued that what is generated in the convergence of these two elements are representations of 'lived spaces' with varying connection to the inhabitants. In this line, this study inquires: how does the shanty reflect the characters' self-identity? How do they shape the space in relation to their perception of society? Using phenomenology in architecture as a framework, this paper examines the spatial dynamics inside the shanty in "Hellow, Soldier" from *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* (Brocka, 1974), where I intend to augment the exchange of meanings between the characters and the space by looking at the fixtures and selected corners of the shanty.

Lino Brocka's Realities

The city is a pervasive figure in cinema and Lino Brocka's body of work features the veiled and sometimes disconcerting images of the urban landscape. Mario Hernando (1993) writes of Brocka's "Golden Years" from 1974-1976, which were defined by films such as *Tinimbang Ka Nguni't Kulang* (1974), *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* (1974)**,** *Maynila, Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag* (1975) and *Insiang* (1976). Among these films, Patrick Campos (2011) states that *Maynila* was regarded as the "pioneer urban realist film" (p. 5) underlining the coarse surfaces and inhabitants of the city, in line with the stylistic orientation of neorealist films.

Brocka also sought "to identify the slum-dweller cinema-type" (Campos, 2011, p. 5) where the characters' lives are entwined with their socioeconomic condition. "Hellow, Soldier," the second episode in Brocka's *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* (1974), is among the classic examples of cinema promoting cultural consciousness. According to Justino Dormiendo (1976), Brocka believed that in representations of social realities in film, there had to be an organic

unity between form and content, in order to devalue biased assumptions that could lead to exploiting the audience's perception. Brocka drew on the distinctive characteristics of shantytowns—the shrill banter of its residents, where the languid and the active live alongside each other, the revving and honking of engines, scents of human, animal, and by-product wastes, the fragile but pleasant-looking walls, defaced public areas, even the mounting humidity and the dense spaces.

Poverty is a shared experience for Brocka, and the filmmaker's primary endeavor was to illustrate the plight of the common people, including the callous side of their personality. This held true for his thoughtful depiction of the oppressed, whose struggles are influenced by societal structures and with the insidious poverty in the country. It has been observed in Brocka's films, though, that "the kind of life that compounds the woes of Brocka's characters is of substandard quality" and that "the basic needs of humans are hardly satisfied" (Dormiendo,1976, p. 46). But the perceived mundane activities of the shantytown and its residents become relevant in depictions that go beyond the surface-level of living as disadvantaged members of society. Regardless of the stereotypical personae, Hernando (1993) asserts the mark of a well-crafted Brocka film, which:

> ... mirrors life in all its beauty and sadness. The characters are flesh-and-blood, the action and conflict real, reflecting experiences culled from life [...] The director examines personal relationships and how the environment and the other bigger forces shape the destiny of his characters. (p. 48)

The filmmaker manipulates the components of a film to suit his vision. However, the depiction of architectural spaces on film has certain limitations because of the camerawork, which tends to leave out some corners. One of the reasons why there are spaces which do not successfully draw out responses from the audience is that the camera's focus sometimes glosses over spatial components that make it appear much more authentic, in comparison to being perceived as merely a set. Recalling the *mise-en-scène*, one also has to pay attention to peripheral images as it provides a heightened sense of physical and spatial partaking. Transposed in film, architecture becomes an artificial object where one relies on the range of visuals in recognizing spaces.

Locating the Shantytown

As the city further expanded, the gloomy wartime atmosphere spilled over to the post-war years. The shattered landscape of Manila was set to be restored under the Philippine Rehabilitation Act of 1946, wherein the U.S. Philippine War Damage Commission received an appropriation of $400 million for private war-damage claims and allotted $120 million for the rebuilding of public property. However, in exchange for this extensive economic aid, the Philippines had to grant the United States and the American citizens parity rights to exploit the country's natural resources for their use ("The United States", 1956). One cannot claim that the capital did not benefit from their assistance, which jumpstarted the renewal of agriculture, business, and the restoration of buildings and facilities. However, Rodrigo Perez (1994) recounts how "hasty reconstruction resulted in makeshift structures with false fronts," describing how "the atrocities of war were followed by the atrocities of reconstruction" (p. 27). Moreover, the rapid population growth causes a haphazard approach to urban habitation. The changes in the urban landscape such as the advent of transients and high birth rate, among others, seemed to have reduced the value of decent dwelling spaces.

Urbanization has enticed more people from the rural areas who have been displaced by the war. They head to the capital hoping that Manila will provide for them, looking for employment and the improvement of their social and cultural consciousness. Often though, they find themselves living in bleak spaces. The city folk, on the other hand, go on exodus to less crowded areas where they build palatial new homes. Recalling the orientation in the Walled City, they put up similar high walls where they try to assert their spaces, to keep their own social circles and cultural values. Recent occupants move into the spaces formerly occupied by the privileged of Old Manila, either by converting them into partitioned quarters or by merely taking over the location.

The expansion of the city led to government efforts to provide low-cost housing projects for urban residents, but it proved unsuccessful as the high numbers of new residents overpowered such attempts. Cultural anthropologists Serena Nanda and Richard Warms (2009) note that "many of the urban poor are unemployed and face hunger, unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, facilities, and substandard shelter" (p. 323). In addition, "many of those who are employed fare little better and most migrants to cities live in poverty for many years" (Nanda & Warms, 2009, p. 323). In the process of migration, a personal transformation takes place as one must adapt to the demands of city living. In this line, connections are cultivated between the shantytown's inhabitants as they help each other out.

Shanties are commonly found along railroad tracks and seawalls, under the bridges, next to dump sites and *esteros* (estuaries), idle lands, government and private properties, even abandoned buildings. Perez (1994) labels the *barong-barong* (shanties) as the "architecture of poverty" (p. 69), which represents ingenuity and perseverance despite being located in pitiable locations. Despite the abject condition, these houses are manifestations of "brilliant creative energies" that have grown through the efforts of man (Dacanay, Hila & Perez, 1992). Shanties are largely built with a collage of materials found within their location—from discarded cardboards, rotting wood, iron and plastic sheets, *sawali* (woven split bamboo), usable mats and canvas, old engine batteries and tires. The main beams and posts of the shanties are constructed haphazardly, which are attached to each other by nails and lashing. Residents construct their homes on any available space, creating a one-room and a one-story structure, but some of these elevate into two-story houses. Households in slum communities can grow from 15 units to several hundreds, even thousands. Their houses tend to have at least 6-30 square meters of room, and given the limited space, there is little to no privacy. Slum communities are vulnerable to the threats of calamities such as storms, violence, conflagrations, and demolition teams, but the shanty constantly rises even when it is completely knocked down.

The persistent nature of the shanty echoes the spirit of the deprived citizens, in which the trial-and-error system opens numerous possibilities and discoveries. On the other hand, some residents tend to settle for what they can attain at the time. It can be inferred that the atmosphere in the shantytown and the living conditions eventually seep into the attitude of its inhabitants, as reflected in the film, where the location and the less-than-ideal mood become definitive features in the narrative. Rolando Tolentino (2013) posits:

> The affect is produced in the landscape of poverty that becomes the motivation for the characters to be alienated and confined in film and in the film narrative. Using actual locations of dump sites, seedy alleys and spaces in urban poor communities […] the film characters are made to dwell in the abyss of poverty […] where characters live in confined spaces and have very little room for social mobility. (p. 121)

The density of people contained in such limited spaces can go either way: a sense of community is forged between inhabitants or the constricting environment becomes a nuisance for the worn-out urban dweller.

Considering the legal standpoint, shanties indicate a breach in property rights while the socioeconomic stance sees shantytowns as a testimony to the unequal allocation of lands. In the film, the main characters additionally represent the lives of the people during a defining time — a period of rebuilding a nation and re-discovering a sense of identity. To this day, there is little improvement in providing adequate solutions to the predicaments of the city and these shantytowns stand as proof of government apathy.

Building Identity

We remember Henri Lefebvre (1992) suggesting that the urban space is a "social product"—a structure of social values and meanings which affects certain practices. One's views relate to other people's perception because of shared experiences. Various city-spaces become significant due to familiarity. In this vein, familiarity breeds attachment which alludes to the strength of memory: a palimpsest that is reinforced through places, images, mementos, even people. Treading on identity and experience, Jeremy Beaudry (2003) notes:

> Memory—autobiographical and collective, each integral to the other—exists as the foundation upon which meaning is built. Memory affords our connection to the world. Every aspect of experience becomes enveloped in the process of memory. (p. 3)

The accumulation of memories facilitates how we situate ourselves in a place and in this world. Looking at architecture, some of these recognizable spaces are imprinted in one's mind and contribute to a person's "place-attachment"—wherein sensitivity to a particular space becomes a key aspect in remembering and appreciating one's experiences. The home becomes a repository of experiences that have been accumulated over time. Moments become years, flashes of episodes turn into memories, and countless things are set aside as mementos. In between images and spaces, linking cinema and architecture, perhaps one of the most evocative types of structure in the urban landscape is the house—a subject recurrently explored by Finnish architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa (2011) who puts forward in *The Embodied Image: Imagination and Imagery in Architecture* that:

> Our relationship to the house also reflects characteristics of our personal histories, as we tend to search out the places where we have felt protected and happy and avoid situations that frightened us earlier in life. These experiences echo

> ageless experiences of safety, shelter, comfort and pleasure as well as the human relationship with the world at large. (p. 127)

Among the architectural spaces in the city, the house has an intimate touch, witnessing the journeys of its occupants who each have their own level of attachment to the space. Similarly, Clare Cooper-Marcus (1995) puts forward the importance of dwelling spaces as it reflects the occupants and the developmental course of habitation. More than the expanse of corners in one's home, meanings can also be ascribed to fixtures and furniture, wherein parts of the inhabitant's self become embedded, some literally keeping fragments of themselves. These components constitute the 'look' of a domestic space, which the occupants strive to make as comfortable as possible, evoking a sense of security. Therefore, the house can become a "symbol of the self" where one could gain insight regarding the influence of the physical environment on the relationships between inhabitants in the domestic space.

Looking at the filmic narrative as "phenomena" to expound on situations where architecture and cinema interact, this paper anchors on phenomenology (the study of the structures of experiences and consciousness) using the architectural phenomenology strain. Classical phenomenology focuses on the sensitivity and subjectivity of human discernment instead of relying on one's involuntary way of thinking, while architectural phenomenology seeks to present the experiential quality of built environments (Seamon, 2000). For the purposes of this study, I attempt to demonstrate the characters' rapport through the house. Juhani Pallasmaa's (1996) notion of multi-sensory experiences in cinema and in architecture is applied to augment the phenomena of shaping the space. Pallasmaa asserts that one of the primary tasks of architecture is "to reconstruct the experience of an undifferentiated interior world, in which we are not mere spectators, but to which we inseparably belong" (p. 25). Using the filmic house, this paper looks at how the shanty and its fixtures become a reflection of the occupants' persona to illustrate the dynamics within the shanty—between the inhabitants and their perception of society, between home and self-identity.

The Shanty as an Embodiment of the Self

The camera pans right—a sea of galvanized iron sheets under the shadows of commercial and industrial buildings in a non-specified area in Manila, where on the corner of Hilaga and Kapalaran streets, a shantytown wakes up: emaciated children sitting on porches, a grandmother tinkering with

a transistor radio, two boys transporting a container of vegetables, a man carrying jars of water and a woman with a basket of fish on her head. A man takes a bite out of his *siopao* as a sobbing toddler looks out of a window; dogs and cats forage for food. There are wet spots on the ground and patches of dry carabao grass. The heat of the morning sun is apparent with the thin shadows of the residents, and there is no wind picking up the loose earth. The people's bemused expressions expose the myriad worries they deal with everyday.

In the preceding sequence, the smooth pavement from the main street changes at the entrance to the shantytown, where the footpath becomes intermittent and rugged. In a film, pathways do not stop at the end of a frame but expands off-screen, waiting to be ventured into by the filmic body. The hidden spaces and the maze-like location stand as a marker in looking at urban slum communities, where the network of alleyways always return to the main street. The residents spend most of their time outside where exterior spaces function as a communal living room. The film's body enters one shanty, where a transistor radio plays "Wake Up, Little Susie" as the camera pans left, featuring a patchwork on the wooden walls: Elvis, The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and Karen Carpenter, among others. A girl is done fixing her hair and heads to their dining area. The girl, Gina (Hilda Koronel) enters the room for breakfast, while her mother, Lucia (Anita Linda) irons a stack of clothes.

Natural light enters the space, bathing the characters in a soft glow, in contrast to the harsh tone outside their shanty. Their dining room is devoid of any striking design—only well-kept wooden walls painted in white and a corroding window grill. Their table can easily fit four people and lacks any accessories. In this scene, the depth of space concurrently shows their neighbor preparing for the day, where a man similarly fixes himself in front of a wardrobe mirror. Despite the multitude of activities in the shantytown,

Figure 1. The shantytown's residents prepare for the day. (Left) Gina fixes herself in front of an offscreen mirror, and (right) converses with her mother Lucia over breakfast. (Source: Cinemanila, Inc., screengrabs by the author).

there are instances where neighbors mirror each others' realities. Some corners of shantytowns are composed of inhabitants from the same provinces, with the same jobs, or linked by personal association, and this generates close-knit alliances between individuals and households.

Gina and Lucia's house reflects their past and future prospects: to get out of their struggles and to aim for a more comfortable life. This state of mind illustrates a prime quality of a house, which for Gaston Bachelard (1994) is an "embodiment of dreams" (p. 15). Residences echo the status of its inhabitants, and while some homes are typified by the materials and the size of a house, others project a watered down version of how its occupants express themselves. Gina and Lucia reside in a shanty that is made with delicate walls, whose material signifies the fragility of their relationship. Some shared spaces in their home are managed by Gina, whose inclination towards America is evident, as nearly every inch of wall space in the living room is decorated with glossy photos of Hollywood stars. Echoing Pallasmaa (2011), we observe how the house is "an extension of our body, skin, senses and memory" (p. 53)—it is an expression of the self. The materiality of the domestic space is influenced by the person's means, where image crafting follows due to the choice of design. However, the dynamics within the domestic space falls in an abstract quality. By way of representing the self, the appearance of one's home project images that reveal their preferences. The scene exhibits how occupants express themselves, which can be seen in their behavior when other people are present.

Gina's father, Tom (Claude Wilson), a former G.I., has sent his correspondence to the girl and says that he will be visiting with his wife, Betty (Barbara Browne). Lucia corrects her by saying that they only came for Gina and prematurely excuses herself from the meeting. When Lucia relays to Gina that she will take out the curtains they hang up for Christmas to make their house look presentable, Gina replies that covering their walls with a gaudy drape will never make it any better. Their prickly interaction suggests how homeowners favor their visitors by showcasing the house in its best appearance, where the "better" looking side of the curtains' print faces the exterior and suggesting that other people's view of one's home is considered more important.

The following sequence show images of their shantytown. Gina walks through the uneven footpath, with a throng of kids playing and a crying baby on the pavement. The community's symphony greets the girl—agitated voices calling out to each others, feet scraping on the pavement, punctuated by the whirring of vehicle engines. There are more huts stacked upon each other, a labyrinth of corrugated iron sheets and wooden walls. People openly relieve themselves and one must watch out for the feces on the ground. The

area is characterized by odors such as sweat, the damp earth, and drying clothes.

As Gina approaches the street corner, Aling Gadang (Mely Mallari), her mother's friend, inquires about her father's visit, only to badge the girl about William, the G.I. who fathered her child. In a crowded environment, stories spread like wildfire. When she receives more questions about her father's visit, Gina irately leaves the group and maneuvers herself through a game of street basketball. The camera tracks, mirroring their movement, as Gina dodges the boys and scolds one of them for getting in her way. The girl leaves and waits for a ride at the street corner where Rudy (Bey Vito) greets her. Gina is not thrilled about the boy talking to her. Rudy asks Gina why she is always irritable, and she emphasizes that she is of different breed. The characters surrounding Gina are generally amiable towards her, but she constantly expresses her detachment from her neighbors in the shantytown.

The film shows another busy district in the city. From the arcaded pathway of a commercial building in Quiapo, the camera enters the office were Gina works as a typist. The scene switches to a wide shot of Quezon Hall, where Gina reads a gossip magazine under the shade of an acacia tree. A classmate invites her to see Susan Roces filming for a movie and Gina replies that she might go if it was Troy Donohue. Her classmate is exasperated with Gina's stubbornness and leaves. On her way home, Gina peruses the posters on a glass wall of a travel agency featuring American cities—Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In the two scenes, the girl's penchant for her American heritage is strong: idolizing Hollywood celebrities, listening to their music, yearning to travel to big cities and openly putting herself above her peers.

Night descends upon the shantytown and Gina arrives home, tired. The darkness signals the end of the day for most people, but their place remains active. Lights are turned on all over the community and the combined glow of their lamps and other sources of light help one in navigating the coarse pavement. More importantly, these lights guide the residents towards their homes. Gina sees the same baby sitting on the ground, far from her mother, Gadang, who is on their front porch with Lucia, eagerly discussing a character in the *komiks*. Shared activities are common among cordial neighbors. In the slums, personal entertainment is limited and most would engage and entertain themselves through each other's businesses. Gina reprimands the women for not doing anything the entire day, and the group disperses.

At this time of the day, the sounds of the shantytown are less raucous with the activities winding down, before they are replaced with nocturnal goings-on. Inside the shanty, the women prepare their dinner, and Gina

asks Lucia why the entire neighborhood is aware of Tom's forthcoming visit. Lucia maintains that they are like family to her, and Gina resolutely leaves herself out of that unit. Both Lucia and Gina express their detachment from each other's favored relationships, with the girl choosing to disconnect with the people in her neighborhood and Lucia separating herself from Gina's preferred kin. The two women curtail any conversation about their own relationship. Later that night, Gina shares how much she wants to leave the shantytown. Gina wants Lucia to help her talk to Tom in order to hasten her departure. Gina continues that their routine lives are a trap they cannot get out of, unless an opportunity presents itself. The most important thing for her is to go and live in the United States and never come back to the Philippines. Lucia appears to be supportive of her daughter's plan to leave the country, but is terrified of facing her greatest fear of living in the city without Gina. The girl's sentiment is a persistent view carried by society and has spilled over to the succeeding administrations, where going overseas supposedly guarantees a better life.

This sentiment is reinforced when Gina wakes up to the local news reporting the induction of US Vice-President Lyndon Johnson in 1963, succeeding the recently assassinated President, John F. Kennedy. Gina asks Lucia about this news, and the girl is visibly disturbed. Based on Gina's reaction, this automatic empathy for any major event in the U.S. is an enduring outlook. Gina changes the radio station, from Tiya Dely to The Cascades singing "Rhythm of the (Falling) Rain." Their kitchen-cum-dining room has few furnishings, save for a decorative *palaspas* (palm frond) turning brown. The mother and the daughter continue talking about the odds of the American couple taking her to the United States immediately. Lucia expresses that she can manage on her own and Gina should make a life for herself. The slums of Manila embody an idealized setting to illustrate the people's continuous struggle to rise from poverty and, in the film, from the effects of war. This concurrence with Kennedy's assassination and Johnson assuming the presidency thinly lead to the similar policies of the period which aimed to prioritize progress.

Gina and Lucia move to the living room, where photos of them hang alongside banners in red, white, and blue, and vintage chowder advertisements. Lucia takes out one of Gina's photos as a child and reminisces about her brown hair and fair skin—qualities which made Gina a Queen in one Maytime Santacruzan. The majority favor these characteristics, where this colonial mentality goes as far back as the Spanish colonial period, when *mestizas* and *mestizos* are deemed more attractive. Lucia's recollection of her daughter's childhood is an indication of her attachment to their happier days.

The inclination towards acquiring or occupying houses that remind us of security and ease indicate how the intangible quality of "home" is primarily recognized in the atmosphere. While homeliness is persistently changing, the sentiment is engraved in our perception of home, continuing to live in our memories and manifesting itself in situations where one examines a place for occupancy. Following the poignant recollection in the narrative, Gina is having none of it and leaves. The frame shows a perspiring Lucia sitting by her lonesome in a wooden bench, then getting up and opening a bottle of gin. On her way back, Gina bumps into one of Aling Gadang's children and screams at him for being careless. The boy's elder sister sees Gina reprimanding her brother and retaliates. Their encounter turns physical, and what seems to be the entire neighborhood flocks to the girls. In the nature of the slums, one must always stand up for him/herself to avoid getting walked all over.

The fight is broken up by Aling Gadang, who tells Gina that she cannot expect an ample amount of space in such a small area. Gina reacts disapprovingly and addresses the crowd as a nuisance in her life. Aling Gadang chastises her, and reminds Gina that in times of need, they are the ones who give a helping hand. Their exchange of words in this scene shows how even with the lack of space for privacy and movement, living in the slums creates a sense of community. The residents become protective of their area and their neighbors, whom they regard as extended members of their family.

Upset by this encounter, Gina locks herself in the bedroom and opens her suitcase containing most of her belongings, including Lucia's photos. One might expect that in their form of dwelling space, their equipment is also inadequate, but their furniture is significantly tidy and ample. Like cupboards, drawers and dressers imply openness to others and the self. Pallasmaa (1994) suggests how furniture can also serve as "hiding places for intimate secrets" (par. 50). Building on Pallasmaa's notion of furniture as secret-keepers, parts of a person's self are contained within these containers, where one's life is represented in items. Such equipment denotes one's territory. While other occupants are given permission to view certain possessions, there is a semblance of privacy. After a moment of solitude, Gina returns the photos inside and exits her room.

The girl hears boisterous laughter from the neighbor's porch, where she sees Lucia conversing with Mang Marcing (Dante Balois). Gina leads a drunken Lucia back into the house after reproaching Marcing about letting Lucia consume an entire bottle of gin before their guests arrive. The shanytown's landscape is featured in an extreme wide shot between Hilaga and Kapalaran streets, and Rudy guides an American couple to Gina's house.

The residents start announcing their arrival throughout the shantytown. An extensive feature of the cramped shantytown follows the crowd and the couple—mostly overhead shots and panning shots of the throng cramming themselves onto fences, porches, and concrete stairways to get a glimpse of their visitors.

Figure 2. The American couple arrives at the shantytown, (left) where the residents ogle at their visitors, (right) who seems to be disconcerted at the sight of the crowd. (Source: Cinemanila, Inc., screengrabs by the author).

Tom and his wife Betty are welcomed by a swarm of slum-dwellers screaming, *"Victory, Joe! G.I. Joe!"* (a prevalent wartime cry that persisted over the following decades). The presence of the American couple is a spectacle in the slums and Guy Debord's (1977) thesis comes to mind, remembering how "passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity" (thesis 4), as generalized images in society have supplanted relations between people. This is displayed by Aling Gadang's eagerness to ask Tom about the whereabouts of William, a fellow soldier during the war. Upon seeing Tom, Aling Gadang rushes to him, seemingly thinking that all former G.I.'s are in contact with each other. Tom confesses that he has not seen William since the war and leaves a persistent woman dragging her son, sired by an American soldier.

From this scene, we realize that the citizens from this period and social class continue to view the Americans (particularly American G.I.s) as their champions who can work out most of their problems. Despite the gradual departure of the Americans in other areas, there is a persistent mindset of them as saviors. Tom's nonchalant reply to Aling Gadang indicated a recurring situation for him. The couple appear to be disoriented by the number of people who came out to see them, but remain composed in the midst of the crowd, all the way to Gina and Lucia's doorstep. The destruction of Manila's architectural landmarks contributed to the erosion of the people's sense of identity. Identity can be crafted by the person in line with the environment that has shaped him/her. In turn, the identity

created by the individual is projected towards others, and by virtue of experiences, the "social character" presented for one's public life is created in pieces. Memories tend be in fragments rather than in whole, and one's characteristics are revealed in parts.

Gina hears the chanting and quickly asks a drunken Lucia to stay quiet inside her bedroom. Lucia's room has the same look as Gina's room, decorated with posters of American figures and the latticework near the ceiling separating the private space from the shared ones. The bedroom becomes a hiding place where a person conceals him/herself from the outside world. There are numerous areas which a person can consider his/her area, such as the kitchen, the porch, or a bedroom. But in a cramped space like the shanty, spaces are utilized simultaneously, with their boundaries collapsed to economize. For example, a family may have their meals in the kitchen while the living room primarily serves as a communal area for most of the day. At night, this space becomes a bedroom. In the film, when Gina opens the front door, her eagerness to welcome an opportunity becomes apparent. She sees a group of people on her porch, ogling at the American couple and tries to pacify the crowd. By screaming, she is able to pacify the spectators.

Gina invites Tom and Betty inside their shanty, and quickly closes the door on her neighbors, thereby shutting them out from her personal affairs. The amount of people on their porch is overwhelming for the inhabitant and her visitors, imagining how they are surrounded by potential intruders. In the scene, the exterior space (porch) is separated from their shanty's interior space through the door and the windows. Gina's actions—closing the windows and the front door—demonstrate her preference for privacy. Recalling Bachelard's (1994) notion that the "outside and inside form a dialectic of division [which] has the sharpness of *yes* and *no*" (p. 211), the act of opening indicates readiness while closing points to dismissal. The exterior of the house relates to one's social character—an openness to others while

Figure 3. Gina shuts out the public from her personal affairs by (left) closing their windows altogether and (right) forces the crowd on their porch to leave. (Source: Cinemanila, Inc., screengrabs by the author).

being subjected to views by non-members of the family. On the other hand, the interior indicates privacy with a more personal approach to interaction and a tranquil environment.

After closing the aforementioned fixtures, a semblance of peace and privacy takes over the space. Gina offers her sympathy about the assassination of President Kennedy, which the couple appreciates. This gesture continues to show her proclivity for events taking place in the United States. Tom interrogates Gina about her life and Lucia. Nervous, Gina asks to be excused and an argument ensues between Tom and his wife about having to take the girl in as a member of their family. Betty discloses how Tom controls their business and the frustration of not having a child. From the kitchen, Gina overhears their conversation and stalls in getting their snacks. When she returns, Tom continues to inquire about Lucia and Gina replies that her mother went to the province. In their movements, the divisions between the rooms create different personas: the kitchen reveals Gina's inquisitive nature while her welcoming character emerges in the living room. Betty discloses her plan of talking to Lucia about their departure, and her confrontation with Tom over his incessant need for control and information represents the causal rule of United States on itself and its former colonies. In addition, the authority of the male figure is reinforced by the woman's revelation that she is exasperated.

Tom gets up and recalls his experiences in the house. Looking around the space, he says that the shanty is older, but has not changed for the better. Homes of this orientation are predisposed to fast deterioration but its inhabitants try to make the house look decent, particularly when one has visitors. Tom sees the veranda and narrates that he passed out in that space back in 1945 and was taken in by Lucia and her mother, who nursed his hangover. After a raucous night with his platoon, Tom kept coming back to pursue Lucia, before leaving without a goodbye. He continues that it will take a lot for people like them to stay in a "rut" such as their shanty. Gina stands mute, watching her father go on. Hearing an off-putting response is an unpleasant situation for any inhabitant, as one imparts a part of him/herself in a domestic space.

Tom ends his monologue and in that moment of silence, Lucia knocks over the bottle of gin in her room. For the third time, Tom asks for Lucia and Gina finally admits to hiding her mother because she is drunk. Gina tries to set her parents apart by standing in between Tom and Lucia's bedroom door, but Tom barges in. Gina witnesses a nostalgic meeting between the former G.I. and Lucia, who is surprised by Tom's presence and greets him, "*Hellow, Soldier*" with the trio surrounded by faces of American icons on the thin walls. Gina attempts to calm down her mother, who is still in a

Figure 4. Lucia and Tom's reunion inside the former's bedroom, where (left) the visitors find the lady of the house inebriated, (right) which then incited her tirade against the former G.I. (Source: Cinemanila, Inc., screengrabs by the author).

drunken stupor. In this scene, Lucia's bedroom transforms from a private space into a communal one, functioning as a stage for the confrontation between Lucia and Tom, who reminisce about their first meeting. In Lucia's case, the bedroom is a central space where she can retreat. However, the high point in the film's narrative details an intrusion as she is in her most vulnerable state. Tom's act of forced entry illustrates the important role of the front door. According to Pallasmaa (2011):

> A door is simultaneously a sign to halt and an invitation to enter [...] opening a door is an intimate physical encounter between the house and the body, the body meets the mass, materiality and surface of the door, and the door handle, polished to a sheen by use through time, offers a welcoming and familiarising a handshake. (p. 131)

As a fixture, the door stands in between invitation and rejection. With the doorknob as a "handshake," a person has the choice to continue the venture or to walk away from a certain discovery. The door creates a distinction between two spaces and different memories. Exiting another room connotes a past memory while entering another space refers to acquiring another experience. Lucia's drunken tirade focuses on Tom and the Americans' sudden departure, leaving their whirlwind romances with local women. Jose Gutierrez III (2009) paints Lucia through the "mother as victim" figure caught in the oppressive nature of society, wherein the woman has no choice but to wait and weather the storms by herself should a man decides to leave her and the child. In this case, the man has no responsibility to explain himself regarding his departure. After a nostalgic exchange, Tom's wife enters and Lucia tries to talk to Betty, who is overwhelmed by the situation. Lucia's eyes widen at the presence of Tom's wife. In the spirit of hospitality,

Lucia offers Betty a glass of gin, then spills it on her. Immediately, Betty yells that she wants to leave and Tom reminds Gina to arrange her papers for her departure. As an inhabitant, Lucia is naturally protective of her space and when threatened, she openly throws out the couple.

The home represents the times spent in privacy, and daydreams trying to become a reality. But apart from its proverbial nature of offering protection, a domestic space connotes sentiments such as misery, isolation, and violence. These cannot be generalized, given that Gina and Lucia's standpoints as personal viewpoints are anchored on human experiences for which the characters stand as the audience's body in viewing the film. Instead of presenting the events using one of the character's viewpoints, the filmic body of "Hellow, Soldier" is an omniscient presence that witnesses Lucia's weak point and Gina's gentler side. Gina is devastated and confronts her mother about breaking her silence. The bedroom turns into a place of confessions and remembrances. Lucia admits that she does not want Gina to leave for the United States and the girl does not reply—an extended silence ringing between them. Following their argument, Lucia falls asleep, weakened by the combination of intoxication, verbal altercation, and ending up as a weeping mess. Lucia wakes up to an empty house during the night where the ringing silence in the shanty and the thought of being alone injects dread in her. Represented in this scene, the apparent stillness inside has left the space admittedly dull, yet pure in spirit, because of the cleansing that came with the confrontation. But the lack of echo extends her anxiety and consequently reinforces her fear that she might be living alone after all. The faint sounds of activities in their community do not tame her worries.

Thinking that her daughter has left her, Lucia calls for Gina. Covered in sweat and tears, she runs through the shantytown, past her neighbors gossiping on porches, children playing, and men drinking. The camera follows Lucia to sari-sari store as she asks for her daughter, then runs to the corner of Hilaga and Kapalaran, where the headlights of a passing jeepney confront her longing. Lucia weeps for Gina and is seemingly resigned to being alone, until one streetlight reveals a figure—it is Gina carrying a stack of laundry and conversing with Rudy. Lucia breaks down upon seeing her daughter. The night lights around the shantytown changes its tone, from somber to celebratory. In the face of their apparent detachment, Gina has a change of heart and decides to remain in their home, where she accepts her life with Lucia in the shantytown.

Between the Walls

Recalling this paper's inquiry: How does the shanty reflect the characters' self-identity? How do they shape the space in relation to their perception of

society? In the film, the gritty nature of the city is colored by the activities in the shantytown which fluctuates between varying levels of stress and forms of leisure. In addition, the lack of space between the houses creates labyrinthine pathways that weave in and out of their neighborhood.

Throughout the episode, Brocka's camerawork displays the texture of the shantytown and its residents, in which the landscape mirrors their personal and collective mindset—some being protective of their own spaces (like Gina's aggression) while others are receptive (in the case of Lucia). Despite the scarcity of spaces in the shanty, the interior of their house is uncluttered, in contrast to their tangled relationship. In addition, the medium shots create a semblance of ample areas in which we are not hemmed in by the rooms. On another note, close-ups function to capture the characters in moments where they come into terms with their fragility, battling resentment, and accepting their situation.

The slums of Manila are a rich backdrop for Brocka's films, echoing the apparent desolation felt by its inhabitants. On the other hand, the city expresses the plans and dreams of the ordinary Filipino even if their aspirations appear to be improbable at times. It can be inferred that there are limitations to their economic insight which can lead to a set of seemingly trivial problems, but when basic needs such as decent living conditions, food, and access to clean water are barely enough, one would not be too preoccupied with secondary worries. In the Philippines, poverty continues to be a massive crisis but people continue to be optimistic and the atmosphere of community remains strong.

In "*Hellow, Soldier,*" the shanty forges a bond that surpasses the basic need of providing shelter. Despite Lucia and Gina's largely strained interaction, the house acts as a mediator between the two. Their once fragile relationship has transcended the weakness contained in between the walls and their bond has improved. Place-attachment points to expressing the self in private and creating a social persona. In crafting self-identity, homes offer its residents a secure space to express themselves freely. Self-identity involves recognizing one's weak and strong points. The chaotic nature of the slums makes it challenging to find solitude and the smallness of spaces lessens the chances of an inhabitant finding privacy. But Gina and Lucia have their own corners to momentarily detach from the uncertainties of shared realities. Certain nooks allow one to withdraw the public self to open up the private self. These areas often witness cathartic moments—hearing one's thoughts, releasing emotions that one would not let others see, and silences, disclose significant meanings.

Inside the shanty are areas shaped by its inhabitants. Gina covers the walls of their living room with photos of American icons to underline

her projected reality while Lucia's prized possessions are her daughter's photos, a reminder of her greatest achievement. Later on, we see how Gina recognizes her mother's struggles in raising her independently by staying at their house, turning her back on the prospect of making a new life in America. On the other hand, Lucia confronts her fear of being left alone and gains the courage to deliver years of pent up anger to Tom, who deserted her. While the power to modify how to use the space depends on human involvement, transforming it involves changing parts of one's character. In the beginning, we see how the dilemmas of the shanty's inhabitants are largely personal and there is an apparent divide. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that Lucia and Gina have their own undeclared woes influenced by the tempestuous times.

From the view of an outsider, the shantytown's inhabitants are often generalized as being nonchalant about the larger societal issues that they are involved in. Others might seem oblivious, but they are directly affected by the changes. And, being deprived of basic necessities, they depend on ephemeral truths forwarded by supposedly considerate figures that appear when the time is most convenient. Any amount of cynicism might be of help for the slum residents instead of simply agreeing. Although quite mechanical in nature, the activities in the shantytown create an urban cadence that are composite images of memory and experiences that are prone to erasure as the shantytown and its inhabitants are constantly subjected to demolition and forced departure.

Postscript

"Hellow, Soldier" was initially aired as an episode in a television feature based on a stage play by Sr. Mary Angela Barrios. It was later adapted for the screen by Mario O'Hara in *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa*. The episode is centered on a G.I. baby and her mother living in a post-war slum community. In 1974, a young Hilda Koronel was commended for her portrayal of Gina, the stubborn daughter, while Anita Linda's role as the constantly-distressed Lucia won her a FAMAS Best Supporting Actress award. In a personal correspondence with the sprightly 90-year old actress, she shares that the episode was shot near the old lot of LVN studios in San Juan. At the time of the production, the area was a smattering of bungalows and clusters of shanties dotting the crescent-shaped neighborhood. This location is briefly seen when Gina walks through the shantytown, heading towards the main street where the slums' narrow pathways open into a spacious pavement. Another snippet is shown during the arrival of Tom and Barbara, wherein the shantytown residents announce their appearance.

As a location marker, Ms. Linda also recalls that there used to be an old cemetery in the area. In line with the production date of the film, the town of San Juan in 1974 was still part of the expansive Rizal province which extended to present-day Caloocan City, several parts of Mandaluyong, and Quezon City. When President Marcos ordered Presidential Decree No. 824 in November 1975, San Juan was excised from the province of Rizal and was incorporated as part of the National Capital Region. In June 2008, San Juan was raised from a municipality to a highly-urbanized city through Republic Act No. 9388.

While the appearance and the size of shanties are neither as grand as the mansions of old families nor as well-kept as most middle-class houses, these diminutive urban arrangements are still homes, where people return to get a respite and attain a semblance of peace. But marginalization continues to rear its ugly head and those who live in the slum communities are always vulnerable to relocation. Looking for a space to call their home in different corners of the unforgiving city continues to be a daunting task, but the ones who have decided to stay remain hopeful. As with other developing countries, poverty is a fact of life, where there are hardly any jobs for too many people.

Figure 5. (Left) The entrance to the shanytown in the film [Source: Cinemanila, Inc., screengrab by the author]. (Right) The location of the shantytown was in the vicinity of the old LVN studios on P. Tuazon Road in the city of San Juan [Author's Collection].

One can only surmise how the vista of the former community in San Juan looked in 1974. After 41 years, the entrance of the LVN studios stands in neglect — in peeling paint, surrounded by high-walled parking lots and commercial buildings in gaudy colors and kitschy designs. The homes of the middle-class have taken over this side of P. Tuazon Road, and more apartment complexes are being constructed in the area. As I stood in front of the decaying gate, vehicles kept rushing past and people walked by every now and then.

A sudden gust of air picked up a large amount of dust from the pavement and I looked at the lone statue of a cherub remaining in the property of the old LVN studios that stood through the years as a mute witness to the rapid changes in the landscape around it. At present, there is no trace of the shanytown in San Juan, the network of alleys leading to the cramped dwelling spaces has been levelled, the voices that once filled the shantytown have not been heard for decades, and its residents have long moved on to other places.

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