UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

COUNTER/PUBLIC:
THE POLITICS OF COMMITTED FILM IN THE PHILIPPINES

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA

by

Daniel Rudin

September 2021

The Dissertation of Daniel Rudin is approved:

_____
Professor Sharon Daniel, chair

_____
Professor Steve Anderson

_____
Professor Yiman Wang

_____
Associate Professor Steve McKay

_____
Peter Biehl
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 38-39. Right, Piolo Pascual, and left, Cris Aquino—ABS-CBN's stable of stars—figure prominently in this Lupang Hinirang version circa 2011. Still capture taken from *mychosdotcom* YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKZwCUTahxc.

ABSTRACT

Counter/Public: The Politics of Committed Film in the Philippines

Daniel Rudin

The "new cinema" was a loose film movement in the Philippines in the 1970s-80s known for combining nationalist and social themes with melodramatic form. Film scholarship in the Philippines has traditionally historicized the "new cinema" through an affirmative, national lens. More recent approaches problematize the nationalist frame through critical transnationalism, discourse analysis, cultural memory studies, and affect and genre theory. Yet, these studies overlook the ideological relation between cinema and the global Left. This dissertation emphasizes national cinema as a historically specific ideology. It situates the "new cinema" within shifting regimes of global capital accumulation through cinema's politicization—that is, in terms of political ideas and aesthetic conceptions on the Left. This *progressive* discourse was *committed* to the political and economic autonomy of the Philippine nation yet regarded the artist's freedom with ambivalence. The same ambivalence characterized the "new cinema's" opposition to Hollywood—with which it was always face-to-face. In this respect, national cinema was not an idée fixe but a battleground where the nation-state was both abettor and enemy.

This dissertation asks: what are the roots of debates on political art in the Philippines? What was at stake in the conflict between the "new cinema" and the filmmaking industry built by the preceding generation? What was the aesthetic self-understanding of independent filmmakers and collectives during democratization? After

the 1986 revolution, in what sense did the media cartel inherit the “new cinema’s” nationalist and pedagogical concerns? It concludes that while a nationalist self-understanding led to novel aesthetic results, a *progressive* narrative limited the “new cinema’s critical interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people, foremost to my committee. To Yiman Wang, Steve McKay, Steve Anderson, and last but not least, Sharon Daniel—thanks for all of your support, input, and time through the years. Thanks to my cohort in the Film & Digital Media (FDM) department at UC Santa Cruz—Aphid Stern, Isabelle Carbonelle, and Turo Pereira. I greatly appreciate the support of faculty and staff at FDM, particularly Jonathan Kahana, Jenny Horne, Shelly Stamp, Irene Gustafson, Warren Sack, and Rick Prelinger, L.S. Kim, Ruby Rich, Melanie Wylie, Rachel Grad, Tristan Carkeet, Chris Cain, Nicole Nolte, and Woody Carroll.

I would not have gotten much research done without support from the Cota-Robles Fellowship, the University of California Institute for Research in the Arts (UCIRA), and the Blum Center. A special thanks to the Fulbright US Student Grant and the Commission in the Philippines, particularly Leanne Malicdem, for facilitating an academic year's worth of fieldwork. Thanks also to the University of the Philippines Film Institute for acting as hosting, and to Rob Rownd, Patrick Campos, and Nick Deocampo in particular. I owe a good deal to Rose Roque for bringing AsiaVisions to my attention, introducing me to her research on political film, and connecting me to Joey Clemente, Jocua Cuaresma, and Bobby Roldan. Thanks to Simon Santos at Video 48, who was really the only supplier of 1970s-80s Philippine films worth mentioning. Thanks to the very accommodating Mary Del Pilar, Ferdie Torres Manalili, Julie Galino, JR Macatangay, and Leo Katigbak at ABS-CBN Film Archives. A special shout-out to Sonia Cenidoza at MOWELFUND for sorting through the archives for me and staying late to photocopy newspaper clippings. Ricky

Orellana shared a number of very helpful observations on the Philippine film industry, Surf Reyes organized a crazy rap session on art in the Film Gym, Rez Cortez gave a very interesting interview on working with Brocka, and Boy Vinarao provided a great inside perspective. Thanks to Mhel Acurin of the Philippine Film Archives, Teddy Co of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Bobby Garcia, Nathan Quimpo, Chito Delavega, Francisco Nemenzo, Randy David, Criselda Yabes, Fe Ramirez, and Jess Matubis, for generously giving of their time for interviews. A special thanks to Jim Libiran for helping me conceptualize the interview portion of the project, and Dong Robles and the team at the Center for People's Media for carrying it out—Jude Sia, Diana Navarro, Japs Descalso, EJ Parco, Jade Arguelles, Tonton Biona, and Irish Estallo. Thanks also to the rest of People's Media Advocacy Asia—Veronica Uy, Norman Grecia, Alwyn Alburo, and Wilson Fortaleza.

My intellectual positions are above all informed by discussions on Marxism and critical theory with Chris Cutrone, Spencer Leonard, and the Platypus Affiliated Society. I am greatly appreciative that this group continues to organize the conversation on the Left and would invite students to consider organizing a chapter on their campus.

A special thanks to my partner Candy Martinez for sharing the journey with me. Finally, I'd like to dedicate this work to my mother Joan Rudin, who may not have been much interested in the topic but who was a traveler at heart.

I. Introduction

Aesthetic Ambivalence

My interest in *committed* or political art flows from problems and obstacles encountered during personal experience. A sardonic comment from one mentor regarding my attitude summed it up. “Either you are a Marxist, or you are Jesus Christ,” he said as we stood in the gallery, discussing several of my multimedia artworks. On one wall played an advocacy documentary web series collaboratively created with a migrant labor rights organization. Opposite, a multimedia installation visualized the political economy of the gallery—which was constructed by migrant labor. The first project proved the measures taken to ensure my practice was ethical, giving something back—to improve the subjects' lives somehow. As befitting a “structural” analysis, the second enclosed its content in the hard aesthetic presentation of spatial montage.[1] Overall, the show reflected my ambivalence towards aesthetics—formalist didacticism on the one hand and handwringing about the content’s ethical dimensions on the other.

The exhibition was, nevertheless, a step forwards from previous projects. It allowed me to pull the components apart for consideration—art on one wall, politics on the other. I can look back on this moment as an attempt to grapple with an unmediated contradiction—an antinomy. I was honest in not belaboring a false synthesis but instead insisting the advocacy work be shown alongside but separate

[1] Daniel Rudin, “Negotiating Documentary Space,” (Austin: University of Texas), 2012.

from the art. From then on, the tension between politics and aesthetics articulated by my thesis exhibit remained—attenuated but unresolved.

Although unfamiliar with Mao Zedong Thought, the following question had overtaken my work: "Literature and art for whom?"[2] Bedeviled by my "Judaeo-Marxist" conscience, I was turning away from aesthetics towards a more conventional documentary. And with few options available, I seized the opportunity to work as a journalist in the Philippines. Despite this role, I fought for and was given enough leeway to tackle (limited) creative treatment. In due course, my coverage of labor strikes led to engagements with generation X remnants and breakaway groups from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP), various social democratic traditions, and a Manila-based arts advocacy organization. The activist outcome of these collaborations skewed to rigid conceptions of documentary—and ended with a split between the arts and labor organizations. Although this pushed the undigested legacy haunting my aesthetic unconscious to the fore, the meaning was not immediately evident.

The problem presented itself anew upon returning to the States. I was considering work as a stringer for an alternative news organization and auditing a course on Adorno. Apropos of the art/politics divide that continued to haunt me, I aborted my participation halfway through to work as a labor organizer. I then zig-zagged back to the academe, fixated on premonitions that were, however, not immediately digestible.

[2] Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong), *Talks at Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 10.

I was still active in the Philippines with the same labor contingent as before. On a whim, while on one solidarity trip, I applied to an academic conference at the University of the Philippines Film Institute. I had put together a muddled presentation on this solidarity work, which involved setting up a citizen journalism organization theoretically justified by Walter Benjamin's notion of the "operating writer." However, the actual flash of insight came from the keynote given by cultural historian Nicanor Tiongson—whose sanguine advice was for students to work in television—for they could raise the political and aesthetic consciousness of the public through even the medium of soap operas.[3]

After the lecture, I encountered a young artist named John Torres muttering and shaking his head. It was evident Torres disputed Tiongson's line of thought.[4] I also had the good fortune of encountering Rose Roque, who was concluding a thesis on Philippine activist film collectives of the 1980s. Through her research on these collectives and their politics (all tackled in chapter three), I gathered a more affirmative account of Tiongson's perspective, as well as his relationship to the Philippine "new cinema" (1970s-80s).

Thanks to the discursive space of the Ph.D. program and motivated by the folklore passed on by activists and filmmakers, frustrations encountered by my

[3] A not entirely dissimilar "rescue" of popular culture is offered by Fredric Jameson, as containing seeds of both degradation and utopia—the latter he equates with "the ineradicable drive towards collectivity." See "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," Social Text , Winter, 1979, No. 1 (Winter, 1979): 130-148. In the following pages, Adorno's central point—that "aspects of collectivity" hide "facades of something that is in truth quite reactionary"—will be upheld. This is spelled out in Adorno's correspondence with Benjamin—art is dialectical as a function of history. "Low" art contains both fantasy and fantasy's disenchantment, while "high" art is interpenetrated with technicality and planning. Theodor Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1980), 125.

[4] I was later to discover from Patrick Campos' writings that such debates *were* happening at the Cinemalaya congresses, but at an apparently inconclusive manner; also, as the following chapters of this dissertation details, that the debates there had already been hashed out in the 1980s (With Nick Deocampo and Lito Tiongson, for instance), 1970s (the cultural policy debates) and 1960s (the "cultural turn").

continued art activism, and the afore-mentioned UP Diliman conference, I began to investigate the history of the "new cinema" in the Philippines. This dissertation is not an exhaustive account of the art criticism battles playing out at that time. Such a history is necessary, although perhaps impossible to reconstruct—as that "history" was focused on influencing the industry through review columns and yearly awards, rather than criticism per se. Instead, this study will analyze several of these debates in relation to the global Left to (hopefully) clarify ramifications for aesthetic practice and criticism today.

Research Methodology

This dissertation follows two articulations—academic writing surveying primary and secondary texts in the field and a parallel interactive documentary and "social history." The latter consists of conversations with twenty-five cultural producers and political participants active during Philippine democratization. Said conversations thoroughly explore the subject's involvement, motivations, and ideas and were carefully lit and filmed with two cameras. The outcome falls outside strict boundaries of engagement and documentation used in social history. Instead, the experience was a familiar re-tread of issues accompanying documentary—an openness to collaboration and ideas proposed by the subject while questioning the subject's truth claims, aesthetic construction, etc.

This "social history" runs parallel to the scholarly text that you, the reader, are presently reading. At times, anecdotes gleaned from the interviews will peek through the text in block quotes or footnotes or are placed in dialogue with it. I see this approach as operant in the manner described by production studies pioneer John

Caldwell—who places different "research modes" of analysis (oral interviews, archival materials, and a political-economic analysis) "in critical tension or dialogue" with one another. Caldwell describes this method as one of "cross-checking" research findings in one "mode" by those of another and as a way of synthesizing "micro-sociological" and "macro-sociological" findings.[5]

While multimodal in Caldwell's sense, the research differs in certain respects. I was not "inside" the film industry. While cordially received at the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation (MOWELFUND) and fortunate enough to interview an actor and editor involved in several films, I could not talk with production crew as planned. It was instead MOWELFUND's archive of film clippings that supported my hypothesis that there was a generational antagonism between the "new cinema" directors and the 1960s artist-producers who dominated the industry (see chapter two). Additional informants were selected from the archival sector and the burgeoning 1980s "independent" film movements (as discussed in chapter three). This research mapped out a very fragmented and politicized terrain.

[5] John Thorton Caldwell, ""Both Sides of the Fence": Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production (a Portfolio of Interviews)," in *Production Culture* (New York: Routledge), 4-5.

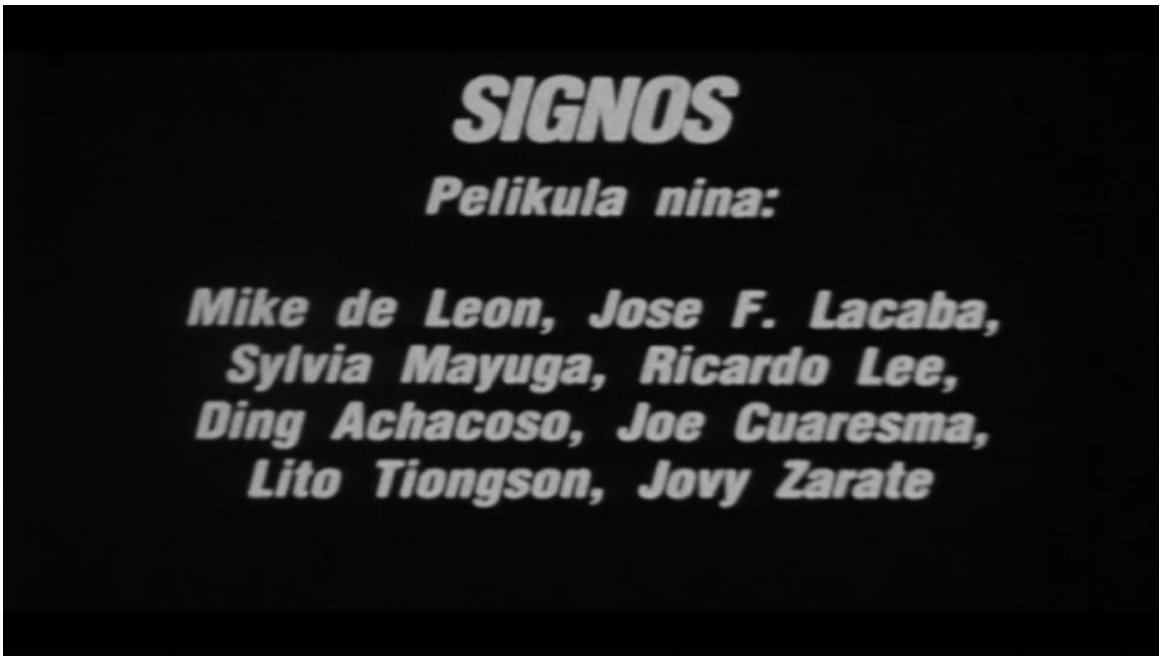

Figure 1. Title card of *Signos* (1984), which was used as an aesthetic and research "map" to locate creators. Still capture from a digital file uploaded by the artist to Vimeo.

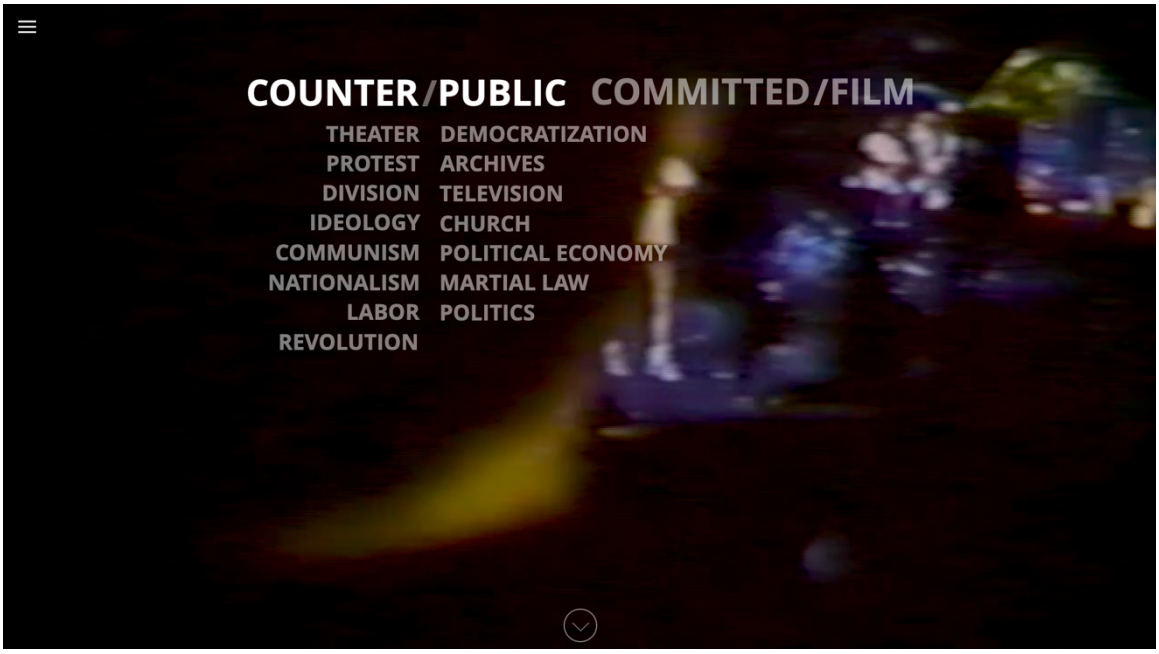

Figure 2. Figure Screenshot of interactive documentary. Still capture by author.

Two cultural "artefacts" proved immensely helpful in drawing this map into focus—cultural historian Nicanor Tiongson's monograph *The Politics of Culture* (addressed in greater detail in chapter one) and "new cinema" director Mike de

Leon's Super-8 film *Signos* (addressed in chapter three); the title still (above) of was used to locate several interviewees. Using personal networks and civil society organizations like MOWELFUND, other informants were selected to explore public spheres spanning cinema, labor, activism, journalism, television, and archives.

Primary texts and interviews from these sources were often conflicting and contradictory—raising specific difficulties for constructing an online, archival social history. Some former activists rejected their prior support of Cory Aquino. The anti-Marcos camp divided along Cory Aquino and Left lines; the Left camp divided into RJ (Rejectionist) and RA (Reaffirmist) camps. The "new cinema" was divided between adherents of Mike de Leon and Lino Brocka devotees. At the same time, the independent film movement was split between hard *commitment* and the more experimental approach of the MOWELFUND Film Institute. An account of these divisions and fractures could constitute a chapter alone.

I began experimenting with different ways of using these oral accounts to put the past into tension with the present, and in so doing drew upon several theories. One was Allan Sekula's argument for combining a materialist cultural history[6] with montage.[7] Another was Steve Anderson's notion of *database histories*—an alternative to digital historiographies that, instead of historicizing the past,[8] use database and search engine to construct a more flexible, reflexive, and participatory

[6] Unfortunately, Allan Sekula's call for a history of archives "from below," emphasizes "solidarity" while setting aside the question of aesthetics—that aesthetic experience itself might be self-contradictory. See Allan Sekula, "Reading an archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *The Photography Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 451.
7 Sekula, "Reading an archive," 443-444.
[8] In Nietzschean terms, this would be "monumental history."

digital archive.[9] A third was borrowed from Sharon Daniel, who envisions interface design as “argument” and user interaction and navigation as “inquiry.” Through an almost iconoclastic approach (in lieu of performative alienation effects), [10] Daniel’s practice attempts to challenge[11] the viewer’s assumptions about narrative construction[12] while foregrounding contradictions between politics and aesthetics.[13]

To synthesize Sekula, Anderson, and Daniel’s approaches (*materialist cultural history of archives, database histories, and interface metaphors*), I needed to develop a method that publishes the informant interviews (here, in the form of a "social history" integrated into and standing alongside the documentary) for a viewer who either reconstructs my research process for themselves or—if they prefer—perform their own research. The result is an interactive documentary resembling a dual-image montage machine, primed to select an archive of short video clips, already cut to what Florian Thalhofer calls the Single Narrative Unit.[14] The clips were taken from the videotaped social history and coded with categories identified through a qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts (using f4analysize), revealing patterns and topics that may not otherwise have surfaced. These codes became the “script” for short (thirty seconds to two minutes) edits organized in dual clusters under the

[9] Steve Anderson, *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth University Press, 2011), 162. See also Steve Anderson, "Critical Interfaces and Digital Making," *Visible Language*, Volume 49, Issue 3 (December 2015): 120-139.
[10] Films like *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Arbor* (2010) use evidence-driven approaches that tend to obscure political/aesthetic contradictions, and conceal the relationship between artist and subject, ultimately reducing complex social problems to ethical injunctions.
[11] Or reframing—see Daniel's discussion on De Certeau and the "distribution of the sensible," 2012.
[12] Examples that shall inform my own approach include Daniel's *Blood Sugar* (2010) and *Public Secrets* (2008), as well as *Love Radio* (2014), *I Love Your Work* (2013), *Gaza/Sderot* (2009), *Planet Galeta* (2010), and Steve Anderson's *Difference Analyzer* (2015).
[13] This wrenches the anecdotal, spoken word apart from its visual documentation (i.e. mise-en-scéne), building an interface out of what is said, rather than seen. Examples include the disembodied interview combined with a spatial metaphor, such as "box" or "wall" in *Public Secrets* and sound waves or "needles" in *Blood Sugar*. See Sharon Daniel 2012. See also Onwezor “Documentary/Verité," 2004.
[14] Florian Thalhofer is the creator of Korsakow—an interactive database editing system.

categories *Counter/Public* and *Committed/Film*, implying internal opposition and possible contradiction.[15]

The interface is not recombinant in Anderson's sense; instead, specific anecdotal claims were taken, edited down into soundbites, and put into tension with the claims of other interviewees. Much like Emil De Antonio's editing strategy, this "makes it clear that no one witness tells the whole truth."[16] The argument is reconstructed by the force of editing these "Single Narrative Units" together, subjecting the social history to multiple and even contradictory points of view; two interviewees' contrasting statements on specific film and political topics are tightly intercut. The final output utilizes the interactive software Klynt. The long-form interviews are embedded on a drop-down menu in the interface and link to a YouTube channel; this allows independent browsing or sharing on social media.

The "New Cinema"—Culture and Industry

The accounts of tensions between art and politics emerging out of this project's multimodal research illuminated my own "aesthetic ambivalence," precisely because the accounts were far more cogent and expansive than my own. Yet the over-arching problems were the same—attempting political art without succumbing to aesthetic formula and working through a past that asserts itself on the present. I discovered both problems were core to the "new cinema" in the Philippines, which

[15] The concept resembles Steve Anderson's *difference analyzer*, as well as the internet documentary *Love Radio*. The "difference analyzer" is a tool allowing scholars to compare two clips from different films in synchronized playback. *Love Radio* displays the diegesis of a "live" radio show on one hand, and verité footage of the surrounding town on the other.
[16] Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," in *The Documentary Film Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 646.

sought to break with the cinematic cliches of the ostensibly crass and commercial films produced in the 1960s[17]—and in so doing, raise the consciousness of viewers.

This dissertation locates the ideological origins of said "consciousness-raising" in a Left-centric "progressivism." In the Left's historiographic imagination, the progress of the national film industry followed a linear march towards a better representation of Filipino experience and identity. This progressivism corresponds to earlier ideological concerns, particularly a *committed* attitude towards political art originating in the 1920s-30s global Left. Re-emergent in the student movements of the late 1960s, *commitment* stressed the self-transformation of the *citizen-artist*—progress towards psychological decolonization, which was interrupted by identification with an overpowering American culture. The 1950s were seen as Filipino cinema's "golden age" because of the nationalist themes and industry's self-sufficiency. In comparison, 1960s films *mirrored* Hollywood, expressing a dependency on American products, filmic approaches, and themes. In this respect, "new cinema" artists upheld the 1950s economic nationalism while grasping at a language of aesthetic layering (old and new)—precisely when Marcos was attempting his developmental experiments (a sort of Fordist politics in extremis).

An affinity emerged between progressive nationalist critics and the nation-state. Ferdinand Marcos' regime (1972-1986)—for which most of the "new cinema" artists at one time or another worked—was equally committed to cultural progress. As the progressives attempted to mold Philippine cinema through awards and showbiz movie reviews,[18] the film industry became increasingly sheltered by the

[17] Aruna Vasudev, "Ishmael Bernal: Cast in Another Mould," *Cinemaya* 27 (Spring 1995): 17-18.
[18] Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 2018), 89.

state. As the regime declined and when opposition consolidated around Cory Aquino, rifts appeared in the film industry's government and civil-social bodies. The 1986 People Power revolution marked the end of national cinema's state "armature"—for which support was withdrawn.

While the "movement"—if the "new cinema" can be so-called—collapsed, its activist orientation became rigidified as exemplary cultural resistance and an object of national veneration. Filmic nationalism was thereafter sustained and mediated in an even more broad-based manner by television cartels. In keeping with the ideals of democratization, this nationalism was ostensibly separate from the state—which, however, it worked to undermine (discussed in chapter four). Meanwhile, while national cinema as such had all but vanished, it was discursively ensconced in the academe,[19] making a comeback in the late 1990s digital "indie film" movement and Cinemalaya film festival (discussed in chapter three).

The Marcosian "armature" of national cinema has been addressed in various ways by contemporary film studies scholars—Roland Tolentino being the most prolific and Joel David the most incisive. At present, a more broad-based assessment of the "new cinema" is in the air, with three book-length monographs released since 2016. The most interesting of these is cultural historian Patrick Campos's *The End of National Cinema*—an investigation into cinema's national "ends." In a post-Cold War context, Campos asserts, national cinema remains an anachronistic yet dominant consideration. It is inferred that Tolentino's earlier theorizing of a "counterpublic"

[19] For an archeology of various discourses of national cinema, see Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2016), 216-274.

relation between Lino Brocka and Ferdinand Marcos echoes a dualistic Cold War frame.

An exchange at the 2019 University of the Philippines Film Institute (UPFI) Philippine Cinema Centennial Lecture Series illustrates this disagreement. During Campos's keynote, Tolentino pointedly queried, "How do you read history against the grain?" Campos responded he did so by charting a dialectics of discursive struggle. The following passage taken from his recent book clarifies this response:

> I can only articulate whatever it is that is new in Philippine cinema by looking to the past, not because of any perfunctory view of the value of history to what is contemporary, but because discourses reified in the past have continued to assert dominance in making sense of the now in cinema.[20]

For Campos, past notions of national cinema continue to exert a more or less deleterious effect. A space must be cleared for film studies (if not filmmaking) to develop beyond the national frame. Tolentino's challenge is to define historiographic method vis-a-vis Walter Benjamin. Does Campos take up a Marxist critique of culture, in sympathy with anonymous toilers—from below? For Campos, this critique—stressing cinema's relation to democratization, mass struggle, and mass identity—is precisely the reified discourse. Campos reads this "progressive" history of national cinema against the grain by asserting the rise of Southeast Asian regional cinema. This regional cinema emerged from "post-Cold War globality"—namely, regional integration "aided by Japanese investment" and the "security system" erected under the "Pax Americana."[21] The transformation of the nation-state renders cinematic legitimation (and the opposition to it) obsolete.

[20] Campos, *The End of National Cinema,* x.
[21] Campos, 11.

And yet, particularly when taking stock of national cinema, of greater import than these more recent and regional transformations are preceding historical and ideological shifts. This study argues that notions of national cinema are very much embedded in the economic nationalism of the 1950s. In this respect, national cinema's lingering ideological "armature" need not so much be confronted, as bypassed—returned to its concept. This requires grasping the historical shift within which the "new cinema" was embedded by revivifying earlier conversations.

Reading National Cinema Against the Grain

Benjamin's concept of regression is pivotal to this dissertation's analysis of national cinema's progressivist presuppositions. Benjamin read Stalinist progressivism against the grain—which, instead of assessing defeats in the 1920s and the collapse of historical consciousness and criticism immanent to both the Left and capitalism's (temporal) contradictions,[22] upheld a contorted and self-justifying logic. If Stalinism proclaimed (in part, through art) capitalism socialized production, thereby advancing and fomenting communism, for Benjamin, capitalism was a destructive, eternal return to the same bourgeois political horizon. Grasping the future meant recovering uncomplete tasks of freedom. However, these tasks were opaque, rendering history a non-linear, repetitive, regressive, and accumulating wreckage.[23]

Following Benjamin, this dissertation reads "progressive" history *against the grain* by remediating period films, primary literature, and the "informant interviews"

[22] In this past, radical bourgeois philosophy posed a critique immanent to society in history, on the basis of possibility for change. Marx—and the Second International radicals Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky—applied this immanent critique to socialism as the highest form of bourgeois radicalism.
[23] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations (New York: Shocken Books, 2007), 262.

mentioned above through area studies, contemporary film studies debates, and an interactive documentary. As mentioned above, the initial approach was motivated by Allan Sekula's materialist cultural history. In this view, archives are tools of knowledge and power,[30] and mediators of historical antinomies.[31] Sekula's framework corresponds to recent discussions in cultural memory studies—namely, Lisandro Claudio's claim that current discourse is driven by a memory politics dubbed the *People Power narrative.* For Claudio, the revolution's coalitional politics were scarcely characterized by ideology or even solid organization. Claudio argues that protest, cinema, and the mass media define how the past is interpreted by *entangling* "concepts of the nation" with "official" discourses and individual memories. The product is a mnemonic politics presently unifying those holding the "anti-Marcos" torch—while screening out the ways in which the 1986 revolution exposed the "structures and…fractures of" of national unity.[24]

Of particular interest is Claudio's insistence that Marcos and the CPP represent two opposing but interdependent strands of nationalism that, following the revolution, simultaneously collapsed. This led to what Claudio calls a "massification" of Philippine politics,[25] characterized by the rise of middle-class NGO organizations loosely comprising the Cory Aquino coalition. However useful the massification concept may be in differentiating the martial law politics from forms following its collapse (i.e., neoliberalism), the *People Power narrative* does not explain the larger historical change—which cannot be treated as merely national or contingent.

[24] Marita Sturken, *Entangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3-10.
[25] Claudio, Taming People's Power, 13.

In a more recent study, Claudio advances a theory of history not based in contingency—by relating liberalism and nationalism as two competing schools of thought. Claudio favorably cites Francois Furet's definition of liberalism as a philosophy of "modern societies, constituted by autonomous and equal individuals, free to choose their activities, beliefs, and life-styles." Elsewhere, however, he characterizes liberalism as a "bureaucratic, a boring pencil-pushing process" for "brokering conflict and managing bargains."[26]

Either definition is at variance with the dysfunctional picture painted by the "elite democracy" school, against which Claudio's book is in part addressed. Benedict Anderson initiated this framework by arguing that not only was People Power a return of the oligarchy, but in a more profound historical sense, the Philippines was a nation only insofar as America's colonial project made it one.[27] The "elite democracy" thesis is most thoroughly theorized by Paul Hutchcroft, for whom familial oligarchies used the weak state to entrench and enrich themselves, primarily during the country's industrialization in the 1950s-60s.

Claudio takes issue with this thesis, arguing that for Hutchcroft, "elites are homogenized, represented as forwarding amorphous class interests," whose debates "have had an effect on the development of the Philippine economy…that, naturally extend beyond the state."[28] One example is industrial magnate Salvador Araneta's

[26] Lisandro Claudio, Liberalism in the Postcolony: Thinking the State in 20th Century Philippines (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press), 7.
[27] "Had it not been for William McKinley, one might almost say, the Philippines in the early twentieth century could have fractured into three weak, caudillo-ridden states with the internal politics of nineteenth-century Venezuela or Ecuador." Benedict Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," *New Left Review* (May 1, 1988): 9.
[28] Claudio, Liberalism in the Postcolony, 51.

push for a Roosevelt-style "New Deal" in the Philippines. Araneta's Keynesianism is characterized as a deficit spending agenda, opposed by the central bank's austerity.

However, this characterization discounts that Hutchcroft describes not failed policy reforms but the outcome of failed politics—particularly, a populist mobilization that would have exercised the political force necessary for Araneta's economic proposals. This raises the question of the American (nationalist) Fordist state, a "social politics geared to assure the national basis" of Keynesian "economics of growth."[29] Claudio mistakenly conflates Keynes with Roosevelt—the latter was, after all, not a mere policy wonk or bureaucrat but at the head of a national coalition—a "three-legged stool" of "big labor, big capital, and big government."[30] The Philippines lacked all three; hence, Araneta's Keynesianism had no "legs" to stand on. If, as Claudio claims, "the New Deal…placed economic welfare at the heart of American liberalism," this "liberalism" was Fordist—that is to say, nationalist. While the communists (mobilizers of "big labor" through the Congress of Industrial Organizations), whom Claudio opposes to the liberals, supported the New Deal, the American Socialist Party did not—precisely because it was understood as constructing a state which infringed upon civil liberties.

Rather than simply opposing these civil liberties to the state's political-collective domination, it is crucial to explain the necessity of the latter's authority. Hutchcroft argues that an administrative state bureaucracy is necessary to facilitate

[29] Chris Cutrone, "Friedrich Hayek and the legacy of Milton Friedman Neo-liberalism and the question of freedom (In part, a response to Naomi Klein)," *The Platypus Review* No. 8 (November 2008).
[30] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990), 142.

legal and "political and procedural predictability"[31] that advanced forms of capital accumulation require. This point—rather than zigzags over exchange controls and monetary policy—is key to Hutchcroft's assessment of the failure of Philippine Fordism-Keynesianism, despite a global postwar boom. What did occur was an import substitution industrialization policy, along with the decision to defend the peso's parity to the dollar, "and the intense external disequilibrium arising out of that decision"[32]—crisis management through exchange and import controls. Entrepreneurs "preferred to take their loans in foreign exchange," and these loans "generally depended upon success in obtaining an exchange license."[33] Those most successful in taking advantage of said loans were family corporations spanning agriculture, industry, and banking. This, in turn, fused the household to the business enterprise, bolstering a culture of blurred boundaries between the family corporation and the "personal authority of individuals."[34] Floating the peso in the 1960s prompted further industrialization and intensive urbanization under these diversified family conglomerates, at which point clientelist politics began to fray. The net result stymied "the fuller development of calculability in the productive sphere."[35]

Hutchroft's assessment contradicts Claudio's claim that the Fordist welfare state was per se "liberal," as well as his characterization of liberalism as some form of benign pencil-pushing and sausage making. For that matter, the public sphere of the

[31] Paul Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state: The politics of private domestic commercial banking in the Philippines. (Volumes I and II) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 106.
[32] Frank H. Golay, *The Philippines, Public Policy and National Economic Development* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), 412, quoted in Paul Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state," 186.
[33] Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1998), 72.
[34] Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state," 22.
[35] Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism,* 41.

Fordist welfare state retained little in the way of critical publicity of prior liberal public spheres; this Habermas describes as "*publicity that is staged for show or manipulation* the public of nonorganized private people…by the communication of publicly manifested opinions."[36] Habermas associates this phenomenon with the (failed) 1848 revolution, which for Marx expressed a dialectic between state and civil society pointing towards mutual negation[37] but later appeared as the "intertwining" of state and society.[38] This consideration is key insofar as it also equates the reconstitution of the modern public sphere under non-critical displays of publicity and legitimation. Like the American Fordist state, the Philippine patrimonial oligarchic state rested upon illiberal public-private relations: the management of consensus and consumer culture and the concomitant collapse of the separate spheres of art and politics. Hutchcroft's ideal type describes the outcome of the failed struggle for a Fordist regime but, as Claudio points out, does not speak to historical transformations in the form of state and within society.

[36] Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge: MIT Press), 247.
[37] Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of State," *Early Writings*. ed. Quentin Hoare, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (New York. 1975), 191, quoted in Habermas, *Structural Transformation,* 126. Marx's idea was that along this path society itself would take on a political form; inside the established public sphere electoral reforms already seemed to indicate the tendency toward its dissolution: "By really establishing its political existence as its authentic existence, civil society ensures that its civil existence, in so far as it is distinct from its political existence, is inessential. And with the demise of the one, the other, its opposite, collapses also. Therefore, electoral reform in the abstract political state is equivalent to a demand for its dissolution and this in turn implies the dissolution of civil society."
[38] Habermas, *Structural Transformation,* xiii. "The…intertwining of state and society in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries meant the end of the liberal public sphere. The public sphere of social-welfare-state democracies is rather a field of competition among conflicting interests, in which organizations representing diverse constituencies negotiate and compromise among themselves and with government officials, while excluding the public from their proceedings. Public opinion is, to be sure, taken into account, but not in the form of unrestricted public discussion. Its character and function are indicated rather by the terms in which it is addressed: "public opinion research," "publicity," "public relations work," and so forth. The press and broadcast media serve less as organs of public information and debate than as technologies for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture."

Instead of a progressive history of national cinema, this dissertation reads nationalist cinema histories against the grain—tracing, rather than progress, transformations in international "regimes of accumulation." The object of analysis is aesthetics and politicized critical discourse on film—often originating from the nationalist Left. This "national imagination" is not only ritualistic or culturally embodied, but a historical necessity (freedom) become contradictory—in art and art's critique, pointing beyond itself.

I: Towards a History of Commitment

In aesthetic theory, 'commitment' should be distinguished from 'tendency.'[39]

The Politics of Culture

Figure 3. Lino Brocka (far left) at the Symposium on Film and the Visual Arts, MAKIISA I, December 28-30, 1983. Scanned photograph from Nicanor Tiongson's *The Politics of Culture*.

On August 21, 1983, the opposition leader Ninoy Aquino, returning from several years of political exile, was shot dead on the Manila airport tarmac. The killing galvanized anti-Marcos sentiment and advanced the efforts of creatives already agitating against censorship when several arts groups organized the MAKIISA I (UNITE I) symposium.[40] Its purpose was to showcase political art and

[39] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," in *Politics and Aesthetics*, 75-89 (London: Verso, 1977), 75.
40 Nicanor Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture: The Philippine Experience* (Philippine Educational Theater Association: Manila 1984), 5. Originally focused on film censorship, the CAP now labored to fight government authoritarianism more broadly: "to mobilize and coordinate the fight…no longer against the censors only, but against the authoritarian government that finds anti-people censorship necessary." The Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) formed and, working with an older group also lead by Lino Brocka, the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA).

channel creatives into mass action for social reform, if not Marcos's ouster.[41] The event articulated these pressure tactics through a progressive type of art activism.

A transcription was made of the MAKIISA I proceedings and subsequently published as *The Politics of Culture.* The book's preface—written by cultural historian Nicanor Tiongson—encapsulated and historicized the direction progressive art was then taking. According to Tiongson, the 1970s Philippine student movement planted the seeds of protest which, flowering in the 1980s, proved creatives able to differentiate "bourgeois and committed art,"[42] understand aesthetics as a domain of Western idealism, and "lay individualism aside"[43] "making the creation of art both an organizational task and a way of remolding one's art and life."[44] Artmaking liberated the artist as a "total person" and "artist-leader in his community."[45]

This chapter reads Tiongson's *progressive* account against the grain by locating its ideological origins in the global Left. Although not once mentioned, Mao Zedong Thought (of which most in the student movement had read little)[46] was the unspoken thread tying *The Politics of Culture* together. As with Mao's injunction for psychological self-transformation through action, for Tiongson, art served as a protocol in the individual's identification with the collective. We will call this identity the "national democrat."[47] Becoming a "national democrat" did not depend upon membership in the Communist Party or its ideologically aligned organizations—

[41] On the use of pressure tactics in the anti-Marcos movement, see Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 175.
[42] Nicanor G. Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture,* 2.
[43] Tiongson, 5.
[44] Tiongson, 2.
[45] Tiongson, 5.
[46] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 79.
[47] Dominique Caouette, "Constructing and Controlling People's Power from the Grassroots: Philippine Social Movement Activism in Historical Perspective" (Unpublished draft, 2012), 2.

because the scope of action was, ostensibly, the nation. The "national democrat" professed freedom but was ambivalent about the individual—whose accountability was always to the Filipino people.[48] To the extent that the artist was a *national democrat*, obligated to political action and nation, the stage was set for an unconscious reiteration of prior political art forms—what this dissertation, following Theodor Adorno, calls *commitment.*

Adorno characterizes *commitment* as an explicit political tendency opposing *art for art's sake*. It is not so much propaganda as a practice which "works at the level of fundamental attitudes."[49] *Commitment* arises from an act of will—as "a declaration by a subject of his own choice or failure to choose."[50] Tiongson's "artist-leader" falls within the scope of this definition. In expressing *commitment,* the artist remolded the self and gestured to others to join the anti-Marcos struggle—a declaration that willed a national identity. But in equating artistic sensibility and national progress, *committed* critics downplayed the task of recognizing a universal "critical moment of aesthetic experience."[51] Omitting the international character of history occluded aesthetic debate. In rejecting aesthetics, critics affirmed the nation—rather than whatever more radical protest against reality artists might have waged.

Tiongson's history of progressive, anti-Marcos art is a case in point. The movement's origins lay not, as he claimed, in the 1970s Filipino student activism, but within a broad postwar "crisis in representation."[52] This crisis was initially registered

[48] Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2017), 89.
49 Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," 79.
[50] Adorno, 78.
[51] Susan Buck-Morss, "Response to the Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October 77* (Summer 1996): 29–31.
[52] Caroline Hau, Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980 (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2000), 182.

in debates over formalist concerns of the New Criticism school. Associated with the American universities which sponsored exchange students and produced textbooks used in the Philippines, the New Criticism was accused of perpetuating a colonial, hierarchical relationship between literary intelligentsia and readers.[53] Instead of this ostensibly imperialist setup, the "cultural turn" that followed stressed "social orientation"[54] and aspired to portray the "true conditions" in society. This meant relating current social ills to colonial history—a "truth-telling" which, by expressing colonial oppression, sutured social divisions.[55] This suturing constituted the nation's masses as new subjects of literary attention: "communities of interpretation."[56]

While the new partisan footing in postwar literature, art, and criticism may have broadened the civil-social context for representation, the concepts "communities of interpretation" and "politics of culture" neglect that the New Criticism also took place within communities—albeit ones not bounded by the nation. Hans Enzensberger provides what this author believes to be a more useful heuristic, framing *progressive* art as "the readiness to revise all solidified theses"[57] and *reactionary art* as legitimating the status quo. If Tiongson's concept of *progressive* art emphasizes political *commitment*, Enzensberger's emphasizes *aesthetic tendency*. Through this lens, any given "community of interpretation" is delimited not by its readership so much as by its avant-garde—a more acute locus of contradiction.

---

[53] Hau, *Necessary Fictions,* 39. Hao argues the cultural turn eventually shifted the locus of critique away from state-centric pedagogy towards an inter-class, national readership that would learn to interpret texts from the secular context of experience. Hau cites Nick Joaquin's *Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (1950) as the pivotal example in this broader "cultural turn." On this point, see Hau, 15-116.
[54] Joel David "Millennial Traversals: Outliers, Juvenilia, & Quondam Popcult Blabbery." In UNITAS Vol. 88 No. 1 (2015), 153.
[55] Hau, 125.
[56] Hau, 116.
[57] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Culture Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 18.

In Enzensberger's terms, the cultural turn's supposedly "progressive" consideration of the reader was anything but.[58] Instead of embodying a protocol for national progress, the author posits that art should be taken as a point of entry into history—registered through (antinomical and symptomatic) aesthetic experience. Insofar as society is held together by aesthetic forms,[59] art (on the Left and otherwise) is an index of and contributes to broader historical transformation and regression. It is this regression which a progressive history of culture hides; an aesthetically "progressive" approach would do otherwise.

Commitment and Nation

As an artmaking approach of reoccurring appeal and flexibility, *commitment* fit the chaotic political and structural shifts of 1980s democratization—a time of global revolution within numerous authoritarian developmental states. In the Philippines, Marcos was visibly ailing. The economy was tanking, the peso declining. Conditions were ripe for mainstreaming the ideology of *commitment*—in the words of Mao Zedong, "Everything under heaven is in utter chaos; the situation is excellent."

Yet, *commitment* was not merely an indigenous response to local conditions but an approach that reoccurs on the world stage during moments of political unrest. For Claire Bishop, the return of the political in art takes the form of a "clash between artistic and social critiques." The "artistic critique" is a bohemian revolt against dehumanization, while the "social critique" expresses "indignation against

[58] Theodor Adorno, "On Jazz." *Discourse.* Vol. 12, No 1, A Special Issue on Music (Fall-Winter 1989-90), 125.
[59] Chris Cutrone (professor, School of the Art Institute, Chicago), in discussion with Bopha Hul and Ye-Bhit Hong November 12, 2020. Also see André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 222.

capitalism."[60] If 1968 was the "heroic last moment of resistance,"[61] then the waning years of the Marcos regime echoed that last hurrah.

At the MAKIISA I symposium, *commitment* played out less as a clash between artistic and social critiques than the former's domination by the latter. Creatives who formerly criticized the Left joined in a chorus against dictatorship. Director Lino Brocka—a former Mormon and anti-communist—sounded like a "national democrat" when he proclaimed in the keynote address, "Now, our inspirations should come from the struggles of the people around us. More, we must be part of those struggles."[62] Another symposium speaker, the journalist Sylvia Mayuga, had previously remained aloof from the Left—whom she characterized as "good-hearted robots."[63] However, her pronouncement that "it is only in *commitment* [italics added]…that we can bring to light the truth about these problems that have bothered us for such a long time now"[64] reflected an about-face on that perspective. Neither Brocka nor Mayuga's presentations addressed aesthetics.

The Concerned Artists of the Philippines—of which Brocka and Mayuga were then leading figures—organized the MAKIISA I symposium. Mayuga's (transient) commitment, Brocka's well-known disavowal of theory, and Tiongson's rejection of aesthetics as Western idealism does not exempt their collective project from characterization as "avant-garde"—at this moment, they cohered as a *committed* tendency. Around their calls for collective action, Tiongson's commentary in *The*

---

[60] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 276.
[61] Bishop, Artificial Hells, 193.
[62] Tiongson, 51.
[63] Sylvia Mayuga, in discussion with the author, January 25, 2019. "I didn't want any part of [the Maoist's] formulaic understanding of Philippine history without full study [and] research"
[64] Tiongson, 40.

Politics of Culture wove a theoretical lattice. But as artists, to what and by what process were they all *committed*? Was their artistic project, as Tiongson claimed, the result of seeds planted by the student movement one decade before? Could Brocka have undergone an "unconscious adaptation" to the Maoist line on art[65]—despite only two years prior being "rabidly anti-Left"?[66] Indeed, Brocka's unconscious and Mayuga's contemplated shift in thinking hinged on a framework. What was it? Why did it suddenly appear viable in ways it had not previously?

One answer can be found in the broad nationalist appeal of the radical democratic movement then percolating within various social strata. Yet, in emphasizing nationalism, *The Politics of Culture* leaves out the student movement replicated, "somewhat belatedly, their counterparts in France, Japan, and the United States."[67] The American student and anti-war movement, the black power turn, the strike wave of the late 1960s, and the 1968 Prague Spring inspired a sense of international solidarity amongst Filipino students.[68] More broadly, students were politicized by "the Cuban Revolution…the deepening of the US involvement in Vietnam, the leftward swing of Sukarno's government in Indonesia, and the 1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution."[69]

Upon closer inspection, it is evident *The Politics of Culture* has a contradictory exposition. The art of the student movement was ostensibly nationalist,

---

[65] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014), 144.
[66] Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon "The Brocka Battles," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 131-132.
[67] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 78–79.
[68] José Maria Sison (with Rainer Werning), *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989), 29.
[69] Francisco Nemenzo, "An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippines Communist Movement", Paper presented at the Work in Progress Seminar, Research School of Pacific Studies (Canberra: Australia National University, November), 74.

yet anchored in a global movement, supposedly "progressive" yet hardly prepared to "revise all solidified theses."[70] Tiongson mentions neither the communists nor "Marx" but instead summarizes the movement's main themes as "mass" and "national democratic." These terms are thinly veiled code-words, giving way to more explicit formulas, such as a struggle "molding" the artist and that the artist is the material that is thereby changed.

These terms belie not only the global character of the student movement but its tutelage under the Left. The coded discourse was one outcome of a muddled relationship between the communists and nationalists. The youth politicization was seized on by the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (Communist Party of the Philippines or PKP)—in the process of reconstruction after devastating losses in the 1950s—as an opportunity to gain ground through establishing a united front.[71] The PKP was then developing not only its local base but international links with Beijing via the Indonesian Communist Party. The 1965-66 massacre of Indonesian communists pushed the PKP towards Moscow, and ultimately, Marcos—who was opening diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet Bloc. This maneuvering belatedly brought home the so-called Sino-Soviet split between China and the Soviet Union, with the PKP splintering into pro-China and pro-Soviet groups.[72] In light of this split, many students activists saw the USSR as a conservative and social-imperialist force, while China advocated the anti-imperialist militancy to which they

[70] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Culture Industry,* 18.
[71] William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution: The New People's Army and its Struggle for Power* (New York: W.W. Norton. 1987), 72.
[72] Joseph Scalice, "Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: Martial Law and the Communist Parties of the Philippines, 1957-1974," PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2017, 1. https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/etd/ucb/text/Scalice_berkeley_0028E_17195.pdf.2017.

aspired. The PKP's support for Marcos was the last straw. During the 1970 First Quarter Storm—a bloody series of anti-Marcos demonstrations preceding (and justifying) the declaration of Martial Law—students battled not only the State but also the PKP.[73]

These intra-Left battles were no more a local affair than were the disputes between China and the Soviet Union. The psychological decolonization and "collective creation" advocated by *The Politics of Culture* are part of that same geopolitical, Cold War dispute—which in turn corresponded to an acute crisis in state-capitalist economies of global scope. The "cultural turn" was enmeshed in this crisis, and—particularly in the wake of the Chinese Cultural Revolution—the student movement the world over attempted to liberate itself from all things "Western"—including the Soviet Union. Aesthetically speaking, the "cultural turn" was a turn from Soviet-style proletarian iconography to more explicit anti-capitalist collectivist protocols and themes. Cultural revolution appeared in activist films, from Jean Luc Goddard's *Chinoiserie* to Newsreel, who used a gritty documentary style evoking guerrilla warfare. The most militant films were conceived as political in the sense of "liturgical acts" (Fanon) based on "confrontation theory," which produced a "liberated space."[74] Third Cinema envisioned a "new man…born in the process of

[73] Scalice, "Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership," 731-735.
[74] Robert Stam "Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant Gardes," in *The Documentary Film Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 536.

anti-imperialist struggle,"[75] as well as "an anti-individualistic conception of artistic creation"[76] that would contribute to "collective decolonization."[77]

Despite militantly opposing the old political art, the "cultural turn" was linked in terms of *commitment.* This "return of the repressed" is evident in the theory of Giles Deleuze, who characterized earlier "classical" political cinema[78] in terms of proletarian tropes and precepts for an entrenched polity—actually existing socialism. To this, Deleuze counterposed the "modern political cinema," a more experimental body of films characterized by disorienting shifts in points of view, multicharacter narratives, and documentary-fiction hybridity.[79] In distinguishing between these two cinemas, Deleuze associated the Third World "masses" with the latter. He considered these masses a projection screen upon which an artist like Lino Brocka, amidst a churning detritus of global culture, "seeks to engender social change by summoning forth new subjectivities and forms of community."[80] This was because "*the People are missing"* (italics original).[81] These missing people were presumably more liable to foment cultural revolution—and revolutionize cinema.

There is, however, some slippage between Brocka's films and the specific experimental traits of Deleuze's "modern political cinema." Hardly characterized by experimentalism, Brocka's films more accurately "echo not just the style but also the

[75] Scott Mackenzie, *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (UC Press: Berkeley, 2014), 231.
[76] Santiago Alvarez, "5 Frames are 5 Frames, not 6, but 5," interviewed by *Cineaste*, 1975, In *The Documentary Film Reader,* 605-608 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 608.
[77] Mackenzie, *Film Manifestos,* 249.
[78] Capino, *Martial Law Melodrama,* 131.
[79] Capino, 131.
[80] Jose Capino, *Martial Law Melodrama: Lino Brocka's Cinema Politics* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 131.
[81] Giles Deleuze, "Cinema 2: The Movement Image" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 217.

social democratic political discourse of the "classic" political cinema."[82] In other words, this "modern political cinema" was also "classical," both backward and forwards looking. Deleuze's strict differentiation of "classic" and "modern" accompanies a broader theory of the transformation of "the movement-image" to "the time-image," with cinema's formal shifts reflecting a change in subjectivity. This point can be contended by pointing to Brocka—whose work, hardly a radical break with history, is more accurately characterized as *ambivalently linked to the past*.

Talks at Yenan Forum

In what sense was *commitment* linked to, and in fact, a return to the past? With the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines, this link was not tenuous but explicit. Tiongson's calls to "lay individualism aside"[83] while "making the creation of art both an organizational task and a way of remolding one's art and life"[84] are derived from Mao Zedong Thought. The keystone text of this *committed* critique was Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942). The tactics of self-transformation outlined by Tiongson have, in Mao's rendition, a philosophical justification. Mao theorizes a committed artist-activist that represents aesthetic activity as a mechanical process, subordinate to the march of revolutionary progress:

> Works of literature and art, as ideological forms, are products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society. Revolutionary literature and art are the products of the reflection of the life of the people in the brains of revolutionary writers and artists.[85]

[82] Capino, 132.
[83] Tiongson, 5.
[84] Tiongson, 2.
[85] Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong), *Talks at Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 18.

Art is presented not as reflection on aesthetic experience, judging and thus mediating between what is and what ought to be, expressing freedom. Instead, the artist's role is to serve the people in the struggle for national democracy—studying, learning from, and reflecting the working masses' consciousness. Mao concludes that "…it is a basic Marxist concept that being determines consciousness, that the objective realities of class struggle and national struggle determine our thoughts and feelings."[86]

As militant as this "Marxism" might sound, it bears resemblance to more broad-based conceptions of national identity. This resemblance can be illustrated by Brocka, who was concerned with speaking to and uplifting a national viewership from the beginning of his film career. In a 1974 article, he called for "introduce(ing) gradual changes until one succeeds in creating one's desired audience…by gathering experience that is not alien to the majority of Filipinos at a particular time; by compressing and systematizing this experience for them; and by giving back this now crystallized experience to them in films they would enjoy and be moved by and take as their own."[87]

While certainly not Maoist, Brocka's program was of a not dissimilar 1950s economic nationalism. This nationalism also contained a "reflective" philosophy—most probably derived not from Mao but the Philippine primary education system. In 1956, Jose Rizal's literature was controversially (due to critical depictions of Catholic clergy) mandated for schools. The bill stipulated, "[Rizal's novels] must be taken to

[86] Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong), *Talks at Yenan Forum,* 7.
[87] Lino Brocka, "Philippine Movies: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 260-61.

heart, for in their pages we see ourselves as in a mirror…only then would we become conscious as a people, and so learn to prepare ourselves for painful sacrifices that will ultimately lead to self-reliance, self-respect, and freedom."[88]

For state education, the student's main lesson is not historical but psychological—the transformation of self into citizen. Rizal is the exemplary artist holding up a mirror that reflects the people's lives—warts and all—back upon them. Mao's pedagogical imperative similarly hinges on self-transformation—leaving behind and excising one's inner bourgeois. By studying, making friends with, and living amongst the "masses," the artist would be tempered and change from one class to another.[89] The committed artist mediates a workerist vision of and for the mute, who cannot represent themselves. They must be represented. In the process, the artist raises the artistic standards of the people, at once popularizing or simplifying complex aesthetic traditions for them in a cultural language "not alien" to them.

Whether nationalist or Maoist, the identity of an artwork with its viewer expresses what is, rather than what out to be—affirming reality as such and downplaying whatever protest art might take against reality. Reflecting reality potentially obscures the dialectical nonidentity of (art) object and subject, of the apperceptive subject, which is able to reflect upon (render objective) itself insofar as the artwork is *like* but not *identical* to itself. In this view, art expresses "the potential

[88] Quoted in Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 39. Senate Bill No. 438. Written in 1956.
[89] Adolph Reed, *Class Notes* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 135. In his critique of Black Power, Adolph Reed characterizes and defines a similar "prefigurative" politics in which "…radicals should seek to enact models of the world we would create. This strain emphasized the need to provide space for voices of relatively powerless groups and individuals who are typically pressed to the margins of public life. And it also evoked a call to value political action for its qualities of self-transformation and personal enrichment.

and possibility for change: art is the expression of freedom."[90] Within this freedom, the artist transforms that which is—given aesthetic tendencies or "the potential transformation of aesthetic form itself'—certainly, not a national affair.[91]

In the outright rejection of aesthetics, particularly when the artist is politically engaged, art and politics are reversed; political gestures are rendered aesthetic. As Adorno noted, the 1960s student movement engaged in a protest theater without realizing its confusion over the difference between "aesthetic semblance and reality."[92] This cuts to the very heart of our consideration thus far of so-called *politically progressive* art and its product, the "national democrat" identity. Art is not defined through aesthetic experience—judgment expressing an individual's free reflection, mediating between Understanding and Reason—but is anti-art, *commitment* flatly contradicting *art for art's sake.* Meanwhile, "art for art's sake" severs its autonomy by renouncing its *relationship to the real*. Autonomous and committed art remain in unproductive isolation: "Each of the two alternatives negates itself with the other."[93]

That a debate might go beyond this fraught and unproductive opposition is not considered, probed, or delved into to mediate contradiction. Clarity could be achieved if there were some basis by which to critique Mao's theory—to recognize an antinomical relation to another system of thought. Mao cuts off any such critique by dismissing aesthetics. This is because the dialectic is not immanent, recognized on the

[90] Chris Cutrone, "Critique of Revolutionary Art: Trotsky, Benjamin, Adorno, and Greenberg," *Caesura*, https://caesuramag.org/posts/critique-of-revolutionary-art-trotsky-benjamin-adorno-and-greenberg
[91] Chris Cutrone (professor, School of the Art Institute, Chicago), in discussion with Bopha Hul and Ye-Bhit Hong November 12, 2020.
[92] Theodor Adorno, *Marginalia to Theory and Praxis* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2005), 262. Adorno called this form of protest theater "actionism."
[93] Adorno, "Commitment," 76.

basis of subjective comprehension, but extracted from experience and its consideration and hammered into a progressive teleology. The artist experiences and translates mass culture; once rendered and publicized, this art is expected to exert pressure on politics through the united front with artists of ally parties or blocs. The value of a work of art is judged not on a subjective basis but based on its effect on the attitude of the masses "collectively," as it were. Art is then smuggled back in a most conservative form. As we shall see, this *politically progressive* perspective on art (here used in quite different terms from Enzensberger) is not only older than MAKIISA I, but older than *Talks at Yenan Forum.*

The Cultural Organization of Defeat

Reading history against the grain, we have established a genealogy of *The Politics of Culture*. Tiongson's appropriation of Mao carried with it aesthetic concepts, elaborated above, which were not dissimilar from Filipino economic nationalism of the 1950s. Brocka adopted this *politically progressive* attitude—allowing him to smoothly shift from an anti-Left position to a Leftist *commitment* in 1983. But what difference did this (perhaps not so dramatic) shift make in his art? We recall that Deleuze upholds Brocka as an exemplar of "modern political cinema," when in fact, per Deleuze's taxonomy, Brocka's films contain both "modern" and "classic" elements. In other words, Brocka straddles the ideological shift from "classic" to "modern." His films thus express a sort of "dual-layered time."[94] This layering of time can be posed in terms of clarifying the subtextual political ideology

[94] Jurgen Habermas, "Dual-Layered Time Personal notes on philosopher Theodor W. Adorno in the '50s," *Logos* 2.4 (Fall 2003).

behind Deleuze's terms—to wit, instead of "classical" and "modern" political cinema, how did the Old Left (USSR) differ from the New (China)?

The Sino-Soviet split was a historical process that both preserved and transformed actually existing socialism. China was ostensibly more militant and anti-imperialist than the Soviet Union. Yet there is continuity between the Old and New Left in terms of Stalinism—defined by Joseph Scalice as "socialism in one country, the two-stage theory of revolution, and the bloc of four classes."[95] Although Scalice follows Trotsky, the latter's concept of regression or "organization of defeat" more concisely summarizes Stalinism. It is a grass-roots movement of workers that overcame the intellectual tradition of Marxism as upheld by the radicals of the Second International—including Lenin and Trotsky.

For Trotsky, the emergence of Stalinism was the *effect* of the defeat of socialism and the organization of this same defeat. The failure of the revolution in Europe, the destruction and repressiveness of "war communism," and forced collectivization (primitive accumulation) were not virtues but tragic necessities—all antithetical to the 1917 revolution. Crimes born out of contingency became utopian principles, necessities became virtues for Stalinism—that is, ideological justifications. Of particular interest is the way in which "culture" played a unique and legitimating role vis a via the party's actions. In this schema, both art and artist are considered subordinate to and inseparable from politics and unable to distinguish their art from class expression. Notions of culture as a function of civil society drop out of the picture as mere bourgeois ideology. It is within the Stalinist mode that Mao writes:

[95] Scalice, 1.

> In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.[96]

The most immediate problem with this perspective is that the state is not identical to its "culture" or society. Neither is the party identical with the state nor a site for cultural production. Like any other free bourgeois association, its (professional) political members cannot rest on their political capacities when they adjudicate cultural decisions—which make use of private, rather than public, reason. Despite its "communism," the party is beholden to ideals of free association of the bourgeois public sphere. It cannot infringe upon the cultural domain, which must be organized autonomously (indeed, the party is autonomously organized within it).[97] Lenin does not bring his private ideas on culture into his political comments on art because he exercises no privileged or comprehensive knowledge of either artistic production or the autonomous cultural needs of the people.

Mao's ideas were derived not from Lenin but resembled the early Proletkult movement—which for a time counted more members than the Soviet party.[98] For Trotsky, the Proletkult's overly confident, self-contradictory approach collapses the distinction between class and style—as Mao would later—staking claim to the true proletarian art. But artists cannot concoct revolution in "laboratory conditions," nor should they "compress the Culture of the Future into the narrow limits of the present

[96] Mao, 25.
[97] Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere of Experience: Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (New York: Verso, 2016), 263. Negt and Kluge note how Lenin is entirely liberal on this point: "he cannot claim to be different than other individuals in society when it comes to [culture]."
[98] Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere,* 260.

day."[99] Not only should small circles not claim to represent an entire class, but the only style available to the proletariat is political—culture and art would need to be carried in from bourgeois culture. So-called "proletarian culture" did not replace bourgeois culture, as the Proletkult believed, but reflected nothing more nor less than its disintegration and regression.

The question of culture impinged on the very nature and meaning of revolution, which Trotsky—following Marx—considered antithetical to the classical bourgeois epoch. This antithetical relationship was not merely oppositional but dialectical—or historically counterposed—in character.[100] A proletarian revolution is a negation of the bourgeois revolution, which it also perpetuates, only in self-contradictory form. However, despite these two counterposed historical conditions, since the failed revolution of 1848, only a "middle course" has been brought about. This middle course was nothing less than the class struggle disintegrating into interpenetrated political and cultural masses. Trotsky's critique of the Proletkult anticipated a similar middle course, or mass culture, stemming from the 1917 revolution's defeat and the organization thereof. True enough, the Proletkult eventually motivated state ideology in the "reactionary" sense. Not only did it project a false image of post-bourgeois art, but it was also no longer able to question and

[99] Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1957), 205.
[100] Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969), 53. "Revolution can be achieved either by a nation gathering itself together like a lion preparing to spring, or by a nation in the process of struggle becoming conclusively divided in order to free the best part of itself for the execution of those tasks which the nation as a whole is unable to carry out. These are two opposite sets of historical conditions, which in their pure form are, of course, possible only in logical contraposition. A middle course in this, as in so many cases, is worst of all, but it was this middle course that developed in 1848."

"revise all solidified theses"[101] when sanctioned by the Stalinist regime as Socialist Realism.

Antinomies of Mass Art

Trotsky's "middle course" represents a different conception of mass culture than the *progressive* one Tiongson derives from Mao. Reading *The Politics of Culture* against the grain, we briefly compared Brocka's 1950s economic nationalism to Mao's "reflective" art theory. Both illuminate Tiongson's Filipino citizen-artist of the 1970s-80s. These different shades of *commitment* layer together and accumulate as ideological detritus. It remains to be seen why—contra progressive history—this is so. To do so requires that we plunge even deeper into the critique of committed art.

The following conception of society proffered by Joma Sison—the founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines—illustrates Maoist *progressivism*: "classes and organized groups mediate or bridge without exception the individual with the nation."[102] Yet for Sison—a student of Mao—this (mechanistic) vision of civil society belonged to a future nation that had not yet come into existence. Sison imagined this future as the outcome of class struggle: a proletarian-led nationalism against US imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism. This struggle was progressive in the sense that it "always outgrows and breaks the old framework which the reactionary force always tries to preserve."[103] Imperialism blocked the flowering

[101] Enzensberger, *The Culture Industry,* 18
[102] Jose M. Sison *The Struggle for National Democracy* (Aklatangbayan.wordpress.com), 12.
[103] Sison, *National Democracy,* 75.

of civil society, which would be achieved "only after national sovereignty has been fully secured and incorporated into a genuinely free national state."[104]

We recall Enzensberger's reframing of *progressive* art as "the readiness to revise all solidified theses."[105] In contrast, Maoist *progressivism* must always reflect the inevitability of a future goal. This point can be illustrated with reference to Sison's claim that "Literature and the arts should reflect the revolutionary struggle and point towards its triumph."[106] We ask, a belief in progress, even in the face of defeat? The Proletkult's "middle course" similarly obscured the defeat of revolutionary politics. Precisely this organization of defeat was carried out under the auspices of "proletarian" or *committed* art—which, by the 1930s, stretched "from Brecht to the Youth Movement ."[107] Yet communism had not transcended bourgeois culture. Walter Benjamin (from whom Enzensberger's notion of *progressive* aesthetics is derived) attempted to intervene in the debate by retracing the following antinomy in history:

1. Art is for the people.
2. Art is for the connoisseurs[108]

The separation assumes an antagonism between "popular" and "esoteric" art. This was not always so. During the classical bourgeois epoch, both high and low art markets were held in productive tension, mediated by social cooperation and the commodity form. Cultural products between these extremes were commercially

[104] Sison, 12.
[105] Enzensberger, *Culture Industry,* 18.
[106] Sison*,* 100.
[107] Adorno, "Commitment," 122.
[108] Walter Benjamin, "Diary from August 7, 1931, to the Day of My Death," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 503.

successful and sustained an "internal continuity," that is, unbroken discursive development. [109] If the dialectical character of bourgeois thinking lay within the nexus of Understanding and Reason, science and theory, experience and ideal, what is and what ought to be—in short, an individuals' capacity to exercise the faculties of aesthetic judgment—art exercised freedom.

This is artistic production per se, in its original and flourishing sense. With post-1848 modern art, the commodity's mediation came into crisis. Popular and esoteric domains had become riven and antinomical, their extremes no longer mediated by intermediate products much less characterized by internal continuity. The contradiction is historical—bourgeois society gives rise to capitalism, which is destructive of and throws art's internal discourse into disarray (generating mass culture). Cinema, for instance, arises as both an industrial and craft effort, a technical enterprise interpenetrated with the aura of the autonomous artwork. Meanwhile esoteric or autonomous art is interpenetrated with the industrial, swallowing up the artist's experience from all sides. The bourgeois "entertainment" writer must admit the commercial and thus class basis of their writing, while the committed artist defers questions of aesthetic quality to the political movement. Neither is preferable.

If for Sison, organizations "mediate or bridge" individual and nation,[110] this mediation breaks down for Benjamin. The "attitude of a work to the relations of production of his time" was difficult if not impossible to arrive at; much better for the artist to treat "its position in them."[111] Benjamin gives as the exemplar the Soviet

[109] Benjamin, "Diary," 504.
[110] Sison, 12.
[111] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* 768-782*,* ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 769.

constructivist Sergei Tretyakov, the “operating writer.” Instead of producing an autonomous work, Tretyakov organizes a collective farm—the experience of is recounted in *Commanders of the Field* (1931), a work of literature that influenced the development of collective farming.

Benjamin does not endorse the “operating writer,” whose practice only existed in the Soviet Union. The argument is pitched to win anti-bourgeois writers like Bertold Brecht over to a dialectical position. Benjamin’s focus is authorship in capitalist countries, where the reader’s opinion is the last word. Yet the reader’s judgement is precluded by the indiscriminate "assimilation of the facts" foisted by news production. What if, instead of passive consumption, the reader was to direct his attention towards “the author as producer”—his own role in the division of labor? For one, this would clarify how the internal dialogue of artists (as professional craftsmen) is periodically either wiped out or antiquated through the struggle for forms more adequate to historical experience. Artists are crushed and buffeted by the forces of capitalist change; writers, artists everywhere are proletarianized—are no longer even petit-bourgeois owners of the means of their production. Their commodity (the art object) expresses experience in the crisis of capitalism either as "progress or...regression of literary technique." While modern art is characterized by discontinuity and rupture, mirroring capitalism’s disjunctive cycles of “creative destruction,”[112] it still expresses freedom, albeit in an alienated form.

For Benjamin, sustaining freedom means recognizing the antinomical character of the so-called “debate” between political tendency and aesthetic quality. A

[112] See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers), 1992.

work educates the viewers, starting with other artists if it advances their imagination and consciousness of reality. Yet this consciousness is not merely an advance; it is a matter of dialectical images—where the "new is the old in distress."[113] Rather than represent things as they are, these images objectify and intensify reality's (historical) contradictions. If a work of art elicits this response, it must be aware of itself—of its a*esthetic tendency*.[114] In this respect, writers, artists are also technicians of the mind.

Benjamin's argument is an immanent dialectical critique of phenomena from within, *in and through* the practice of art and its critique. Compared with Benjamin, Mao's approach towards contradiction is neither immanent critique nor transformation of *aesthetic tendency*—but the artist's transformation. There is a valorization of the (bourgeois) nation and ambivalence regarding the (bourgeois) individual. The collective opposes the individual; Mao dismisses artistic freedom as a bourgeois canard, putting politics before aesthetics—or the internal laws of artistic creation. Aesthetics are to be overcome—rejected through self-criticism, immersion, study of and drawing close to the masses. The party instrumentalizes the artist, seeking to "proletarianize" them through political activism that popularizes revolutionary themes. In a straightforward way, artists are "culture givers" to uplift the backward classes in a "people's culture." Yet, they must do so not only in a way that "reflects" reality but by projecting an image of infallibility and progress. This is

[113] Adorno, "Reflections on class theory," in *Can one live after Auschwitz? A philosophical reader* , Stanford 2003, 95. Or as Adorno put it elsewhere, "objective constellations in which 'the social' situation represents itself." Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1980), 115-116.
[114] Chris Cutrone (professor, School of the Art Institute, Chicago), in discussion with Bopha Hul and Ye-Bhit Hong November 12, 2020.

due to an economic determinism that dismisses the subjective factor—historical consciousness. Historical change becomes both contingent and inevitable.

Without the faculties of judgment—freedom—the artist-citizen functions as the mere "representative" of the currently demanded *Weltanschauung*, which they must "adequately reproduce."[115] But there is a non-identity of aesthetic experience and social reality; bourgeois art is about freedom as a possibility. This non-identity/freedom must be sustained rather than dismissed as an instrumentalizing "bourgeois idealism." Maoism attacks the validity of (bourgeois) art, an anti-art of the operating writing, the artist-citizen. It is at best antinomical—political tendency opposing itself to art for art's sake. Yet committed artists that merely oppose or resist might actually "assimilate themselves sedulously to the brute existence against which they protest."[116] Militancy is no proof of victory but can mask defeat. A *progressive* history of culture may do the same.

Conclusion

The discussion of Benjamin and Mao brings us back to one of our initial questions—what spurred Filipino artists to join the *committed* avant-garde? While Brocka and Mayuga adopted politicized rhetoric, their art—although adopting *committed* themes—never passed over into the realm of pure formula. Their abrupt Left turn nevertheless embodied a general trend. If *committed* ideas and themes flowered in the years prior to the 1986 revolution, it was in no small part due to the

[115] Enzensberger, 19.
[116] Adorno, "Commitment," 177-178. This perspective is perhaps more clearly voiced by Bayard Rustin who, referring to the militancy of the Black Panthers, observed that "passionate self-assertion can be a mask for accommodation."

cracks in the Marcos regime and the groundswell against it. Debates about the relationship between art and politics from earlier epochs resurfaced, including arguments for a politics-art praxis. This theory and praxis of art grasped at a social reality—the temporary merging of various political and artistic groups and the evolution of students in the protest and underground movements. However, in so doing, it became entangled on the antinomy between autonomous and *committed* art.

This *commitment* can be defined as a one-sided political (rather than aesthetic) art tendency in the protest movement, derived from Mao Zedong Thought. The underpinning claims of art as a form of radical alterity, as a site of transformation and unification of the artist with the community expressed both ambivalence over the (bourgeois) individual, and aspired to a united front with the opposition. This united front was conceived in Stalinist terms as a "bloc of four classes."[117] Art is both theory and praxis in the sense that "petit-bourgeois" artists (mainly recruited from universities), shedding their class origin (and individuality), would ally with and organize these other classes (together, masses). The political activity of the united front would propagandize nationalistic ideas, preparing the revolution in two stages—first, bourgeois national-democratic, and sometime in the far-flung future, proletarian. This two-stage idea was so common that Marcos himself appropriated and used it as justification for martial law.[118]

Scalice is correct to define both the PKP and the Maoist movement via the category of Stalinism—differentiated only as competing political rackets, the Old

[117] Jose Ma. Sison, Report to the Second National Congress, 1967, PRP 16/23.14 cited in Scalice, "Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership," 339. That is, "the working class and peasantry…the petty bourgeoisie composed of…students, intellectuals and professionals; and the national bourgeoisie, composed of Filipino businessmen interested in a self-reliant economy and in nationalist industrialization."
[118] Scalice, 784.

Left (PKP) supporting and legitimating Marcos, the New Left (CPP) supporting and legitimating the opposition. Both struggled for ideological hegemony not only with each other but with a nationalist opposition—a conundrum that will be discussed further in the following chapter. If there is a difference between Old and New, it is to be found in the latter's stress on "the politics of culture." For Deleuze, "modern" political cinema differentiates from "classical" in political vitality and militancy.[119] The former emerges from the wellsprings of a revolutionary Third World "missing people" (and their oppressed American analogs), the latter sinks into the workerist Second World. This chapter has stressed similarities and continuity, rather than differences, between Old and New types of *commitment.*

Insofar as *committed* artists were advised to subordinate their (individuality) and art to the development of the political movement, their chances to stage a "protest against reality" were diminished. Moreover, an unquestioning service to the movement could well mean adopting the triumphalist language of socialist realism that called defeat victory. In fossilized symbols of *commitment,* art would do what Benjamin observed Dialectical Materialism did for Stalin—it would, like an automaton, appear to win every time.[120] If *committed* art projected messages of victory, infallibility, and collective identity, this masked the actual fragmentation of the protest movement, and the liberal opposition's outmaneuvering of the Left—obscuring its defeat.[121]

---

[119] Here, Newsreel, Santiago Alvarez, and Solanas and Gitano align more closely with the New Left, I.e., the Maoism of the Black Panthers and foco *theory* (foquismo) derived from Che Guevarra, then with the "revisionism" of the Old Left.
[120] Walter Benjamin "On the Concept of History." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 4,* ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 389.
[121] It need not be recounted here how in the Philippines, the progressives were outmaneuvered by the right, and most promises of People Power unfulfilled.

The innovation of an artist like Brocka is to be found not in a "progressive" political character but in his layering of cinematic time ("modern" and "classic" political cinema, for instance). This is *aesthetic progressivism* in Enzenberger's sense, yet with utmost hesitancy and hence ambivalence an attack on Hollywood's commercial culture. This attack was entangled in regional, temporal idiosyncrasies—like economic nationalism—which at once refracted deeper histories of ideology on the Left. The remainder of this dissertation will reconstruct this history to shed light on the ways in which *committed* Filipino film criticism exerts a continued pull in the present. This means writing a counterfactual history.

Before plunging deeper into said counterfactual history of Filipino national cinema, it will be productive to conclude this chapter by asking how, beyond the anti-Marcos struggle, politicized artwork might be seen not only in terms of oppositional politics, but per Benjamin, from the standpoint of *tendency*. What is the position of a work within the relations of production? Is the tendency either "in progress or in regression of literary technique?" Where is it situated in the movement of history, and how is it an expression of that movement as freedom, and the crisis thereof? These questions will trouble the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

II: The "New Cinema's" Double Conjecture[122]

> …precisely the most important tasks—namely, work on the new art forms on the basis of the entire arsenal of proletarian life and language—have become insoluble and, we might even say, incapable of formulation.[123]

The National Question

Figure 4. Joseph Estrada (on speaker's right) at rally outside the Philippine Senate following the US bases vote. Scanned photograph from Jovito Salonga's *The Senate that said no: a four-year record of the first post-EDSA Senate.*

On September 16, 1991, a crowd of Leftists gathered *outside* the Philippine Senate, awaiting the vote on the US military bases agreement. As the news spread that the agreement would be scrapped, they cheered.[124] For the first time since colonization, the American military was out. Yet despite its role in the struggle for national sovereignty, no senator *inside* "praised the Left for its contributions to the

[122] This term is taken from Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016).
[123] Walter Benjamin, "Diary from August 7, 1931, to the Day of My Death," in *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-1934* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 504.
[124] At the time, thousands of troops were stationed in several bases, including Subic Bay, the largest naval repair facility outside the continental United States. The bases were at that time the second-largest employer in the country.

movement."[125] This was due not to electoral or organizational failure,[126] but "nationalism's ideological vacuity and its tendency to have many claimants."[127] While the Left remained in a weaker, ideologically brittle (i.e., anti-imperialist) position, one of the senators voting no—movie star Joseph "Erap" Estrada—expressed a more pliable appeal through identification. In his senate privilege speech two years prior, Erap declared his position with the following exhortation:

> Let this be our finest hour, as we face the judgment of history. We have become so dependent on the Americans that we have never learnt to be self-sufficient. Our country has been seen as a nation of beggars, a nation of prostitutes, a nation of cheaters, a nation of domestic helpers. And if we do not assert ourselves today, we will also be known as a nation of cowards. This I cannot accept. And this we must not accept.[128]

Erap's assertion of national selfhood was derived from the economic nationalism of the 1950s. In this view, the nation must be not only sovereign, but productive in a self-sufficient sense, successful above all in heavy manufacturing, with vertically integrated support industries. These industries would provide stable—even union—employment which paid enough for workers to consume the national product, precipitating a virtuous cycle of aurtarkic production and consumption. In a word, without this *Fordist* self-sufficiency, the nation was dependent and thus not self-determining. Erap gave this problematic an emotional twist—without an assertion of national selfhood, the nation was weak, even cowardly. Apropos of a movie star, he hailed the public through melodramatic "appeals to memory and

---

[125] Patricio Abinales, *Fellow Traveler: Essays on Filipino Communism* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2001), 195.
[126] The Communist Party of the Philippines—failed in the critical moment of the revolution to dominate the anti-Marcos movement. It traditionally abstained from bourgeois politics, and its attempts at forming an electoral coalition prior to the People Power revolution failed. At this time the party was undergoing an internal split.
[127] Patricio Abinales, *Fellow Traveler,* 197.
[128] *The Fight for Subic Bay* (Surrey: Journeyman Films), 2019, https://www.journeyman.tv/film_documents/534/transcript/.

identification." Invoking the pathos of national virtue and calling for its defense, he "activate[d] public subjectivity in the realm of fantasy."[129] It is here, not so much in the town square as the "lair of the skull" that a broken and fragmentary colonial subjectivity identified with the nation, and was made whole.[130] Yet recognition of the "self" (nation) was mediated by the colonial "other" (America), though both the acts of identification and rebellion, resistance, and submission.[131]

Erap was very much a product of the American-dominated culture industry. His on-screen personae was since the 1950s akin to an existentially contorted, rebellious James Dean. Off-screen, he was "movielord" to the nation's film industry—whose aesthetic regimes were not merely nationalist in the abstract, but the product of protagonists and antagonists, insiders and outsiders, factions and feuds. This chapter will elucidate shifting, contradictory conjectures of Philippine "national cinema" by casting Erap as *kontrabida* (foil) to auteur director Lino Brocka, contestant and (temporary) industry heir. If Erap exercised leadership of both industry and nation from *inside*, Brocka—having died in a tragic automobile accident just months before the bases vote—would certainly have been with the activists *outside*. This *inside-outside* dynamic can be seen not only as opposition, but a division of labor. Both Erap and Brocka were nationalists engaged in politics and successful makers of melodrama. Erap was one of the actor-producers rising on the decline of the studio system in the 1960s. Brocka's works were acclaimed by the international festival circuit and nationalist critics in the 1970s-80s. Depicting extreme poverty,

---

[129] Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 4.
[130] Espiritu, Passionate Revolution*s,* 4.
[131] Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 43.

they projected a "politics of the oppressed"[132] or an "aestheticization of poverty."[133] Erap, meanwhile, was the "defender of the oppressed" incarnate "spitting on the political correctness of a hypocritical society like ours."[134] His *bakbakan* or action films were "proletarian potboilers,"[135] "ethnopoeic,"[136] or "a mass consciousness."[137] Brocka's comparable "commercial" flicks are considered "well crafted" but dispensable.

In treating the Erap-Brocka opposition as a fraught division of labor, the outlines of a "cinematic historical imaginary"[138] of contention, disjuncture, institutional and cultural loss appears—a cultural apparatus entangled with state power and changing structures of production and distribution. This apparatus is never fixed; rather, it oscillates between cultural and industrial concerns. In the 1970s-80s these concerns became increasingly mediated by identification with and rebellion against the colonial "other"—American commercialism (Hollywood). Here, art was both part of a developmental project, and an autonomous practice, both anti-art and art, a commodity and not a commodity, popular and esoteric. "Art is both produced by *and* destroyed by capitalist culture, both its ideology *and* its critique."[139] This means, as pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, that consideration must

---

[132] Armida V. Santiago, "The Struggle of the Oppressed: Lino Brocka and the New Cinema of the Philippines" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, Denton, 1993).
[133] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press. 2014), 42.
[134] Randy David (Professor of Sociology, University of the Philippines, Diliman), in discussion with the author, October 2019.
[135] Pete Lacaba, "Notes on Bakya: Being an Apologia of sorts for Filipino Masscult," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 117-123.
[136] Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 423-457.
[137] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "The spectre of populism in Philippine politics and society: artista, masa, Eraption!" *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2001): 5-44.
[138] Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, 21.
[139] Stewart Martin, "The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity," *Radical Philosophy* 146 (November/December 2007): 17.

be given to the commodity function of art as "regimes of accumulation."[140] Cinema presents either well or poorly, a sense of "dialectical images" produced through *aesthetic tendencies*, either screening out or shedding light on historical transformation—that is to say, "shifts in the social structure itself."[141] The antinomies of art illuminate the ways in which this social structure's regimes of capital are held together by aesthetic forms. The politics of culture reveals its aestheticization.

Philippine Cinema—American Import?

Nationalism belongs to the ethereal thinking of what it replaced, religion and the techne of morning prayers. Bereft of discursive, political mediation, and ultimately a coherent relation to the philosophical absolute, freedom—it is driven inwards, into the individual's imagination.[142] If nationalism is vacuous, "national cinema" is also an empty signifier, acquiring meaning after "posterity…sifts through the nation's active and passive image bank."[143] It is a highly constructed—and displaced or mediated—category. This constructedness does not mean that historians have the last word on national cinema's meaning. The film industry is just that—an industry—corresponding to or expressing regimes (epochs) of capital accumulation. Hence the international renders "national cinema" subordinate in relation to the "dominant and referred point…always Hollywood."[144] This is in large measure

[140] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990), 338.
[141] Daniel Bell, "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education,* Vol. 6 No. 1-2 (January-April 1972): 31.
[142] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 35.
[143] Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 40.
[144] Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, 37.

because national cinema production relies on distribution networks showing primarily Hollywood films, without which the viewing of said films would be impossible.[145]

American dream factories cast a long shadow, under which the so-called "first golden age of Philippine cinema" (1940s-50s) arose. It was the high-water mark of Fordism—an epoch where mass production required mass consumption—"in short, a new kind of rationalized, modernist, and populist democratic society."[146] Much like in America, in the postwar Philippines, a studio system (LVN, Sampaguita, Premiere, Lebran) developed oligopoly control of production and distribution.[147] Despite protectionist legislation and exchange controls,[148] by the late 1950s the local industry could not keep pace with their American rivals.[149] Hollywood films dominated the metropole, establishing a distribution network—and more importantly, a cinephile audience—which Filipino films built on top of, cornering the provincial regions and immigrant population centers in Manila.[150]

The largest of the studios, LVN,[151] was run by Dona Sisang, a former haciendero. Cinema was but one item in her family's multi-sectoral portfolio, which—much like other postwar diversified family conglomerates,[152]—included

---

[145] Elsaesser, 38.
[146] Harvey, The *Condition of Postmodernity,* 125-126.
[147] Joel David, "Millennial Traversals: Outliers, Juvenilia, & Quondam Popcult Blabbery, Part I: Traversals Within Cinema," in *UNITAS* Vol. 88 No. 1 (Manila: University of Santao Tomas, 2015), 7.
[148] Nick Deocampo, *Film: American Influence on Philippine Cinema* (Pasig City: Anvil, 2017), 533. Like other Philippine industries, film production was nominally sheltered. The Republic Act 409 of 1948 prohibited licenses to theaters that did not exhibit ten percent Filipino-made films, while the Republic Act 426 of 1950 limited rental fees remitted to foreign companies to 75%.
[149] Deocampo, *Film,* 533.
[150] See Nick Deocampo, *Film: American Influences on Philippine Cinema* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2017) and *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* (National Commission for the Culture and the Arts, 2003). This was not always the case. Deocampo notes that up until the 1930s, Spanish-language films were dominant.
[151] LVN controlled over 60% of the market.
[152] For a brief introduction to this term, see Paul D. Hutchcroft and Emmanuel S. de Dios, "Political Economy," in *The Philippine Economy: Development, Policies, and Challenges,* ed. Arsenio M. Balisacan and Hal Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45-73.

banking, the cement industry, insurance, and real-estate.[153] She ran LVN like a both a film factory and a "feudal hacienda,"[154] producing up to 28 films yearly.[155] On the one hand, she "kept an ongoing correspondence with…technical experts in Hollywood" and acted as a spokesperson for the Philippine industry to Hollywood.[156] On the other hand, she "was nationalistic in the sense that she wanted…to depict Filipino customs, traditions and costumes."[157] LVN's 1950s musicals—contemporaneous to Hollywood's—depicted national practices of the Spanish period, like the zarazuela, a "folk" dance performed in the open theater.[158] These musicals expressed a certain nostalgic *Hispanismo,*[159] decaying remnants of the past.[160] Yet this mimicking of the old was a patina covering a new imaginary—the phantasmagoria of Fordist capitalism.

In this respect, the Philippine studios were "dream factories of American cinema," fantasies for "working out some of the most persistent issues of national and geopolitical import."[161] In this cinema, one can locate the contemplation of the

---

[153] Monina A. Mercado, *Doña Sisang and Filipino Movies* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1977), 149.
[154] Michael Chua, "Direk Mike De Leon and the Legacy of Doña Sisang," *Manila Times,* April 7, 2018. https://staging.manilatimes.net/2018/04/07/opinion/analysis/direk-mike-de-leon-and-the-legacy-of-dona-sisang/391027/.
[155] Mercado, 14.
[156] Mercado, *Doña Sisang,* 4.
[157] Mercado, 78.
[158] Nicanor Tiongson, "From Stage to Screen: Philippine Dramatic Traditions and the Filipino Film," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema,* ed. Rafael Ma Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1983), 87-88. Tiongson writes: "Probably the most prolific of all the dramatic progenitors of the Filipino film was the sarsuwcla, after the Spanish zarzuela, a musical comedy which supplanted the moro-moro in Manila from 1900 to the 1930's. Presented regularly in Manila and during fiestas in the provinces, sarsuwelas were love stories with songs and dances as high- lights. Romantic love between modest-pretty heroines and kind-handsome heroes (underscored by comic love between their servants or parents) is obstructed by matapobre donyas (snobbish rich women), ultra-modern alembong females (flirts), or suave be-mustached mestizo playboys (from the Spanish, understood to mean a Filipino with Western blood)."
[159] For a discussion of *Hispanismo,* see Nick Deocampo, *Film: American Influences on Philippine Cinema* (Pasig: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2017).
[160] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism 1939-1944 (1986; reis., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 19.
[161] Jose Capino, Dream Factories of a Former American Colony (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xx.

American experience and its reproduction. Trade unionism was part and parcel of the Fordist consumer culture needed to develop and support national production. The presence of former American soldiers with backgrounds in labor unions as well as top-notch organizers sent by the American Jesuits—in part to stem the tide of communism—contributed to an uptick of Philippine unions.[162] Following a botched communist uprising, the Jesuits were particularly well positioned to lead the labor movement. Their organizing efforts enabled theater and studio workers to negotiate CBAs.[163]

Although a virtual clone of their American counterparts, the studios were essentially a cottage industry and unable to sustain the aggressive organizing. By the late 1950s this labor activity[164] coupled with the US anti-trust "Paramount decision" to break vertically integrated production and distribution[165] factored in the system's collapse. The market was shifting, due to an ongoing increase of both urban poor and middle-class populations in the Manila region.[166] The former class often took jobs working in urban factories and as domestic helpers (for the latter). They were less concerned for European-resembling stars on offer by a declining studio system and

[162] Randy David (Professor of Sociology, University of the Philippines, Diliman), in discussion with the author, February 8, 2018.
[163] Edmundo F. Nolasco, *Unyonista: The Chronicles of a Social Justice Crusader* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2011), 72. A consolidated organization called the Philippine Musicians Guild (PMG) was set up, and further rights such as the right to picket unorganized theaters – with signs like "Don't patronize this theatre. It is not unionized" – was won. The FFW even sent a delegation to study the Hollywood guild model.
[164] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Philippine Problems in Film History," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 74-75.
[165] Joel David, *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1998), 70. US jurisprudence was often followed in the Philippines.
[166] Hedman, "The spectre of populism," 9.

"used their peso-votes to signify what types of idols they preferred….iconographies long withheld by the elite-controlled studio system."[167]

The commercial and unsophisticated tastes of these viewers allegedly harmed the traditional "quality" local films, leading the premiere Filipino director at that time, Lamberto V. Avellana, to spitefully coin the term "bakya crowd."[168] Referring to the wooden slippers worn by the poor living in backwards barrios, *bakya* became synonymous with kitsch, "unsophisticated, undiscriminating, uncouth even."[169] But the market required stars who, sensing their worth, demanded higher pay. New tactics were needed to efficiently recoup investment: the exploitation film and the rise of the superstar. Freed from contractual obligations to the studios, the stars produced more films with more producers—in turn proliferating the star phenomena.[170] These factors revolutionized the studio system from a "closed corporation to the freewheeling enterprise" of actors who made their own films.[171] The gatekeepers of mass culture were swept aside, and actor-producers like Joseph "Erap" Estrada—then a young action ("bakbakan") superstar—stepped in to capitalize on cultural fads considered taboo by the likes of Avellana—imported from America.

The "Out-of-Focus Effect"

From the late 1950s through the 1960s, a preponderance of films followed their Hollywood counterparts, often as knockoffs and cultural fads. "As Hollywood

---

[167] Joel David, "Review of *Contestable Nation-Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos- Brocka Philippines*, by Roland Tolentino," *International Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 14 No. 1 (January 2017): 29.
[168] Pete Lacaba, "Notes on Bakya: Being an Apologia of sorts for Filipino Masscult," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 117-123, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 117.
[169] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Approaches to Philippine Film," in *The Urian Anthology: 1970-1979*, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: M. L. Morato, 1983), 100.
[170] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Philippine Problems in Film History," 74.
[171] Hedman, "The spectre of populism," 14.

goes, so goes local moviedom" mused Filipino journalist and author Nick Joaquin.[172] Joaquin located an "out-of-focus effect" in these movie clones: "something not quite Philippine, not quite American."[173] While some nationalists advocated that Filipino films counteract American imperialism,[174] Joaquin thought that "local movies perpetuate the worst kind of colonialism in our culture…the lust to become pseudo-American."[175] The postwar generation, Joaquin believed, was so mired in admiration for America it was unable to distinguish between cinema's public sphere and their own social reality. "The movie fixed the type of the Philippine teen-ager," he bemoaned, referring to a local 1957 film popularizing the imported "greaser" fad. It featured Erap's movie pals who, off the set "…continued to tie a compact gang, together in their drinking, together in their joyriding, together in their brawls."[176]

In both American and Philippine youth culture, the trend was towards alienation and rebellion. The generational reality portrayed by Erap's cohort expressed a "James Dean mood," which is to say, the "perpetually renewed unease du jour" of their depoliticized generation.[177] The youth rituals, such as *barakada* or gang identity, comprised a "dramatic eruption" from the practices of generations prior, largely submissive and feal to family. This "mood" was articulated not only through fashion but, in Erap's case, through method acting (or some approximation

[172] Nick Joaquin, "Gun Duel at LVN," 44-56, in Reportage on Crime (Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1977), 44-45.
[173] Joaquin, "Gun Duel," 45.
[174] Deocampo, *Film,* 138-139.
[175] Joaquin, "Gun Duel," 44-45.
[176] Joaquin, "Gun Duel," 50. Before becoming an actor almost by accident, Erap had been a college drop-out, carousing with gangsters and mugging college law students for drinking money. As an actor, he battled a criminal protection syndicate seeking to disfigure male stars. On one occasion, a gun duel between Erap and a rival group at (ironically) the LVN movie studio resulted in the death of a costar.
[177] Jean-Paul Dumont, "The Visayan Male 'Barkada': Manly Behavior and Male Identity on a Philippine Island," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1993): 407.

thereof)[178]—a blurring of fiction and reality in itself. But it also incorporated (global) youth rebellion within a lifestyle that viewers consumed—putting pressure on efforts to construct an authentic Filipino culture. Yet Erap's on-screen and off-screen escapes into the rebel world of street culture belied a conformism enfolding an entire generation—for whom free individuality and rebellion[179] were foreclosed by incorporating the population at large within the counter-cultural paradigm.

The youth counterculture shocked Joaquin, but only momentarily. He soon wrote of the same "greaser" film with fondness, claiming it "not only summed up a generation," it was a turning point from the escapist fare of the old studio films to the "contemporary world…wearing the look of the '50s, speaking the idiom of the '50s."[180] The actor-producers such as Erap who cut their teeth with the Big-Four studios, had by then established their own. The breaking down and reconstituting of the film industry played a part in, and imagined, new formations of capitalism welling up from reconfigured physical and social foundations. Shifts in cinematic form and technique came "into focus" because of "shifts in the social structure itself."[181] The "social infrastructure" or consumer base had changed because of recent rural-to-urban migrants; shifts in production were afoot, with new industries emerging from a surplus and unorganized labor force. Meanwhile, investments in "physical infrastructures"—an impediment to new rationalizations—were devalued with the breakup of studio control over both production and distribution (that is, ownership of theaters).

---

[178] Rez Cortez, in conversation with the author, January 25, 2018.
[179] Daniel Bell, "Cultural Contradictions," 23.
[180] Nick Joaquin, "Mr. Box Office," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema,* 144-156, ed. Rafael Ma Guerrero. (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 152.
[181] Bell, "Cultural Contradictions," 31.

By the 1960s, the local film industry developed "market rationalizations" to improve turnover time in production and "accelerat[e]… exchange and consumption."[182] Innovations included 35mm film advertisements, allowing greater "inventory control" and resulting in a tripling in investment.[183] Both actors and booking agents ventured into production, indicating not only increased demand but sophisticated distribution mechanisms. Finally, improved feedback mechanisms came from mushrooming fan clubs, industry magazines, and the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences Awards (FAMAS), which assigned criteria for aesthetic and technical success.

The industry matured; local films had just as many playdates as foreign films and even began for the first time to outgross them. By 1966 over 200 films were produced yearly, and Manila alone saw 36.5 million admissions.[184] This however oversaturated the market, leading to a decline in production. Erap was by then known for portraying the poor urban underdog "in action films which celebrate the dignity of spirit among the very poor."[185] His character had grown up—shedding lumpen, hoodlum personae for working class roles. That same year, he produced and starred in a prestige film for his own studio—the national epic *Ito ang Pilipino* (This is the Filipino, 1966). Popular culture had assimilated youth rebellion; the nationalistic "pang-FAMAS"[186] genre had assimilated the actor-producers.

---

[182] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity,* 285.
[183] Hedman, "The spectre of populism," 14. "…from US$210,000 in 1960 to US$625,000 in 1965."
[184] Hedman, 16.
[185] Agustin L. Sotto, "A Close Look at Pinoy Action Movies," in The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989, 60-65, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001), 98.
[186] Roughly, this means "FAMAS-like."

Joaquin glowingly endorsed the film, calling it "authentic Philippine cinema, besides being a darned good show."[187] More than a show, it was also a political advertisement, anticipating Erap's foray into politics. During his 1967 run for the Mayor of San Juan City he quipped "It's time for me to repay [the bakya crowd] for what they have done for me and I can only repay them by serving them."[188] In recognizing the *bakya* as mass constituency, Erap had, in effect, cashed in "peso-votes"[189] from his immense popularity as a movie star at the ballot box. The vote was also a blow against entrenched corruption; the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ) had theretofore ruled city hall in cahoots with the police department and the Liberal Party.[190]

Following the election win, Joaquin praised Erap's *authenticity*: "The Estrada films…are the closest we have come to true Philippine cinema—not limp clique art…but alive and gutsy pop art as contemporary as a canto boy's latest belch."[191] Erap's approach to politics was similarly timely. His campaign was the first in the Philippines to deploy a PR agency—helping craft an image as an independent and a public servant. As such, he was a new breed, the "artista-politico"—"unburdened by tradition, hierarchy, and easily accessible to a wide spectrum of the population."[192] Increasingly urbanized, middle-class, and poor, this public had become "less firmly

[187] Cited in Danny Dolon, "Ito ang Pilipino: Erap's masterpiece," *The Philippine Star,* April 18, 1999.
[188] Nick Joaquin, "Erap in a New Role," in *Joseph Estrada and Other Sketches* (Manila: National Book Store, 1977), 18.
[189] Joel David, "Millennial Traversals: Outliers, Juvenilia, & Quondam Popcult Blabbery, Part II: Expanded Perspectives," in *UNITAS* Vol. 89 No. 2 (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2015), 109.
[190] Again, see Joaquin's harrowing account of the election in "Erap in a New Role."
[191] Joaquin, "Erap in a New Role," 6.
[192] Hedman, 9.

integrated into local clientelist structures."[193] These political structures required resources and a mass political vehicle,[194] yet job intensive industries were lacking, limiting the corporate tax base.[195] As for the mass party, Erap and other artista-politicos were unfit for this task. Instead, they attempted a complex juggling of cultural and political appeals, assisted by their "simulation of patronage"[196]—or, reproducing the illusion of clientelism without a party apparatus.

The Cultural Turn and the Crisis in Criticism

This chapter has thus far set aside the question of the Left. We now recall it was *outside* during Erap's vote to eliminate the US bases. Was this due merely to nationalism's contested and amorphous character?[197] Here we must expand the thesis, noting not only the Left's failed contestation of nationalism, but the tortured and contradictory relationship of its nationalist and cosmopolitan aspects.[198] Said contradiction was rendered obscure through tactics whereby the Philippine Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), in the process of reconstruction after devastating losses the decade prior, latched onto nationalist groups with the plan of "infiltrating…and annexing them" to a united front.[199] Lowered horizons of this nature also characterized a traumatized international Left, which through the 1950s

[193] Thomas C. Nowak and Kay A. Snyder, "Clientelist Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?" *The American Political Science Review*, Sep., 1974, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1974): 1166. See Nick Joaquin (Quejano de Manila), "Erap in a New Role," (Manila: National Bookstore), 1-43. The election was itself fraught. The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), who backed the Libera Party candidate and controlled the police, rigged the vote. But in addition to the Liberal and Nationalist parties having lost power, the INC—headquarted in San Juan—had also lost popularity due to its political meddling.
[194] Nowak and Snyder, "Clientelist Politics in the Philippines," 1164.
[195] The state instead relied on regressive point-of-purchase taxes (including on cinema admissions).
[196] Vincente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Philippine History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 137-140.
[197] Patricio Abinales, Fellow Traveler: Essays on Filipino Communis*m* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2001), 197.
[198] Abinales, *Fellow Traveler,* 4.
[199] William Chapman, *Inside the Philippine Revolution: The New People's Army and its Struggle for Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 72.

"maintained political will through culture, criticism, a sociology of the mass society, and alienation."[200] This trauma in turn affected how the *New Left* was reconstructed in the 1960s.

In the Philippines, the common "progenitor" of both communists and nationalist was the statesman Claro Recto, whose 1950s crusade "…initiated for a wider audience than the Left had been able to reach, a critical definition of the role of the Philippines within the neocolonial framework."[201] Consequent to the PKP's state of disarray, Recto's campaign was taken as an opportunity to recruit youth "to the anti-imperialist position.[202] Recto's crusade called for national industrial development:

> …by Filipino capitalists, and not simply the prevention of industrialization by foreign capitalists; exploitation of our natural resources by Filipino capital; development and strengthening of Filipino capitalism, not of a foreign capitalism; increase of the national income, but not allowing it to go mostly for the benefit of non-Filipinos.[203]

Recto here describes Fordism—which "simply means the need for rationalized state planning."[204] Yet Fordism as such was not successfully replicated in the Philippines. As Paul Hutchcroft notes, "above all, advanced forms of capitalism require an administrative and legal structure able to promote "political and procedural predictability."'[205] However, following the global postwar boom and import and exchange controls, conditions for "rationalization" of legal and administrative norms

---

[200] Bell, 20.
[201] Renato Constantino, The Philippines: The Continuing Past (Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), 272.
[202] Francisco Nemenzo (professor emeritus and former president of the University of the Philippines, Diliman), in discussion with the author, October 14, 2018.
[203] Constantino, *The Continuing Past,* 292.
[204] Harvey*,* 127.
[205] Paul Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state: The politics of private domestic commercial banking in the Philippines." (Volumes I and II) Phd diss., (Yale University, 1993), 106.

failed to materialize. A weak state with unpredictable administration stymied "the fuller development of calculability in the productive sphere." Two further factors limited industrial take-off: one, heavy investment in mining, timber, and ag exports, real estate and services.[206] Boundaries between *inside* and *outside* the family corporation blurred, overlapping with the "personal authority of individuals"[207] The household fused to the business enterprise—diversified family corporations spanning agriculture, industry, and banking became the dominant political and economic players.

Yet by the late 1960s the political status-quo ante—clientelism—declined and "specialized;" i.e., patronage networks began to disintegrate in favor of the highest bidder. The collapse of these networks meant that without a "considerable government intervention," large swatchs of the population would face "an increasing loss of security."[208] No mass political formation emerged to mediate these discontents. Ferdinand Marco's experiments in developmental statism—formalized in 1972 with the declaration of Martial Law—exercised "considerable government intervention" but were bound up in the crisis and transformation of Fordism.

"Economic nationalism" has been thus far used to define Fordism in the Philippine context, which was more an ideal than reality. Yet for Recto's intellectual protégé, Renato Constantino, the crusade exemplified a future "decolonized Filipino"[209] and an advance beyond the "colonial mentality." As such, Recto's campaign—a political failure—had greater traction at cultural-propagandistic and

[206] Nowak and Snyder, 1149
[207] Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state," 22
[208] Nowak and Snyder, 1149.
[209] Constantino, *The Philippines: Continuing Past,* 272.

literary-psychological levels. It was in propagandizing nationalism that the PKP successfully rebuilt its cadre—some of whom broke away to form the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). While the CPP's germination thus originated in the defeat and existential turn of the postwar intelligentsia, it branched out in directions foreclosed to the proletarian PKP—namely, to subjective and cultural dimensions of struggle, not only against labor exploitation but oppressions ostensibly perpetuated by America and the Soviet Union's "social imperialism." Not incidentally, Constantino was a "major intellectual inspiration" for the CPP.[210]

The New Left's cultural turn was, in large measure, a turn away from the factory to the open fields of the nation—of which the yet largely agrarian Philippines had many. Filipino culture was seen as a site to suture a perennial "great divide" between the masses and nationalist intelligentsia—on the basis of common "historical experience of social fragmentation and conflict."[211] Literature internalized a perceived collective suffering as a "haunting of the Filipino nation" by its own subaltern others. Instead of advocating an explicit political transformation, postwar nationalist discourse embodied a tension that Caroline Hau characterizes as a "doubled subject":

> On the one hand, the Filipino collective subject of history is free in its capacity to strive for perfection and respond to the ethical imperative of transforming the determinants of its existing conditions. On the other hand, this same subject is irreducibly constrained by these determinants and her history, that is, by something human labor and effort shaped, but did not make.[212]

---

[210] Vincente Rafael, "Mis-Education, Translation and The *Barakada* of Languages," *Kritika Kultura* 21/22 (2013/2014), 2.
[211] Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*. (2000, reis., Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 12.
[212] Hau, *Necessary Fictions,* 27.

This doubled subject was also an "object of anxiety," resulting not only in cultural dissent and contestation, but state regulation.[213] Culture was a site mediating a "powerful pedagogical imperative toward ethical self-development."[214] The citizen's exemplary self-realization, mediated by culture, modeled the nation[215]—first effecting an inner, then outer, social transformation.[216]

The cultural turn had immediate objects of cinematic critique. It was a rebellion against the commercial cinema of the 1960s and its legitimating body, the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences Awards (FAMAS).[217] FAMAS was opposed not only as a corrupt institution, but as a purveyor of experimental and aesthetic criteria[218] by an awards body called the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (Viewers of Philippine Film, MPP). Instead of "Western" aesthetics, the MPP strove to "rediscover folk traditions…in contemporary popular culture," prioritizing indigenous folklore.[219] At the same time they "replaced FAMAS's bourgeois formalism with a more progressive canonical build-up."[220] The MPP was initiated by, among others, "new cinema" director Ishmael Bernal, who had the following to say:

> "We were having fun, the world was ours and our sworn enemy was Marcos! We were young filmmakers, beautiful and talented and had a common cause to improve the quality of the Filipino cinema, by which we meant at the time, reacting to the previous generation of Filipino films, that is, the cinema of the 60s which produced sex and cowboy movies, James Bond movies, Hollywood copies, Elvis Presley movies. So our generation of filmmakers introduced social realism, and psychological insights into characters, breaking down

---

[213] Hau, 27.
[214] Hau, 16.
[215] Hau, 25.
[216] Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 62-63.
[217] David, "Millennial Traversals (Part II),"152. Joel David charactaerizes the FAMAS of this time as hosting "corruption-ridden and mislabeled industry prizes" controlled by a handful of newspapers.
[218] Joel David, *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1998), 97.
[219] Campos, *End of National Cinema,* 89.
[220] David, *Wages of Cinema*, 97.

> stereotypes, the bad cliches, and did away with James Bond and cowboys, kicking them out of films by doing good socio-realistic, psychological dramas."[221]

Bernal's generation was bringing a "new cinema" into focus *against* the 1960s, in the creative and critical sense, against what the European new waves of the prior decade called "daddy's cinema." Like Bernal, Lino Brocka also challenged the "bad cliches" of Erap's generation, calling for better films that raised "local cinema from its present *bakya* status to an artistically acceptable level" by "introduce[ing] gradual changes until one succeeds in creating one's desired audience." These familiar (Filipino) themes and experiences were to be "compress[ed] and systematiz[ed]" in filmic form for the audience to "enjoy and be moved by and take as their own."[222] The proposal was for, in short, more aesthetically sophisticated films grafted onto traditional, popular forms, which would eventually produce a more discerning Filipino audience. Brocka's proposal embraced melodramatic structure, and in practical terms meant making four or five compromise flicks for every art film.

The film criticism emerging from this "new wave" milieu more closely reflected Brocka's gradualism than Bernal's modernist impulse to "accelerate the demise of "backward" ways of thinking."[223] Bernal's *Nunal sa Tubig* deliberately pushed the fusion of folkloric and modernist themes to an absurdist limit. Some MPP members judged the film as "incoherent, poorly-edited, and "un-Filipino" in sensibility."[224] This led the MPP to a practical contradiction. A film should

---

[221] Aruna Vasudev, "Ishmael Bernal: Cast in Another Mould," *Cinemaya* 27 (Spring 1995): 17-18.
[222] Lino Brocka, "Philippine Movies: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 259-262, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 260-261.
[223] Hau, *Necessary Fictions* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2000), 125.
[224] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Nunal sa Tubig Revisited," in The Urian Anthology 1970-1979, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson. (Manila: Morato, 1983), 242-243.

"reflect…the culture of Filipinos."[225] Yet "cinema is not a national, but an international business."[226] This contradiction was resolved by separating out a universalist "technique" from vernacular "sensibility…bear[ing] the stamp of the culture that molded the artist." The MPP embraced cosmopolitan "technique," in order to validate the "demand that a Filipino film be Filipino in sensibility."[227] The rigid division of form and content regrettably subordinated the artist to a perceived national culture and ostensible collective experience.

Subsequently, MPP member Nicanor Tiongson formalized a proto-modernist[228] framework quite like Brocka's proposal. Tiongson claimed that traditional modes of Philippine theater "migrated…into the medium of film and created the cinematic taste among the masses which is now scorned as bakya."[229] MPP member Alice Guillermo was skeptical that these archaic *forms* (costumes, dances, theatrical traditions) expressed the same *content* within, or exclusively constituted, Philippine films.[230] This author would add (as argued in chapter one) that cinema is not teleological "national property," but rather a crisis-ridden and fluctuating world art, prone to breaks and transformations in regimes of accumulation.

In sum, critic's agenda straddled what film historian Patrick Campos calls a "double conjecture"—the "folkloric" on one hand, and the "canonical" on the

[225] Lumbera, "Nunal sa Tubig Revisited," 242-243.
[226] Elsaesser, 37.
[227] Lumbera, 242-243.
[228] This is Joel Davids term. See David, *Wages of Cinema,* 97.
[229] Nicanor Tiongson, "From Stage to Screen: Philippine Dramatic Traditions and the Filipino Film," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema,* ed. Rafael Ma Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, 1983), 84
[230] Alice Guillermo, *Images of Change: Essays and Reviews* (Quezon City: Kalikasan, 1988), 97.

other.[231] In both cases, cinema's ends lay in its mythologizing national function.[232] The mythology was concerned with national development—not only for cinema, but the "Filipino people." The "great divide" between the "masses" and the nationalist intelligentsia, gave rise to an ambivalence that came to color and occlude film criticism—which was conducted in a state of "piecemeal hurriedness," resulting in composited publications culled from showbiz industry writings.[233] These "coffee table compilations" were cited in turn and "made indispensable in the realm of film pedagogy."[234] Predictably, the exigencies of review writing left open a significant gap in addressing what, exactly, was the function of criticism—had it become nothing more than the film review-crowd who made up the award-giving bodies?[235]

Bernal's insight—that the "new wave" was an attack on the 1960s—clarified an immediate object of criticism, at least for the artists (if not the critics) of that movement. Erap was in this sense target or *contrabida* (antagonist) representing a bad generation of "Hollywood copies," one of the "actor-producers" who, as we shall see, dominated that decade *from the inside,* unconsciously "face-to-face" with Hollywood. Meanwhile Bernal and Brocka were of the auteur generation, capable of reflexively fashioning a persona through engagements with the *outside*—through the European film festival circuit. And, *outside* the FAMAS dominated by Erap.[236] In the very clash

[231] Campos, 89.
[232] Campos, 91-92.
[233] Campos, 89.
[234] Campos, 88.
[235] David, "Millennial Traversals (Part II)," 150.
[236] Joel David, "Book Texts—A Second Golden Age," Oct. 22, 2020 https://amauteurish.com/2020/10/22/book-texts-a-second-golden-age/. David writes, "During the launching ceremony for the Film Academy of the Philippines, Imee Marcos, then-recently appointed Director-General of the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, announced that the FAP would be replacing the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (inasmuch as the latter was an academy only in name). Joseph Estrada, then still the mayor of San Juan City, had just won two FAMAS awards, each one his fifth as producer and as actor, thereby qualifying him for elevation to

and contestation of these two decades, victory (i.e., market rationalization) would be achieved by neither generational cohort, but rather, in large measure, intervention by the state. Erap and the 1960s generation were better positioned to reap the benefits—but also the forthcoming crisis.

State and Cultural Decolonization

If "national cinema usually means…an institution…enjoying state patronage and, when defined as culture, often receiving substantial state support,"[237] then the twilight years of the Marcos regime were characterized by an expansion of national cinema. National cinema played a legitimating role vis-a-vi the state, and the state required legitimation precisely because of its declining legitimacy. But post-Fordist transformations cause the very concept of "national cinema" to "come under pressure"—making both the concept and the state's relation to it "oscillate between an industrial and a cultural definition" [238]

This oscillation was evident in both nationalist criticism and state sponsorship. Despite Bernal's insistence that Marcos was the enemy, he and Brocka participated in the Tadhana project—a "multimillion peso omnibus"[239] modeled after the state-funded series "that was touted to be the definitive history of the Philippines."[240] The project was never completed, and Brocka soon fell out of favor with the

its Hall of Fame in two capacities (a historic first-and-only achievement) during the next year's ceremony. He therefore waged a campaign in favor of maintaining the FAMAS, forcing film authorities to agree to allow the new academy and the old pseudo-academy to continue; ironically, the FAP would also experience its own schism in the new millennium, resulting in two sets of awards claiming to emanate from the same organization."

[237] Elsessaer, 36.

[238] Elsaesser, 36.

[239] Agustin V. Sotto, "Filmography," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times,* ed. Mario A. Hernando. (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 245-308.

[240] Espiritu, 6. See also Sotto, "Filmography," 259-260. *Tadhana: Ito ang Lahing Pilipino—Reform Movement Episode* was part of larger Filipino epic history film project also featuring Lamberto Avellana and Ishmael Bernal. The film was produced by the National Media Production Center but never released.

administration. His representations of extreme poverty interfered with Marcos' developmentalist project, portraying a lopsided slice of the nation—its slums—to domestic and international audiences. According to one account, Imelda called him to the palace to remind him that "Your job as a director is to be part of nation building."[241]

Imelda's finger wagging, however, resembled if anything dictates passed down from the Left—namely, that the film critic's role lies in "reminding [the filmmaker] that he creates within a society that needs "developing."[242] "There can be no excuse in the Philippines," wrote MPP member Bienvenido Lumbera, "for films whose main concern is formalist experimentation…their self-indulgence in an underdeveloped country is a sheer waste of resources." Imelda, however, had a blunt rejoinder to critics of her cultural budget: "Filipino people should not accept the "barbaric injunction" that being a developing country, art and culture must constantly shrivel in neglect in our minds."[243] Differences in budgetary expenditure aside, the Left and right were aligned in that artists must be "culturally, if not politically, accountable to the Filipino people."[244] In both cases, underdevelopment was at the center of notions of national cinema.[245]

We have already discussed the transformation of the film industry, correlating emerging cultural-political forms such as the artista-politico, the "simulation of patronage,"[246] and the failure of politics to assimilate constituents. These

---

[241] Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon, "Brocka, Imelda, Imee…and other vanities," *The Manila Times,* May 24, 1996.
[242] Lumbera "Philippine Problems in Film History," 96.
[243] "FL exhorts film artists," *Bulletin Today*, Feb. 25, 1985.
[244] Campos, 89.
[245] Espiritu, 5.
[246] Vincente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 137.

transformations were global in scope. In Europe, the "creative industries and experience economies," including film festivals, attempted to capture "the time and location advantages" of tourism.[247] The phenomenon has since grown into a global post-Fordist alternative to Hollywood.[248]

Arguably, the Philippines was well ahead of Europe in the development of a culture-based economy. Beginning with the construction of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in 1969, Imelda Marcos sought to recuperate a culture "timeless, locally rooted, and expressive of the authentic indigenous identity, character, and soul of the people."[249] This would be done democratically—ticket prices would cost only one peso. The center's inauguration featured a theatrical performance by none other than the original *bakya* critic, director Lamberto V. Avellana, and was attended by the American artista-politico, Ronald Regan.

It was a logical extension of the government's promotion of culture that in 1975, when Imelda Marcos took office as the first Governor of Metro Manila, she was approached by Erap with a proposal to transform the Manila Film Festival into a metro-wide event—the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF). Erap's recently established Movie Workers Welfare Foundation (MOWELFUND) would manage the festival and in return take a cut of the profits to support the health and education of industry workers. This was quickly accomplished, and it took nobody by surprise that Erap's own prestige film, staring himself—*Diligin Mo ng Hamog ang Uhaw na Lupa* (Sprinkle with Dew this Arid Earth) won first prize that year.[250] Erap's "commercial"

[247] Elsaesser, 103.
[248] Elsaesser, 88.
[249] Espiritu, 78.
[250] Hedman, 29. The film was directed by Augusto Buenaventura.

work, meanwhile, became increasingly self-referential, more often than not as father or henpecked husband, indicating that the rebel had been domesticated and his style reified.

By the early 1980s Imelda—at the height of what some sardonically called an "edifice complex"—was in the process of setting up the Manila Film Center (MFC) and the Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) that, according to her vision, would compete with Cannes. Full state support, and the groundwork laid by industry "actor-moguls" like Erap, guaranteed the new post-Fordist "alternative" would be birthed almost immediately and in full splendor. In 1981 Marcos signed an executive order[251] establishing various institutions to support the industry, including the Film Fund that would advance production loans, the Film Ratings Board which granted tax rebates to high-quality films, and the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) which would, much like its American counterpart,[252] consolidate the various film industry guilds under one roof. Written into the law as a coordinating body was Erap's MOWELFUND.

In 1982, at a substantial cost to taxpayers and, due to its hurried construction, the loss of life in a scaffolding collapse—the Manila Film Center—which housed the above institutions—opened to great international acclaim. The inauguration also kicked off the First Manila International Film festival, where Marcos gave the nationalist discussion its ultimate cosmopolitan interpretation:

[251] The Official Gazette, http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1981/01/05/executive-order-no-640-a-s-1981/. Executive Order No. 640-A was a "vehicle to accelerate the artistic, scientific and cultural advancement of the nation, and reinforce the national endeavor of social and economic development and progress."
[252] The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

> Ours is a time that finds its most sterling exponents in the image of the loser and the anti-hero, and it has sometimes appeared as through our art today is predominantly consumed by unremitting experience of ugliness…artists appear to be torn between the call of truth and the call of beauty. And because it seems more fashionable to choose truth, there sometimes is a tendency to think that by making things so ugly nobody can therefore doubt "its virginity.[253]

In a veiled attack on Brocka and Bernal's "aesthetics of poverty" (then being mobilized against him via international film festivals), Marcos sought to draw anew the boundaries between, and subordinate, culture to politics. He was, however, ensnared in his administration's cultural project of moral regeneration—"the good, the true, the beautiful." Instead of sensationalizing poverty, film should "provide a more faithful and arresting story of what is noble and beautiful in us as a people and as a race."[254] This claim did not substantially differ from the MPP's claim that Filipino film's "sensibility…bears the stamp of the culture that molded the artist."[255] If the MPP defended Brocka's representations of poverty, this was simply the flip side of the antinomy between autonomous and political art. The "ugliness" of Brocka's films seemingly rendered them anti-Hollywood. But if "beauty" was not identical to life ("truth"), national culture was also *not* commercial (American). To the extent that the regime was clearly propped up by IMF loans, its project of racial authenticity was delegitimized.

Despite agreement on nationalist fundamentals, the MIFF and MFC were, as the CCP before it, lambasted by critics as ostentatious and spendthrift. Shielded by a mandate from entertainment taxes and anti-pornography laws, the project's debts

[253] Ferdinand Marcos, "Cinema: Its Impact on Human Society," *Evening Post,* March 30, 1984.
[254] "FL exhorts film artists," *Bulletin Today*, February 15, 1985.
[255] Lumbera, "Nunal sa Tubig Revisited," 242-243.

were offset by a slew of "bold" (soft-porn) films that drew huge crowds.[256] The screenings were so successful that other municipal theaters experienced a slump in the meanwhile. At least in the short-term, these cultural programs were harming the very industry they were supposed to support. Lino Brocka (no doubt sympathetic to these losses) engaged in campaigns against the bold films, condemning how they "falsify, arouse our baser instincts and uphold the status quo."[257] In so doing, he linked his campaign to expose poverty with the chorus of voices allied against government corruption and spending—including the Catholic church. His participation in these campaigns called for censorship of fan magazines and movie columnists promoting smut films—indicating he might not be the anti-censorship advocate he has been made out to be.

Brocka and Erap's Melodramas

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the *cinematic historical imaginary*[258] as embedded in Erap and Brocka's *committed* films made just before and after the 1986 revolution, and the ensuing crisis and contestation for the apparatus of national cinema. These respective aesthetic and political-economic paradigms illuminate changing *regimes of accumulation*. Transitions across time can be tracked via production in the national, Fordist paradigm represented by Erap, to the post-Fordist production and distribution networks (i.e. film festivals) and institutional structures tapped by Brocka. Erap was an actor-producer among other actor-producers, able to rise on the decline of the studio system, at the peak of a global

[256] "Philippines Film & TV Industries Impatient for Clear Govt. Policies," *Variety*, July 16, 1986.
[257] Velarde, Ernie G. "Film as instrument for social change." *Times Journal*, September 4, 1985.
[258] Elsaesser's term—rather than "national symbolic."

postwar boom, a moment when their commercial ventures turned them into "subject and object" of history. Like his pal Fernado Poe Jr. Erap was an "artista-hindi-artista" (artist-not-an-artist),[259] that is, an artist who deflated art's aura and esoteric specialization. Erap was "closer to the Philippine experience" of the *bakya* class,[260] authentic, folkloric, or simply "the bristling victim of the Unjust Society."[261] Attempting to deepen this observation, we have cursorily tied Erap to James Dean and "the method" as a temporal marker—expressing emotional intensity, angst, and hubris of the depoliticized 1950s generation. These markers had a half-life that became reified, a self-reflexive "signature" in his productions of later years.

Meanwhile, Brocka was an auteur amongst the "new cinema" auteurs whose failed business ventures reflected the failed subjects in his films. He refunctioned the melodrama by injecting social themes, realistic scenes, and layering and differentiating character psychology. This he did by embracing the mass cinema public—as noted above, funding art films with four or five commercial productions, while seeking acclimation and financing in the burgeoning European festival market."[262] Recent reassessments of Brocka's legacy aver that melodrama reveals "a previously unrecognized problem or contradiction within modernity" to "generate outrage against realities that could and should be changed."[263] This type of "outrage"

---

[259] Alfonso B. Deza, *Mythopoeic Poe* (Quezon City: Great Books Publishing, 2006), 95.
[260] Pete Lacaba, "Notes on Bakya: Being an Apologia of sorts for Filipino Masscult," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 117-123, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 122.
[261] Nick Joaquin, "Mr. Box Office," 148.
[262] Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* (1988; reis. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 71. This formula was previously pursued by studios for prestige granted by domestic industry awards—until Imelda's short-lived attempt to rival Cannes by establishing the Manila International Film Festival. Here, the state intervened in a specific way to promote the local film and tourism industry and elevate the regime's prestige, with the unintended consequences of drawing viewers away from the local theaters. The scope of state activity expanded, "produc[ing] the side effect of a disproportionate increase in the need for legitimation."
[263] Linda Williams, "Mega-melodrama! Vertical and Horizontal Suspensions of the 'Classical,'" *Modern Drama* 55, no. 4 (2012): 524, 530.

would, of course, refer to anarchistic works in the tradition of Comte de Lautréamont, the Surrealists—a vein of literature rich in aesthetic experimentation. One could also turn to theatrical interests (like Summerset Maugham). Not only would Brocka's relation to other "neo-noir" works need to be taken into consideration, but the European art-house circuit that he penetrated in the mid-1970s.

In the few observations on Brocka's aesthetics readily available, the most striking comes from Machel Perez in *Le Matin:* " The vigor and visual intensity of the neo-realist masters fused with the admired qualities of American psychological cinema. Result: a melodrama that reminds one of the American films of Bunuel."[264] Meanwhile Rafael Guerrero noticed in Brocka's work a tension between "dramatic sense, documentary aspirations."[265] This hints at the mixing of private and public realms. As previously argued, statist impulses defined both Left and right cultural discourses; both assumed private and public spheres "work in tandem, inculcating a drive toward self-improvement in the cultural citizen."[266] In other words, art reflected a larger tendency towards public-private collapse. The question is, did it do so as a contradiction, or affirmatively?

Giles Deleuze affirms this collapse, observing that Brocka had to traverse "an illiterate public, swamped by American, Egyptian or Indian serials, and karate films…it is this material that he has to work on, to extract from it the elements of a people who are still missing."[267] It is interesting to consider the meaning of this

---

[264] Agustin L. Sotto, "Lino Brocka: The International Director," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times,* ed. Mario A. Hernando (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 105.
[265] Rafael Ma. Guerrero, "Lino Brocka: Dramatic Sense, Documentary Aspirations," ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero, *Readings in Philippine Cinema* (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 226.
[266] Espiritu, 6-7.
[267] Giles Deleuze, *Cinema: The Time Image 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 217.

"missing people," particularly with respect to the fragmentary and collapsed public-private spheres described by Hutchcroft's patrimonial oligarchic state. Deleuze's notion of *trance*—the "absence of boundary between the private and the political"[268]—attempts to put this fragmentation towards a new, party-less and non-proletarianized politics, *the multitude*. The concept recalls the anarchist valorizations of the "rabble of the people," the "riff-raff," the "lumpenproletariat," for whom Marx believed, class consciousness (for itself) was impossible. But this idea is wrong if it concerns Brocka—who, despite the proliferation of lumpen characters in his films, was against trance-like states induced by cinema, as testified by his following remarks:

> [The] audience cannot demand something better if they are steeped and just completely immersed in that quagmire of Hollywood films—Rambo and all that. They cannot! You are not developing their sense of thinking—they don't become discriminating with their taste. America just keeps giving them one (piece of) shit after another and they don't know any better anymore, and it's to the point where they will accept just anything.[269]

These comments are an admission of the pull Hollywood, with whom his films are "face to face." As noted previously, this was due to a critical deepening of the 1960s Hollywood cliches into psychological insights and social realism. Subsequent pages of this dissertation will discuss reflexive tropes used by Brocka to defamiliarize Hollywood forms (Bernal commonly did the same). Keeping this point in mind—that the "new wave" intended not simply to portray their characters as comprised of "shattered states of emotions and drives," but helpless as a function of social circumstance and cinematic genre cliches—we observe a layering and space-

[268] Deleuze, *The Time Image 2,* 219.
[269] Marlina Gonzales-Tamrong, "LA-based Pinoy newspaper features Brocka," The Manila Chronicle, May 6, 1987.

time compression. The new wave, in other words, compressed and folded the 1960s into the 1970s, producing a more complex object with a plethora of cinematic references.

On a more abstract level, Erap's films more straightforwardly carry over aesthetic constructions from, to use Deleuze's term, classic cinema. This cinema was more concerned with the body's motion, and with an editing technique that chained together clips and sequences in a continuous and rhythmic fashion, like music, or a machine. This aesthetic lends itself to episodic constructions. Brocka, as part of Bernal's "new wave" cohort, introduced cinematic movements like dolly shots and 180-degree camera shifts. These techniques were consonant with emphasizing character and psychological development, manipulating time and the character within it, both building and deflating the star's emotionality and mesmerizing prowess. Erap performed this disenchantment as well, constantly dying from hubris—but had only so far to fall as his character had limited psychological range.

A Season for Labor Films

Before proceeding to a comparison of Brocka and Erap's *committed* melodramas, it is important to historicize their cinema politics. While the Marcos administration attempted to establish a developmental regime, it instead adapted to post-Fordism through investments in the culture industry. According to David Harvey, post-Fordist politics are thoroughly "mediatized," producing "the fleeting, superficial, and illusory means whereby an individualistic society of transients sets forth its nostalgia for common values." In this context, the state requires a "stable

(though dynamic) image as part of [its] aura of authority and power."[270] In this imagistic domain, artists possessed a certain undeniable power. Nationalism's ideological vacuity allowed them to stake a claim[271]—or at least, project an image of radical elan against the "apparatus" of cinema.

Brocka, along with his fellow "new cinema" director Mike de Leon criticized the expense of the Manila International film festival and began agitating against rigid film controls.[272] On February 11, 1983 they organized a rally that the movie industry was hesitant to endorse. It snowballed into a series of larger anti-censorship protests under the name "Free the Artist Movement,"[273] which de Leon even turned into a documentary (discussed in the subsequent chapter). Fractures were appearing within the structure of the FAP, where Erap held court. "The rally in my opinion is a case of wrong timing," he complained. "[N]gayong pa sila lalaban (they keep fighting) when the movie industry is getting all the government help and support. There are visible results."[274]

The "visible results" were the reorganization of the film industry guilds, with state funds pouring in through the Film Fund and in the form of tax rebates from the Film Ratings Board—whose first recipient was, ironically, Lino Brocka. However reassuring this support may have been to the industry—and there were disputes over how resources were allocated—political discontent was palpable, as was the growing economic crisis. Since the ending of martial law (in 1981) and the killing of Ninoy

[270] Harvey, 288.
[271] Abinales, *Fellow Traveler,* 197.
[272] Jose Capino, *Martial Law Melodrama* (Oakland: University of Califoria Press, 2018), 129. Executive Order 868, which reorganized the Board of Censors with expanded power.
[273] Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon, "The Brocka Battles," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando, 118-153 (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 124.
[274] Billy R. Balbastro, "Joseph Estrada gets busy again as filmmaker," *Times Journal,* February 25, 1983.

Aquino, labor unions had grown more militant and oppositional to the government, including unions in the business district, Makati. The Bank Employees Labor Association union tore up phone books and weekly rained yellow confetti—the favorite color of the slain Ninoy Aquino—down on rallies from atop office buildings. Leftist unions infiltrated the country's first export processing zone, twice immobilized the zones's workforce of 26,000 with mass strikes.[275] Countrywide, the number of strikes almost doubled in 1984 compared to the year prior.[276]

While foreign investment was decreasing, it is not clear if this was attributed to or caused the strike wave.[277] The uptick in labor activity could be interpreted as a grappling with the potential of a social welfare state—insofar as the current state was clearly on the way out. Labor was "in the air" —and, with the reinvigorated youth protest movement, there was an activist market to tap. These factors undergirded a "season for labor films," which included Brocka's *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (My Country: Holding on to the Edge of the Knife, 1984)[278] and Erap's *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy* (Paper Boat on a Sea of Flames, 1984), and Mike Deleon's *Sister Stella L.* (1984). These "labor films" were economic-nationalist vehicles expressing the language of *classic political cinema.* Cinematic experiments were subordinate to plot, the endings were arguably rather weak, the plots were episodic.

---

[275] Kim Scipes, *KMU: Building Genuine Trade Unionism in the Philippines, 1980-1994* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1996), 139. As a consequence the government scrapped eleven more zones planned at that time. Steve McCay, *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands* (New York: Cornell Press, 2006), 13.
[276] Louis West, "Political unionism, development and democratization in the Philippines," PhD Dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), 139. 282 strikes total occurred in 1984.
[277] West, "Political Unionism," 139.
[278] *Bayan Ko's* Philippine release was delayed until the following year due to a court battle over censorship of the film. See Capino, 147 for an account of the lawsuit.

Numerous links tied the creatives of all three films.[279] *Bangkang Papel* was originally written as a follow-up to *Maynila, sa mga Kuko ng Liwinag* (Manila in the Claws of Neon, 1975)—Brocka's famous Cannes winner that set the scene for further conquests of the European festival market. Like *Maynila*, *Bangkang Papel* was written by Edgardo Reyes and was to star the former film's lead, Bembol Roco. However, it fell afoul of financial sponsorship of the state-run Film Fund, allegedly due to the theme of labor unrest.[280] Erap took the film under his wing, retaining the theme and ensuring its consummation as a *bakbakan* (fighting/action) melodrama—at once resurfacing the style and concerns of the 1960s "classic" political cinema (not least being Erap's famous "Elvis" style pomade). Sexual oppression is a theme in the film but unlike *Maynila* it is strictly heterosexual. The prostitution scenes are rather banal, particularly because the prostitute (Laarni Enriquez), Erap's on-screen ex, happens to be his actual mistress. The fatherly, even chaste protections he gives her (before finally consummating things in a springtime montage) read like an in-joke, and certainly do not express much of an aesthetics of oppression. Antagonists are crude caricatures hardly comparable to real-world bosses.

The primary conflict is not sexual but responds to exploitation at the point of production. Reyes moved his provinciano from the intersection of Ongpin and Misericordia—the famous Chinatown intersection represented in *Maynila*—to the Hemisphere Textile Mills—implicating rather than the Chinese shopkeeper, the

[279] *Stella* and *Bayan Ko* shared Pete Lacaba as scriptwriter, who inserted two characters based on interviews with workers in strike areas—a veteran labor leader and a young labor activist—into both films. Several of the same actors appeared in *Bayan Ko* and *Bangkang Papel*—Paquito Diaz plays a sadistic foreman in both films; Raul Aragon plays a wanton HR manager in *Bangkang Papel* and a gangster in the *Bayan Ko*. Rez Cortez plays his lumpen accomplice in the latter film, and a sidekick to Erap in the former.
[280] Ronald K. Constantino. "Erap serves constituents, entertains movie audiences." *Tempo*, March 2, 1983.

globalized economy. At the same time, the film follows the "proletarianized" model of classic political cinema. As the film opens Corpuz (Erap), requests and is denied safety masks. Although clean and orderly, the factory is a degenerate place—rogue employees harass women and steal. The personnel manager impregnates one and molests another. Meanwhile the general manager is busy practicing his golf moves. The last straw comes when it is discovered by Erap—unassisted by labor lawyers and in fact, as a consequence of his own studies of the labor code—that the company is stealing social security remittances and illegally denying security of tenure.

Figure 5-6. Erap discovers a violation in labor law. Alone, he plots his next move. *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy* (1984). Still captures from a DVD produced by Cine Suerte.

A visit by Corpuz's father from the provinces reveals that the economy is improving there thanks to Marcos' irrigation projects. Rejecting his traditional role in his community of birth, he ignores the fatherly plea to return and tend to the farm, opting to stick it out in the factory and fight. Erap's lone-wolf individualism—both asset and tragic flaw—shines through. He is a pensive, if overweight, "worker" or a filmic facsimile thereof, ever the rebel, despite the girth added since his James Dean glory days—this time, leading the masses. Before he can jump start a union Corpuz must thrash his ex's pimp and relocate her to another tenement where they can live

together—chastely. Erap now calls a general assembly. He recounts a litany of workplace complaints, punctuated with an account of his own radicalization as a shoe-shine boy. It was then that he pledged to shank the other boys if they would ever steal his favored site, adopting as his motto, "What is just and right should be fought to the death for."

Figure 7-8. After recounting his hard knock life growing up on the streets, Erap lays out his code of ethics. *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy* (1984). Still captures from a DVD produced by Cine Suerte.

The critic Alice Guillermo took issue with the implausibility of *Bangkang Papel's* zig-zagging plot—it forgoes character development for an episodic structure loosely congealed around a struggle for justice against the exploiters at the factory.[281] But is it surprising that the action becomes wrapping for Erap's ethics? Rather than mystifying, the formulas become overdetermined camp—precisely what had happened to the labor movement; a fist raised against Hemisphere Textile Mills means little in an age where production can be off-shored. The nuclear family Corpus cobbles together with his ex is but a pipe dream. And his do-or-die stance becomes a sort of hubris; Erap is assassinated by a disguised balut vendor—presumably, a

[281] Alice G. Guillermo, "Of Workers and the City." In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989*, 120-123, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson. (Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001), 120-123.

consequence of having taken hush-money from management only to distribute to the striking workers. As he lays dying in the hospital, documentary visions of the city flash before his eyes. He utters one last curse against a cruel world—"Fuck you!" An obligatory coda depicting Corpuz's wake is inserted, wherein the workers vow to carry on the struggle. As Erap's casket is shipped to the province for burial, we see an interesting cross-dissolve—from color to black-and-white—which, if one continues with the "sequel" analogy, acts as a sort of bookend to the opening cross-dissolve in *Maynila*. Both films, in other words, feature proletarian themes of mythic proportion, of perennial oppression and exploitation. Both feature prodigal sons from the countryside drawn to the city, only to meet a merciless and tragic fate—at the expense of a wistful and momentary consummation of their respective love interests.

If for Deleuze *Maynila* is modern political cinema, in most respects, *Bangkang Papel* is classic political cinema—from the aerobatic fight scenes (characteristic of the earlier "cinema of attractions"), to the (approximation of) method acting-turned-camp, the lack of psychological insight, to the proletarian themes, stereotypical instances of injustice (the private hospital, the evil factory manager, etc.). Albeit, with a hero weighted down by the hubris of Erap's individualism—undercutting his righteous leadership. The film is, in this sense, a melodramatic cautionary tale—it elicits a moral response to social injustice, while at once enforcing moral traditions.[282] These tensions were mediated by social-democratic forms and expectations, and camp aspects referential of Erap's peak 1960s characters—when the "James Dean mood" reigned supreme.

[282] Espiritu, 9.

Figure 9-10. Documentary flashback scene at the end of Bangkang Papel. The film stock is colored to look like faded film. At the end of the sequence, we cut back to the diegesis. Erap dramatically croaks, cursing the cruel world. *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy* (1984). Still captures from a DVD produced by Cine Suerte.

Figure 11-12. Fade to black and white at the end of *Bangkang Papel* (classic political cinema). *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy* (1984). Still captures from a DVD produced by Cine Suerte.

If *Bangkang Papel* was anti-boss, it had no anti-Marcos sentiment. *Bayan Ko* was, on the other hand, both a propaganda vehicle for the Marcos opposition, and a film "made to order" for the Cannes festival. And, some speculated, a provocation against the censors that only magnified its festival publicity cachet. The film was commissioned by Tony Gonzales, soon to become tourism minister under the Aquino administration. In the opening scene we see Turing (Phillip Salvador) working as jeepney driver. Documentary footage of the 1984 anti-Marcos boycott rally flashes by, and Turing spots an old friend, Willie (Ariosto Reyes Jr.) amongst the marchers. The two discuss past events, and Turing apologizes for wronging Willie. But Willie is

going to Samar and must run after the surging crowd. This flashback becomes the story of first commitment for Willie, it is assumed, is returning to his home province to join the movement. The rally is, however neutrally depicted rather than lauded. As the labor story develops, Turning evades his coworker's union effort, eventually becoming a scab to cover his wife's hospital bills.

Although shoehorned into the melodramatic form, *Bayan Ko* also explores realistic and psychological themes with small experimental flourishes—delving into problems of union organizing in ways both more realistic and complex than *Bangkang Papel*. The film is a composite of two true-to-life stories—the organizing of a printing press and a factory robbery. It is doubly invested in documentary—in terms of both its journalistic story and its docu-fiction scenes. Verité rally scenes intrude into the diegesis[283]—in turn Phillip Salvador is inserted into rallies—the cameras single him out standing head and shoulders above the others. The nuance in cinematography (Conrado Baltazar) and its integration into the plot distinguishes this film from *Bangkang Papel*. Zooms are used in the latter film for dramatic emphasis and continuity purposes…whereas in Baltazar's case, they show not only drama, dampness, and hiddenness of an illicit transaction, but foreshadow within a moment of spatial movement, a transition from one plot (the strike) to another (the robbery).

[283] Agustin L. Sotto and Pet Clato, "Two Filipino Films Make Waves in France," in *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989,* 60-65, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001), 64.

Figure 13-14. Turing calls Willie out of the crowd. *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (1984). Still captures from VHS.

Figure 15-16. Willie spits on Turing as he passes through the picket. *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (1984). Still captures from VHS.

While *Bangkang Papel* represents organizing as the meeting of two opposing forces, in *Bayan Ko* it is a more convoluted process complicated by legalities. And while *Bangkang Papel* is driven by sub-plots, *Bayan Ko* is fragmented into two stories—each dominated by a different social class (lumpen-proletariat and worker). Both "circumstance and character" create the scenario, which in turn is rendered as a "varied tapestry" of issues—"high prices, low wages, inconsiderate management, a heartless profession, and exploitation of the helpless."[284] Joel David comments that this juxtaposition did not age well; after the revolution its "basic thematic weakness of justifying both proletarian nobility and lumpenist imperatives in the same

[284] Billy R. Balbastro, "A season for films on labor problems," *Times Journal*, July 13, 1984.

character…now become a commanding concern."[285] These disjointed themes might also mark a breakdown in the "new cinema's" investment in explorations of psychological depth.

Looking at it another way, the dominant formal theme becomes fragmentation—a smashing together of the proletarian politics of the *classic political cinema*, and the oppression politics of the *modern political cinema*. In Brocka's own words the film is "a social melodrama which develops like a film noir, thus enabling me to express urgent realities…My wish is that this modest but hopefully clear film will help the audience feel the pulse of the boiling blood of politically unprepared characters like Turing."[286] "Unprepared" being the key word—for Brocka's rule of thumb was that he should intercept and train the actor or actress before they "acquire bad habits." The dictum "no acting please"—developed around that time by Eric Morris into an acting system—accorded with the new cinema's efforts to introduce psychological dramas into Tagalog cinema, kicking out the "cowboys" (i.e. Erap). However, the film's unlikely plot-twist into the "lumpen" hostage scenario flattens out Felipe Salvador's aw-shucks character-type. The reflexive finale, where Turing is shot as a consequence of hot-headedness (hubris), his body cradled by his wife a-la pieta, yet surrounded by cameras, shatters prior efforts at realism. Even the newscaster at the scene of the crime—Joe Taruc—plays himself, a popular radio correspondent.[287] While research indicates the closing scene likely alluded to the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, formally, it is a forced addition, one more layer of

[285] Joel David, "*Book Texts* - Pinoy Film Reviews I: Celluloid (Pre-1990s) Era," (Amateurish, October 7, 2020), https://amauteurish.com/2020/10/22/book-texts-pinoy-film-reviews-i/.
[286] David, "*Book Texts*."
[287] Capino, 135.

"reality" balanced on top of classical forms. Reviewing the film, Clodualdo Del Mundo Jr. wondered "what his melodramatic strategy has added to my understanding of the story of exploitation and oppression."[288] Yet the film seems concerned not so much with oppression as with a psychic and formal ambivalence.

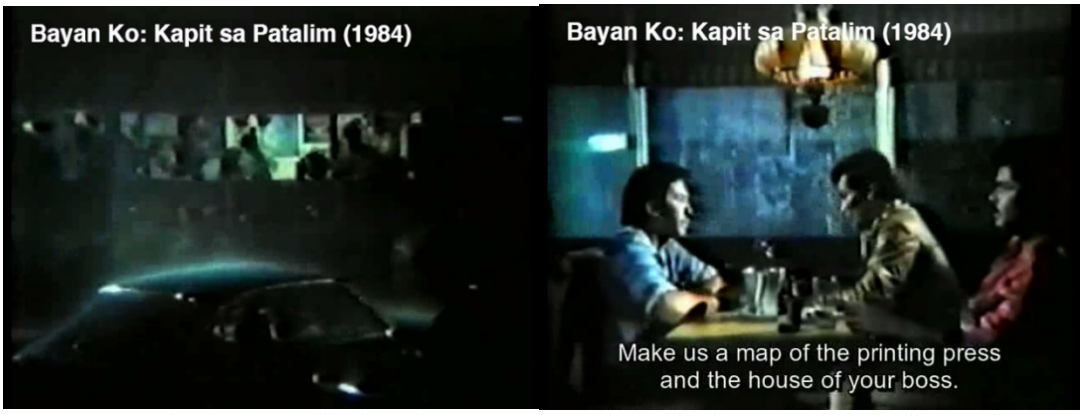

Figure 17-18. A long zoom outside the café. Cut on action to the inside; the camera position flips 180 degrees. *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (1984). Still captures from VHS.

Figure 19-20. More cinematographic experimentation: we cut from third person to POV as Turing drives through a road blockaded by protestors, in the process "getting into his head." *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim* (1984). Still captures from VHS.

Revolution or Collapse?

Tensions between *classic* and *modern political cinema* in *Bangkang Papel* and *Bayan Ko* illuminate historical transformations alluded to hitherto. While Fordism is constituted by a virtuous cycle of production and distribution, a stable and highly

[288] Clodualdo del Mundo Jr., "Kapit sa patalim and Orapronobis: Stories of Our Country and Brocka's Melodramatic Strategy: A Review of Kapit sa patalim and Orapronobis," in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 89.

organized workforce, post-Fordism is based on flexible accumulation (underpinned by disorganized and socially stratified workforce), denationalization, delegation of state power to the private sector, and reconfigured systems of distribution.

In the Philippines—were Fordism was never established, although upheld by the Left—the political crisis coincided with structural transformations in how films were made and viewed. The next chapter will explore how political filmmaking collectives sought to use the "Betamax" circuit—so called for the tapes passed from hand to hand—to politicize art. New modes of distribution presented new possibilities and chronic problems. It was not only the Marcos regime that was collapsing, but the cinema industry it had supported. Cost of film stock had skyrocketed, up 400% since 1978. This led to a "shuttling" of extant prints between various theaters that tended to wear out exhibition copies—rapidly degrading the film[289] such that much of the film history disappeared as rapidly as it was consumed. Other problems, including the proliferation of videotape pirate copies, high labor cost, and fuel also resulted in the shuttering of around half the country's movie theaters.[290] The political turmoil translated into a major headache for movielords like Erap and the Film Academy of the Philippines. "I just wonder why new and responsible leaders take so long to surface," wondered Erap in an interview. "Don't they know we are now tired? Are our new talents afraid or too timid to lead? Are they so lost in their own personal struggles for glory?"[291]

[289] *Variety*, "To beat high costs, Filipino distributors shuttle film prints," October 1984.
[290] *Bulletin Today,* "Problems of movie industry discussed," November 19, 1984.
[291] Billy R. Balbastero, "Industry needs new leaders, 'old hands' admit," *Times Journal*, April 10, 1985.

Much like the earlier attack on FAMAS, Brocka and his gang of young turks had come to see the guilds as corrupt and tainted in their continued loyalty to Marcos and subordination to the film industry producers. At the same time, Brocka was considered too self-interested, emotional, still a street parliamentarian, to lead the guilds. And there was no love lost between the two—they were, in effect, political opponents. The following shows that Brocka was if anything more macho than Erap:

> On one occasion Erap, with characteristic machismo, looked Brocka straight in the eye, stating "Ang problema sa industriya, maraming balka" (The problem with the [film] industry is that there are many gays). Lino was quick to respond that "Hindi baklang tao ang problema ng industriya kundi mga baklang desisyon" (It's not gay people but rather the wishy-washy decision making) [292]

Then the 1986 People Power revolution happened, in which the culture industry played a special role. Hans Enzensberger observes that the rebels of modern revolutions first occupy the television stations.[293] This was true of People Power; civilians took over the major north-south highway (EDSA), allowing military rebels to consolidate their ranks and to invade the country's major broadcast facilities. Fierce firefights at these stations resulted in several fatalities. At PTV-4—the former ABS-CBN—several troops were wounded and a reporter died from a heart-attack. The seized station was christened "People's Television Network" and began broadcasting the revolution live. The following day, three soldiers were killed defending PTV-9 from the rebels. As the firefight raged, two Presidents of the Republic of the Philippines were sworn into office at roughly the same time. Cory Aquino took her oath in Club Pilipino, and Ferdinand Marcos in Malacañang.[294] As

[292] Armida Siguion-Reyna, "Remembering Lino Brocka," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 22, 2012.
[293] Enzensberger, 7.
[294] This is the name given to the presidential palace.

he raised his hand to recite his oath, the television transmitter broadcasting the event was hit by the rebels, interrupting live coverage.[295] His grip on the media broken, Marcos fled.

Lino Brocka, among other celebrities who flocked to the newly captured PTV Channel 4, exclaimed of the *balimbings*—the name given to former Marcos loyalists who were now supporters of Aquino—on camera "wala siyang karapatan! (they don't have any rights). This pugnacious sentiment aligned with the belief many held that the FAP should be dissolved, "that in fact a general overhaul of the entire film industry setup be undertaken to break up the feudalistic structure based on favor and patronage."[296] Erap—who was to be counted among those loyalists who showed genuine tears of regret that Marcos was deposed—was certainly not going anywhere, and his own fans and voters clashed in San Juan with Aquino's supporters who moved to purge him from his mayorship there.

With the guilds and former Marcos film organizations in disarray, Brocka's protest group, the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP), attempted to insert itself into the vacuum. It began investigating possibilities of forming a Ministry of Culture under which extant organizations could be regrouped.[297] Brocka was an active CAP member, and certainly acted on the basis of these deliberations. Yet CAP's ideas were, curiously, reminiscent of the cultural nationalism promoted by Marcos. After one CAP meeting, Brocka was assigned to investigate "A proposal to have a syndicated regular feature to be serialized in certain, if not all, major

[295] Nick Joaquin, *Quartet of the Tiger Moon*, (Metro Manila: Book Stop, Inc., 1986), 89.
[296] Bibsy M. Carballo, "Changes awaited in the industry," Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 8, 1986.
[297] *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, "Artists to propose a separate ministry," March 6, 1986.

publications on the current presentation of Philippine history from a nationalist standpoint."[298] If not properly educated, People Power would mean for cinema what the *bakya crowd* had always meant—pure "profit motive," wrong values, and bad art. The CAP called for a Ministry of Culture to implement "The long-range education of moviegoers and the improvement of their taste through sustained nationalist oriented cultural programs."[299] This was precisely what Marcos had attempted to do through the Tadhana project, and Imelda through her "edifice complex."

Aside from the nationalist objective were political imperatives. For the CAP sought not only to realign the ideological paradigm, but to purge the old organizations of loyalist leadership. Brocka and collaborator Pete Lacaba were appointed by memo of Joker Arroyo—Aquino's Executive Officer—to a task force to reorganize the local film industry, including eight film agencies and the guilds under the FAP.[300] The Task Force was mired in controversy from the start. Its leader or Officer in Charge (OIC), Ciro Santiago, was outed as the "classmate and boyhood friend of Peping Cojuangco," the powerful and wealthy brother of President Cory Aquino.[301] He was furthermore seen as being out-of-touch with the local industry since until his appointment his work was abroad, in Hollywood B-movies.

After producing a damning report that alleged (but did not meticulously account for) corruption within the various film agencies, the task force's conclusion that a new Film Commission be created was met with stiff resistance. A letter signed

[298] Nicado, J.C. "Towards a flowering of art and the liberation of culture." *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* March 10, 1986.
[299] *Manila Bulletin,* "Critic pushes for change in movie industry." March 23, 1986.
[300] Mario V. Dumaul, "Con-Con rep Brocka, is also film OIC," *Malaya*, May 27, 1986. This despite the fact that Brocka had previously "maintained that he (would) never accept any government position."
[301] Oscar Miranda, "Democracy and local movies," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* June 2, 1986.

by many of Brocka's own colleagues denounced the effort, alleging that it reproduced precisely what Brocka and Lacaba had been fighting all along. One movie journalist wondered whether "Leadership in the movie industry is being given out as the spoils of victory…And the past administration's men have given way."[302] "When one comes right down to it," declared another "the only thing that makes one a leader in the industry is money—how much investment, how much income you can generate for the industry. There are other ramifications, of course, filmmaking and distribution being a commercial enterprise. This is still a capitalistic society, and we are not changing that—or are we?"[303] Erap put it bluntly: "Our politicians foul up business every time they poke their fingers into it. The same can happen to the movie industry if we have a commission to tell us how to run the industry."[304]

It appeared, in fact, that Brocka et. al. had both political and ideological axes to grind, and were not above using the state to achieve their objectives. Already, under the Marcos system, "A" and "B" rated films had been given tax rebates by the Film Board. However, this system had proven prone to corruption and manipulation from both Marcos and the industry—to, the task force alleged, dole out rebates to industry insiders.[305] To raise the aesthetic question meant to take up nationalism—but the very question of what this meant remained up for grabs.

Brocka, for his part, seemed torn between the double-conjecture of the nationalist agenda when he claimed that the "audience cannot demand something

---

[302] Nino Nunez, "Politics in the movie industry," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* March 7, 1986
[303] Oscar Miranda, "Democracy and local movies," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* June 2, 1986.
[304] Nino Nunez, "Politics in the movie industry," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* March 7, 1986.
[305] *Manila Bulletin.* "Critic pushes for change in movie industry." March 23, 1986. "The film ratings system, while benefiting a few movies, failed to become a barometer of which films were artistically good" according to the CAP.

better if they are steeped and just completely immersed in that quagmire of Hollywood films." On the other hand, he believed the "aspirations that are reflected in our art and culture are the aspirations of everybody, of every single nation."[306] Brocka's economic nationalist presumptions colored his vision of art, which was laced with the pedagogical imperative to "provide the public with films that mirror the struggle of the Filipino people for truth and justice."[307] Yet this belief rested upon an ambivalent relation between the individual and his obligation to the nation. If the struggle was universal, how was "new cinema" aesthetically advanced—in a manner not premised on "national experience"? Did Brocka's outlook collapse the non-identity of art and reality for the sake of politics, obscuring the "new cinema's" line of attack? What if truth and beauty were not options to choose from, but an insoluble contradiction? What if the way forward for Filipino film lay in its "out-of-focus-effect," in some combination of neo-realism and American psychologism, or for that matter, local documentarism? What of Brocka's own experimentation and play with documentary and fiction in *Bayan Ko*?

These old debates on art and politics were shunted aside by the exigencies of the industry's crisis. On April 6, 1986 Brocka attempted to establish an organization for the sector that he ostensibly represented—to "spearhead the founding congress of the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa ng Pelikulang Pilipino" (Philippine Cinema Workers Union). Around 200 or 300 showed.[308] However, this was a mere fraction of rank and file FAP guild members. One journalist wondered whether the congress was to "vote

[306] *The Manila Chronicle,* "LA-based Pinoy newspaper features Brocka," May 6, 1987.
[307] *Philippines Daily Express*, "Critics issue a statement of concern," January 9, 1987.
[308] Maglipon, "The Brocka Battles," 151-152.

upon the contending ideas of guilds and unions or were his people out to impose their knowledge and themselves on the 'ignorant' industry?" Weighing in, Erap stated "They must study their innovation first and inform every one of its merits and demerits so that the movie people can decide."[309] This proved prescient, for when Aquino fired her progressive secretary of labor, Agusto Sanchez, the effort collapsed. Subsequent industry transformations would not be fomented by labor politics as they had in the 1950s, the actor-producer "commercialism" in the 1960s, or state assistance, as in the 1970s and early 1980s. National cinema had reached a terminus.

After the Revolution

Both Brocka and Erap opposed the rightward swing in Aquino's film policy. Yet they remained antagonistic. When the two men crossed paths at an anti-censorship rally, Brocka walked away. "I was afraid I'd hit him with the microphone," he later confided.[310] Although Brocka was able to participate as delegate in the Constitutional Commission long enough to insert the words "freedom of expression," he walked out to protest the failure of land reform. A year after the revolution he admitted that, due the moralism of head censor Manuel Morato at the Movie and Television Review & Classification Board (MTRCB) "we are back to zero." While Imelda insisted upon "The good, the true and beautiful," the new film censor's Catholic pronouncements were "a little bit frightening because it has gone to the other extreme."[311] This was in no small part a religious backlash against the bold

[309] Billy R Balbastero, " The president's man," *The News Herald*, April 19, 1986.
[310] Armida Siguion-Reyna, "Remembering Lino Brocka," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 22, 2012.
[311] Gonzalez-Tamarong, Marlina. "LA-based Pinoy newspaper features Brocka." *The Manila Chronicle,* May 5, 1987.

films featured during the Marcos period. And as Brocka knew from his own censorious participation in the anti-smut campaigns, the Catholic Church was *the* major player in the Aquino camp.

At that time, Erap was busy working on a propaganda vehicle. While Brocka exited politics amidst much acrimony, Erap's run for election in 1987 succeeded by a landslide—making him one of only two former Marcos figures to constitute a Senatorial opposition to Aquino. His new film titled *Sa Kuko ng Agila* (In the Eagle's Talons, 1989) was to be explicitly nationalist, and a campaign platform for the upcoming vote on whether or not to retain the US military bases. Having actively participated in anti-bases activism and as sitting board member of the *Abakada* (Anti-Baseng Koalisyong Demokratiko or *Anti-Bases Democratic Coalition*) it was not surprising when Erap reached across the aisle to tap fellow Senator and feminist TV-show host Nikki Coseteng as his leading lady. Famous nationalist Renato Constantino and his son (R.C., a fast friend of Erap) and the renowned and nationalist-leaning scriptwriter Ricky Lee also participated.

Some controversy was stirred up in the movie gossip columns when it was alleged that the CIA offered a $2 million bribe to Erap to call off the film—a story the film's editor Boy Vinarao considers apocryphal.[312] Despite its sensitive subject matter, the intention was made clear by Erap: "We've commercialized it so it won't look like a hard sell propaganda."[313] Director Augusto Buenaventura was somewhat more frank: "This is an entertaining picture with a social message. People still pay to

[312] Boy Vinarao, in discussion with the author, January 2019.
[313] Joe Quirino, "Pass the Word," *The Philippine Star*, March 8, 1989.

see a movie to be entertained."[314] The output of this all-star cast was not, however, as stellar as some had hoped. Parts could not be filmed on location, since locals—including the bars and go-go dancers—were for the retention of the bases, what shooting that was done was interrupted by pro-bases rallies.[315] Aesthetically, the film left much to be desired. "Agila" is both bad politics and bad art," wrote one movie critic.

> …the movie's compulsive emotional tone comes across as shrill from beginning to end. American imperialism…is an absolute evil that must be absolutely exterminated. Anybody who isn't against it and in the same manner as the movie's protagonists are for it.[316]

Most agreed that the film was, above all, a campaign vehicle in advance of not so much the bases vote, but 1992—the general elections. In the last frame of the film, Erap is shown walking between two actors—Laurice Guillen and Ruben Rustia—who had played, respectively, Cory Aquino and Ferdinand Marcos in an Australian TV serial about People Power (*Dangerous Lives*, 1988) the prior year. One critic quipped the reason for this was "to suggest that he has the support of both the Coryistas and the (Marcos) Loyalistas."[317] The film was launched precisely when the Cory coalition was coming undone—amidst "a national political vacuum between a reformism without much muscle and a radicalism without sufficient focus to contest successfully Philippine elections."[318] As Erap stepped into this vacuum, "advocacy of social

[314] Claro Cortes, "Two solons star in pic on bases," *Philippine Star,* May 29, 1989.
[315] At the time, the bases were the second-largest employers in the country.
[316] Nelson Navarro, "'Agila'—Doomed from the start," *Malaya*, July 6, 1989.
[317] Bob Castillo. "Nangampanya si Erap!" People's Journal, July 7, 1989.
[318] Hedman, "The spectre of populism," 36.

justice collect[ed] its gains at the altar of a popular and populist government."[319] He would be elected vice president in 1992.[320]

Brocka, for his part, had retired from state politics after his abortive attempts to establish a Film Commission. The political arena had become more complex, he had acquired more foes, and found the new censorship climate insufferable—that it was "even worse in many ways because with Marcos, we knew who our enemy was and there was only one."[321] Brocka's *Orapronobis* (1989) would push not only the censor, but the public, to its very limits. Negotiations with the communists had fallen apart and Aquino, forced by multiple coup attempts to fire her progressive executive secretary Joker Arroyo, had "unsheathed the sword of war." Based on stories of government-armed anti-communist vigilante groups, a kidnapping that Brocka had witnessed in broad daylight, and with characters from the communist movement, the film was as his other more politically oriented works jam-packed with social melodrama while attempting to address the deteriorating human rights situation. As such, it was perceived as an explicit attack on the Aquino administration. "Nothing has changed," one character declares, "but the names and faces of the oppressors."[322]

As with *Bayan Ko,* this time production was both inside and outside of national cinema boundaries. It was an international collaborative project, once again groomed by French cinema impresario Pierre Rissient and made to order at Cannes. It was also a festival film for the art market, and the final cut was made in France. This spurred MTRCB censor Morato to allege the film was smuggled out of the country;

---

[319] Hedman, 36.
[320] The vice president is elected by popular vote, rather than as part of a slate.
[321] Diego Cagahastian, "It's like 1985 for Brocka," Tempo, May 18, 1989.
[322] Martie T. Logarta, "There's a lot of risk when you make a movie like 'Orapronobis,'" *The Manila Chronicle on Sunday,* July 9, 1989.

Brocka maintained the rushes were shipped to France merely for post-production, at once challenging the classification of "export" as it was applied to festival prints. A group of Filipino workers showed up to protest the films screening at Cannes, while Morato wrote the festival disavowing the film—which was, according to Brocka, moved from the out-of-competition category due to the pressure. Above all, public, president, and censor seemed panicked that the film would project an image of a destabilization to foreign viewers. Aquino was to visit France in July and wanted her image untarnished.

A debate laced with much vitriol in the press ensued, centering around the appropriateness of scenes of extreme violence—several implying cannibalism (cut from the film's US release) and another the massacre of nine on a basketball court. For one critic, these were isolated events projected by the film as everyday occurrences. Worse, they "reinforce(ed) the already prevalent reputation of Filipinos abroad as a people of savages and barbaric cannibals…cast(ing) a slur on the entire Filipino race." Reminiscent of Imelda's prior criticisms, the upshot of this was economic: "…how will foreign investments come in with films…which depict us as brains-eating cannibals?"[323] One reviewer identified the basketball court massacre as having happened in 1982—under the Marcos period, hence a deceitful critique of Aquino—going as far as to imply that the film should be burned.[324]

[323] Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, "Brocka depicts Pinoys as cannibals," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* July 11 1989.
[324] Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, "The damning aspect of Mr. Brocka's film," *The Philippine Star,* October 28, 1989. When Brocka dealt with similar content—melodramatic cannibalism—in a pre-martial law television show, there was, as far as the record shows, no such outrage. What had changed between the two stories, was evidently a greater degree of importance given to cinema as an analogue for nation—against, even, the wishes of the artist. Another way of looking at is was that the culture industry had itself become more important and powerful; indeed, Brocka was a key figure in the anti-Marcos protests.

In response Brocka presented himself in two ways—as both activist and citizen-artist, both *inside* and *outside* the world of art. The cannibalism was not shown but only inferred. As for "The killings, the cults, the children..[t]hey're in there because they are the reality today, and only by filming this reality can I hope to change reality." At the same time as Brocka hedged his bets, claiming that "None of this is ever designed to represent everything, not the cosmos, not the Philippines. It may precisely be that the vigilante is meant to be the evil that plagues the Filipino."[325]

Ambivalently, Brocka felt compelled to reproduce the national allegory and undermine it. Perhaps—just perhaps—it was his deconstruction and mocking of these allegories that the public could not countenance. The *double-conjecture*, after all, intended to destroy the Hollywood-inspired *bakya* commercialism, through gradual supplantation by more sophisticated, nationally inspired aesthetic forms. Yet, "commercialism" had adapted as a consequence of the global pressures, rendering the object of protest—Hollywood—transformed and hence obscure. The Filipino nation had at once liberated itself from Marcos, putting the *bakya* class—and its cinema—into decline. Although "national cinema" had reached a terminus, Brocka stuck doggedly to his claim that art could propel change. His activist interpretation of national allegory triggered a repression more extreme than had been the case under Marcos. Whether Morato's heavy-handed tactics, the subsequent public backlash, or local distributors just didn't want to touch the film, *Orapronobis* would not screen commercially in the Philippines during his lifetime.

[325] Lino Brocka, "Brocka on 'Orapronobis," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* July 15, 1989.

Conclusion

"Directors like Lino Brocka left their mark on an emerging generation of filmmakers," writes Nick Deocampo, "for whom thematic and social commitment of the "new wave" were upheld as ideals." In this respect, the emerging young filmmakers of the 1980s upheld characteristics of *commitment* "rather than the distant and isolated literary movement of the late Fifties and early Sixties."[326] Yet for Deocampo, the sweep from the 1970s to the 1980s was utterly fragmentary:

> "The Filipino filmmaker is caught between the two worlds of art and commercialism. It is difficult to say that a totality of his work constitutes this set of aesthetic principles or that set of ideological beliefs…neither aesthetics nor ideology has fostered a thread of continuity among the movements…each movement makes no articulate avowal of its support (or the lack of it) concerning the movement it wishes to supplant…[327]

Deocampo makes it clear that despite a tendency towards "social realism" the aesthetic question never crystalized. We must here admit that Bernal's characterization of the "new wave" was never formulated in a manifesto. This is precisely why "new wave" is given always in quotations—there is no fixed agreement on precisely what it stood for, as a movement, nor even what it was called. When a new generational cohort appeared on the scene, working primarily in short film, Deocampo was left with the lingering question—were they prepared to foment another "new wave"?

Erap—not figuring for the new generation as he had for the "new cinema"—had abandoned art for politics, becoming after Senator Vice President, President, and finally, Mayor of Manila. Most of his films were destroyed when his studio's archive

[326] Nick Deocampo, *Short Film: Emergence of a New Philippine Cinema* (Manila: Communication Foundation for Asia, 1985), 21-22.
[327] Deocampo, *Short Film,* 93.

was flooded. Erap's legacy as an artist remains, if only in the form of legend—if not as pirated and at times barely legible YouTube and DVD-copies. For he is certainly an artist. The question is, of what kind? At precisely the peak of Manila's expansion in the post-war period, Erap arrived on the scene with a product that met the demands of the new urban masses who, having lost their taste for the handcraft of their past, desired a culture fit for their new urban experience. That product was kitsch—a vicarious culture that draws its "lifeblood…from (the) reservoir of accumulated experience…the popular art and literature of yesterday."[328] This reservoir was certainly American popular culture, although just as certainly with Erap' original twists. Soon enough, Erap was even copying himself. This is not to say that Erap is somehow inauthentic—on the contrary, his art "heightens reality and makes it dramatic"—flying fists and curses, groans of pain and folksy turns of phrase. His jokes and exclamations are more poetic than Shakespeare, almost identical with lived experience.

Yet this heightening of reality is precisely kitsch—it leaves no room for the viewer, who must project onto and reflect upon what is visible. Instead of *aesthetic tendency's* "imitating the processes of art," kitsch predigests and packages aesthetic effects from the avant-garde. This is done in a "vividly recognizable" realistic manner; "there is no discontinuity between art and life."[329] The realism of kitsch provides, in other words, a "vicarious experience" in ways that autonomous art—requiring the viewer to reflect upon and project meaning onto the work—does not.

[328] Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch,* 12-16.
[329] Greenberg, 16.

The heightened reality produced by Erap's appropriation of method acting and in his action sequences, was on one hand perceived as representing an authentic and current Filipino experience. However, the "new wave" believed this authenticity was not enough—seeking to replace the 1960's Hollywood's commercialism by destroying character types through greater psychological realism and on-site shooting. In so doing, however, the "new wave" mirrored similar efforts in Europe and the United States. By fomenting a global transformation of cinema—from Fordist to post-Fordist aesthetics—"Filipino cinema" was in effect global—hardly a measure of, and even undermining, national authenticity required by standards of the 1950s economic nationalism.

The recognition of these aesthetic antagonisms and shifts requires criticism—what Susan Buck-Morss calls the "critical moment of aesthetic experience…bringing to consciousness what was before only dimly perceived, so that it becomes available for critical reflection."[330] This criticism in turn benefits from extremes of high and low that, together, "touch" the critic.[331] In this respect, if Erap's films clearly represent kitsch, the "new wave" seems to occupy a middle ground between high and low. Brocka—the most ambitious among his peers in attempting to elevate his audience's taste—could in no way deliver on elevating the *bakya* class, for this project also requires of the viewer "enough leisure, energy and comfort"[332] in which to develop aesthetic sensibility. Even Brocka's attempt to commandeer the cinema apparatus of the old regime was no help in this regard; the project immediately

[330] Susan Buck-Morss, "Response to the Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October 77* (Summer 1996): 29–31.
[331] Theodor Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," *New German Critique*, No. 24/25, Special Double Issue on New German Cinema (Autumn, 1981 - Winter, 1982), pp. 199-205. Adorno writes "…but only if the dialectic of the lowest has the same value as the dialectic of the highest, rather than the latter simply decaying."
[332] Greenberg, 19.

collapsed. If the film criticism of the "new cinema" was bound up in and unable to extract itself from this collapse, this was because both high and low "are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up."[333] To the extent that criticism envisioned from the "new cinema" an integration of these two extremes, it was a victim of its own success. Rationalization—and hence reification—is here the agenda, and gravedigger of the "double conjecture." To advance, film cannot seek to reflect, but must contradict subjectivity. For it is precisely in this contradiction that we can objectify, and thus grasp, experience.[334]

[333] Theodor Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Verso, 1977), 123.
[334] Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 421-436. Krackauer theorizes a contradiction between the "memory-image" and the photographic image. The author would like to thank Chris Cutrone for bringing this formula to his attention.

III. Divides of Independent Film

> Art does not provide knowledge of reality by reflecting it photographically or 'from a particular perspective' but by revealing whatever is veiled by the empirical form assumed by reality, and this is possible only by virtue of art's own autonomous status."[335]

Revolutions in Film

Figure 21. Title card for AsiaVisions' *No Time for Crying* (1986). Still capture from VHS produced by AsiaVisions.

In 1987 the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP)—the state's premier cultural institution—held its first Independent Film and Video competition.[336] A year had passed since the 1986 People Power revolution rolled across Manila, deposing

[335] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," in *Politics and Aesthetics*, 75-89 (London: Verso, 1977), 162.
[336] Eloisa May P. Hernandez, "A Conversation with Ed Cabagnotm January 17, 2016. Usapang Pelikula ATBP. https://badassprof.wordpress.com/. Prior to 1986, the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP) held the Experimental Cinema and Independent Film & Video competition.

Marcos and purging his *loyalistas* from state bodies. Meanwhile, having implemented a new constitution, the country was clobbered by a series of coup attempts. The CCP—an impregnable structure and indispensable state institution—survived (its anti-Marcos activity likely helped it weather the storm).[337] The theme of "independent" film and video seemed appropriate for a newly formed, if fragile, democracy and signified a shift in cultural policy away from Marcos's support lavished on the film industry.

Only one documentary thematized the prior year's revolution—filmmaker, historian, and educator Nick Deocampo's *Revolutions Happen Like Refrains in a Song* (1987). Deocampo's narration interwove ruminations on personal and political emancipation—his own coming out story—with fragmentary images conveying the incommensurability of individual and crowd, of artist and masses, the brute power of a revolution and his struggle to represent it.[338] Despite competing against only one other film, the judges denied Deocampo second and third place.[339] The winning work was *No Time for Crying* (1986), a 16mm documentary about the peasant struggle submitted by Lito Tiongson.[340] One could attribute Tiongson's success to his film's

[337] Joel David, "Awake in the Dark: Philippine Film during the Marcos Era," in *Philippine Studies: Have We Gone Beyond St. Louis?* ed. Priscelina Patajo-Legasto (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 227-243.
[338] Nick Deocampo (filmmaker and film historian), in discussion with the author, May 29, 2019. Due to the dearth of film stock, he had to consider whether to pull the trigger of his super-8 camera only when rebel troops fired their guns. "It made me realize who I was. A million people, are you joking? Who was I? Why this confluence of events? And why this particular age where…I would have been empowered with ten rolls of film, Super-8. You know how long a roll would last? Three minutes. I was going into a revolution with ten rolls of film!"
[339] Deocampo's second submission, a biopic on three Filipino painters, merited an honorable mention.
[340] Lito Tiongson, "The Making of No Time for Crying," 67-92, in *Making Documentaries and News Features in the Philippines*, ed. Isabel Enriquez Kenny (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 1995/2006), 75. Tiongson writes "The so-called "people power revolution" in February, 1986, after the hotly-contested presidential election, did not alter at all the theme and body of our documentary. Only a couple of lines were added to the final narrative text which said that the people, scarred by more than twenty years of Marcos misrule, continue to rebuild their shattered lives and struggle for a better tomorrow under a new dispensation." While I am inclined to follow Tiongson's rending of "people power," I use People Power throughout as conventionally cited.

polish (it was an international collaboration). Or, perhaps there were concerns with the prominence of Deocampo's self-psychologizing voice-over and coming out story. There may even have been a conflict of interest, as the celebrity judges—director Lino Brocka and scriptwriter Pete Lacaba—were board members of Tiongson's film collective AsiaVisions. It is as likely, however, the two films were seen to offer contrasting philosophies—and the judges preferred *Crying's commitment,* dismissing *Revolutions'* lack thereof.

This chapter will discuss these two contesting visions of filmic "independence." It argues the fractious politics and art of the anti-Marcos movement reveals just that—fractures. Instead of presuming (as progressive historiography is wont) that protest or collectivity mediates, *politics and aesthetics are disentangled as the exercise of public and private reason*. From this view, the political landscape appears not as a unified movement but a field contested by different camps of art. It is difficult to prove this claim because the independent "movements" in question were not fully formed. Nevertheless, a reconstruction of what little debate is on hand will draw out tensions between art and politics and show how emphasizing the latter can lead to obscurantist renderings of material phenomena—"truth."

Antinomies of Committed Film

It may seem counterintuitive to divide the "rising crust of independent young filmmakers"[341] into two camps. Both Deocampo and Tiongson grappled with the problem of *commitment* and, in so doing, ran up against creative limits. Tongson was

[341] Nick Deocampo, *Short Film: Emergence of a New Philippine Cinema* (Manila: Communication Foundation for Asia, 1985), 56.

a documentarian predisposed to evaluate his work through the politics of his viewership. At the same time, he felt constrained by the dictates of collective production. Meanwhile, although Deocampo's approach was experiential, introspective, and biographical, he was the only documentarist to (at that time) creatively treat the revolution. What, then, was the substantive difference in their approaches? We turn to their writings—and films—to make this determination.

Deocampo was the more outspoken evangelist of their common medium. His writing preceding the revolution outlines the character and prospects of independent film in the Philippines. The movement was educated and urbane, drawing from prior movements in Germany, the United States, and Filipino 1960s-70s student activism and social realism.[342] Deocampo expected independent filmmakers to synthesize these traditions in terms of "*experimentation, realism,* and *independence*."[343] Thanks to the cheapness and accessibility of 8mm film, projects were not capital-intensive[344] and indeed were made precisely "where capital is weakest"[345]— for new audiences[346] within alternative systems of production and distribution.[347] This allowed the filmmaker to exercise "direct control" in realizing his work "unfettered by a monstrous assembly line of production executives and crew."[348]

[342] Deocampo, *Short Film,* 21. Deocampo here registers the over-all shift in art from the New Criticism to "communities of interpretation" discussed in chapter two, namely the rejection of formalism for a political agenda and a "aesthetics of poverty."
[343] Deocampo, 2.
[344] Deocampo, 56.
[345] Tolentino, "Indie cinema bilang kultural na kapital," KPK Column, Bulatlat, 2008. http://rolandotolentino.wordpress .com/2008/08/03/indie-cinema-bilang-kultural-na-kapital-kpk-column-bulatlat/.
[346] Deocampo, 22.
[347] Deocampo, 2, 98, 103.
[348] Deocampo, 2.

In sum, Deocampo endorsed a counter-hegemonic film politics opposing not only Hollywood but also the Philippine commercial tradition.[349] It was precisely this "native film tradition" that, as chapter two discusses, nationalists found necessary to engage to secure the pedagogical function of cinema—to educate the *bakya*. Rather than taking up a committed, pedagogical film practice that would educate viewers in nationalist politics, Deocampo expected even the poor to have the wherewithal to take up their freedom—become artists even, if only in the limited means at their disposal. *Revolutions* is a case in point. The film contains a brief performance at a gay club by the film's subject, Oliver, who is nude, painted, and dramatically lip-synching Grace Jone's disco number "Do or Die." The subsequent shot shows Oliver walking through the debris-strewn streets of the slum he calls home. Deocampo's voice over intones:

> Oliver has accepted his lot, decided his life is so, and works for his survival. That's still his freedom. Freedom by choice. Whether his choice is still acceptable to us is another matter. The question is, can our society accept Oliver?[350]

Democracy and performance allow Oliver a modicum of agency and choice within the fringes of society; he steers clear of attacking the "socio-economic and political structures that tie him down." This representation grapples with the paradoxes of a freedom both facilitated and stifled by the imperative to work. It seeks to learn from the subject who has in certain respects accepted his lot in life. The rhetorical question "Do we accept Oliver" is leveled at a society where homophobia

---

[349] See also Nick Deocampo, "Into the Light: Philippine Alternative Cinema and the Neuer Deutscher Film," 20-28, in *Kino-Sine: Philippine-German Cinema Relations*," ed. Tilman Baumgärtel (Manila: Geothe-Institut, 2007). This definition Deocampo would later modulate from an underground or "other" cinema to a counter-hegemonic one opposing not only Hollywood films but also the Philippine commercial tradition. This put him at odds with the more populist, nationalist tradition exemplified by Nicanor Tiongson as well as the anti-experimentalism of Bienvenido Lumbera—especially since explicit connections are drawn between the (German) Oberhausen and (American) Other cinemas, which serve as both inspiration and cosmopolitan model.

[350] Nick Deocampo, *Revolutions Happen Like Refrains in a Song,* (1987), 8mm film.

still exists. Herein lies the pedagogical move—one little addressed by the nationalist or communist movements, which had spotty records upholding gay rights.

In a 1986 rejoinder, Tiongson, like Deocampo, defined cinematic *independence* negatively, as "not motivated by profit…(or)… entertainment, and…illusion and dreams."[351] Yet, the independent movement had not gone beyond the university and the metropolis. The People Power revolution was only a step towards true "democratization," which would require the transformation of the "traditional mass" into a means for "conscientization of the people."[352] Until this conscientization was articulated through a "free national state,"[353] the movement developed into contradictory tendencies—"cinema-as-art" emphasizing form and subjectivity, and "cinema-as-reality," emphasizing content and truth.[354]

Tiongson's *No time for Crying* takes up the latter, downplaying form and playing up collective, rather than individual agency. The film begins with the funeral of the murdered trade unionist Toto in a war-torn province. Friends and family surround and wail as the casket is lowered; one child stamps her feet in vexation. The narrator intones:

> With the return of democratic government in the Philippines seems like this should no longer be part of daily life. But the poverty and conflict which has torn society asunder are unlikely to vanish rapidly under any government. Too many powerful and privileged interests remain intact. If the voices of the poor continue to make themselves heard as courageously as in the last year of the dictatorship, the sacrifice of Toto and thousands like him, will not have been in vain.[355]

---

[351] Lito Tiongson, "Alternative Cinema: Development and Prospects," *Diliman Review*, Issue No. 5 & 6 (1986): 26-30.
[352] Tiongson, "The Making of No Time for Crying," 71.
[353] Jose M. Sison, *Struggle for National Democracy* (Aklatangbayan.wordpress.com), 12. "In the Philippines, it is particularly important to assert that only after national sovereignty has been fully secured and incorporated into a genuinely free national state will civil liberties be truly enjoyed by the people."
[354] Tiongson, "Alternative Cinema," 28.
[355] Lito Tiongson, *No Time for Crying* (1986), 16mm film.

Toto's killing highlights the injustice perpetrated by the military and the transnational plantation where he worked. Still, it is not clear what will befall his family—or for that matter, the community. The narrator claims the death will not have been in vain, heralding future redemption[356]—and adding an element of drama to the plot. Be that as it may, *Crying's* expected use determines its aesthetic form. Funded by the London-based organization Christian Aid, the film needed to highlight the successes of affiliate NGOs, a "testament of their viability in the empowerment of the grassroots."[357] It, therefore, targeted an international audience—the British public—who would "identify more with a narrative voice that has a familiar accent than a foreign one."[358] Tiongson was torn in two directions—on the one hand, critical of the government and international corporations. On the other hand, the producer's affirmation of local initiatives fell short in the empowerment they promised. He wanted to end the film with a defiant rally. At the same time, his collaborator chose the Christian iconography of a "damaged church awaiting to be rebuilt" and a community of fisherfolk drawing in their harvest, "suggest[ing] hope and redemption."[359]

Counterpublicity

Tiongson's argument that the independent movement was split into two tendencies—cinema-as-art and cinema-as-reality—aligns with this dissertation's

[356] In retrospect, this cannot be affirmed as accurate, since the region is embroiled in conflict and has the lowest poverty index in the country. The attitude towards the subject is colored by what in retrospect is an over-estimation of political possibilities.
See https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/15CARAGA.pdf
[357] Tiongson, "The Making of No Time for Crying," 70.
[358] Tiongson, 75.
[359] Tiongson, 75.

discussion of art and politics.[360] As chapter one demonstrates, their antinomy is not merely national but a feature of modern art tout court. The protest movement in the Philippines reproduced this antinomy by fixating on organization and self-transformation[361]—in service of the greater community.[362] The citizen-artist both interpreted and adopted, through collective action, the movement's "national democrat" identity.[363] Adherence to this collective identity was not contingent upon membership in a Left organization, for its scope was the nation.

There have been, of course, attempts to theorize a way out of this impasse. Philippine art historian Allice Guillermo critiques the "national democrat" formula, attempting to recover "art's elusive autonomy"[364] through oppositionality and art's "role as agent of social change.[365] It requires no great leap to relate Guillermo's "protest/revolutionary" frame to two ideological tendencies of the revolution—the Lefts with their (Maoist-derived) anti-imperialist propaganda, and the "protest artists" or liberals. Even if social change was brought about through the combined forces of these two political groups, this elides aesthetic judgment and its exercise through private—rather than public—reason. As with the "cultural turn," and like political art more broadly—an ambivalence over the (bourgeois) artist's freedom generated confusion over the difference between private and public spheres.

---

[360] Walter Benjamin, "Diary from August 7, 1931, to the Day of My Death," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* 501-505 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 503.
[361] Nicanor G. Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture: The Philippine Experience* (Philippine Educational Theater Association: Manila, 1984), 2.
[362] Nicanor Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture*, 5.
[363] Dominique Caouette, *Constructing and Controlling People's Power from the Grassroots: Philippine Social Movement Activism in Historical Perspective. (*Unpublished draft, 2012), 2.
[364] Patrick Flores, "Social Realism: The Turns of a Term." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry,* Issue 34 (2013): 70.
[365] Alice Guillermo, Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970-1990 (Quezon City: UP Press, 2001), 166-167.

This problem is addressed by Nancy Fraser, for whom the collapse of the Socialist Bloc (coeval to democratization in the Philippines) raised the need for conceiving new relationships between voluntary social action[366] and the state."[367] For Fraser, this theory "accommodate[d] contestation" among competing *counterpublics*, which circulated counter-discourses of "identities, interests, and needs."[368] Said counterpublics were "spaces of withdrawal and regroupment" and "training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics"—characteristics which are alleged to dialectically interrelate.

Fraser's view that *counterpublic* protest merely "offsets" injustice[369] is a lower bar than offered by Guillermo, for whom art works towards "dismantling" systemic "exploitation and inequality."[370] But art neither offsets nor dismantles the political sphere. Rather, its main task lies in grasping and transforming the means of production—aesthetics. In this respect, the exchange of *ideas*—rather than propaganda or us/them moralistic outrage[371]—is required of a dialectic. Fraser's theory here takes on a mechanical, tactical quality inherited from the dualistic politics she critiques. *Counterpublics* are not enclosures, nor are they "training grounds" or bases, but a historically specific form of (Marxist) mass party.[372]

---

[366] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text, No. 25/26* (1990): 76-77. Fraser calls our world "post-bourgeois," hence the need to "theoriz[e] the limits of actually existing democracy."
[367] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 74.
[368] Fraser, 67.
[369] Fraser, 68. "This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies."
[370] Alice Guillermo, *Social Realism in the Philippines* (Manila: Asphodel, 1987), 50.
[371] As discussed in chapter four, Kusaka demonstrates it is not rational discourse but affective, moralistic we/they binary that develops in a "dual public sphere" of "civic" and "mass" spheres.
[372] To Fraser's credit, she does clarify that "The idea of the public sphere" establishes a "norm of democratic interaction we use to criticize the limitations of actually existing public spheres." Publicity generates its own autocritique through *counterpublic*s. But even this footnote, tucked at the very end of the text, does not denote a critique of imminence. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 78.

This brings us to Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, for whom *counterpublics* are a mere precursor of a "proletarian public sphere."[373] Unlike postcolonial or identity politics, a contradiction of "bourgeois and industrial-capitalist publicity" grounds the theory. [374] In the bourgeois public sphere, rituals of publicity divide public and private life.[375] Within the modern *public sphere of production*,[376] public authority expands into every corner of life, while private experience seems diminished, if available at all.[377] Although experience and culture produce a context of living, the horizon is strictly individual,[378] a mere fragment of the larger division of labor. This experience is contradicted by journalism, science, and politics emanating from the consciousness industry and the "public sphere labor of conglomerates"—parties and interest groups (e.g., corporations, shareholders, their entire labor force) entangled in the state.[379] Attempts to use the bourgeois public sphere are blocked by a movement's collective organization, which cannot call for new forms of public consciousness in the private terms set forth by bourgeois-capitalist publicity.[380] Even before it can grow into a proletarian public sphere, a *counterpublic* is thus caught in an antinomical individual/collective vice.

---

[373] Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere of Experience: Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (New York: Verso, 2016), 91.
[374] Negt and Kluge, xxxvi
[375] Negt and Kluge, 1.
[376] The term *public sphere of production* allows Negt and Kluge to further specify what Nancy Frasier mistakenly labels the "idealist" dimension of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. See "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." Social Text, No. 25/26 (1990), pp. 56-80. Fraser's mistake lies in her own transhistorical understanding of the bourgeois public sphere, although it should be clear enough that Habermas is describing an epochal shift, or structural transformation, that is phenomenally registering in various contradictory aspects of publicity. In sum, it could not be more clear that he is describing the bourgeois public sphere *in contradiction with itself, pointing beyond itself, but not yet transformed beyond itself*.
[377] Negt and Kluge, 3.
[378] Negt and Kluge, 6.
[379] Negt and Kluge, 13.
[380] Negt and Kluge, 7.

It should now be evident that, rather than mediate, *counterpublic* activity can serve to paper over myriad contradictions. For while a plethora of *counterpublics* has the potential to constitute a public sphere, they may nevertheless, in relation to each other, be a "Babylon" of mutually unintelligible polities.[381] Framing *counterpublics* this way accounts not only for contestation and resistance but also "exclusion and intensified incorporation"[382] in the face of more powerful "bourgeois combinations."[383] As the next chapter will show, Negt and Kluge's historical characterization goes some way towards explaining how a Leftist movement for "national democracy" helped transform the developmental state into a regime of flexible accumulation—People Power was a "capital [reconstituting] revolution."[384]

The Committed Artist

The remainder of this chapter turns from Deocampo and Tiongson's writings to two films bearing the latter's imprimatur—the experimental Super-8 documentary *Signos* (Signs, 1984) and the short essay film *Arrogance of Power* (1983). Although *Signos* was *committed*, it retained an autonomous character. Meanwhile, with *Arrogance of Power* (and other works authored by AsiaVisions), both aesthetics and argument were influenced by the National Democratic movement. While an avid supporter of this movement, Tiongson's ambitions correlated to his creative background. His career began at the Philippine Educational Theater Association

[381] Stuart Liebman, "On New German Cinema, Art, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere: And Interview with Alexander Kluge," in *October* Vol. 46 (Autumn, 1988): 23-59.
[382] Negt and Kluge, 15.
[383] Negt and Kluge, 80.
[384] On this concept see Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* (1993; reis., New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Chris Cutrone, "Capital in history: The need for a Marxian philosophy of history of the Left," *Platypus Review* 7 (October 2008).

(PETA)—the acting troupe that Lino Brocka headed up. Thanks to the PETA connection, he became assistant producer for more than ten of Brocka's films. In 1982 he directed his first—and last—feature, *Hubad ng Gubat* (Naked Forest). The film allegorized the rape of the Filipino land and people "by colonizers, capitalists, and exploiters in general."[385] Unfortunately, the producer insisted on playing up breast shots and more "sizzling" sex scenes.[386] Disillusioned by the "crass commercialism of the film industry,"[387] Tiongson turned to short films. He was, in essence, starting from scratch. While initially financing the venture himself, he was not alone in this decision:

> In the course of the production. I was joined by other committed artists who contributed in expanding the perspective of what was originally a personal one, into a general situationer about the country in the aftermath of the Aquino assassination. The product of the collaboration was a 20-minute documentary, ambitiously entitled "Arrogance of Power."

Arrogance of Power was first shown in 1983 at an indoor rally in Quezon City to commemorate International Human Rights Day[388] and soon became "one of the more popular films shown in meetings and assemblies."[389] It was screened at the MAKIISA I symposium the following year, along with *Signos*. These two works were produced concurrently, exhibited together, are "collective films" with a crossover in creative teams, represent the same events and people, and even share footage. Both are anti-Marcos films, falling within the definition of Guillermo's "protest/revolutionary art." If *Arrogance* is revolutionary "cinema-as-reality" and

---

[385] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019.
[386] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019.
[387] Lito Tiongson, "No Time for Crying," 69.
[388] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019, and Roque, 93. The location was Christ the King Mission Seminary of the SVD (Society of the Devine Word).
[389] Nicanor Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture: The Philippine Experience* (Philippine Educational Theater Association: Manila, 1984), 159.

Signos a form of protest "cinema-as-art," the latter more concretely represents the social reality as a tenuous united front. Meanwhile, *Arrogance*—the more oppositional work—downplays the united front's sectional structure across society for a more abstract, schematic anti-imperialist argument.

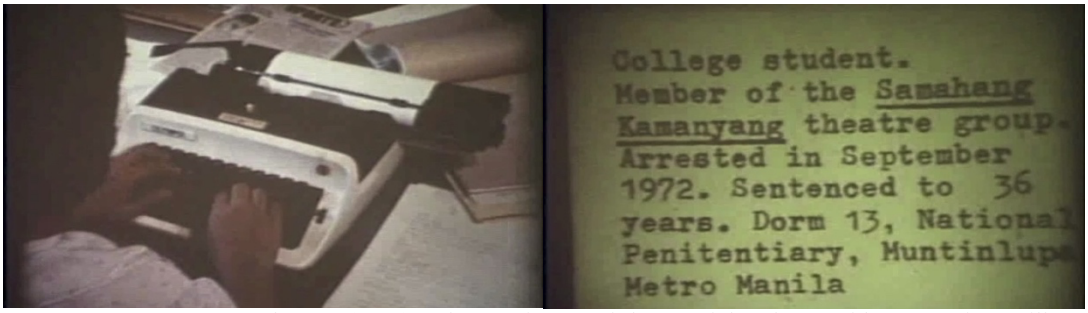

Figure 22-23. *Arrogance of Power* (1983). A lone typist records human rights abuses with a typewriter. Still captures from VHS produced by AsiaVisions.

Arrogance of Power is clearly the more committed work. The plot draws an arc of "conscientization" from individual to collective experience and action. Near the beginning, someone hammers out a list of names on a typewriter. A close-up shows the names and faces of several dead (salvaged) activists. The typewriter is modulated to sound like gunfire; this abstraction is didactic yet imaginative. From this point on, *Arrogance* presents its argument more perfunctorily. The Philippines is increasingly controlled by the military, which is, in turn, a product of American dominance of the Third World—an aggression, the narrator insists, against "the Filipino people's national and democratic rights."[390] Near the end, Marcos is depicted reviewing the Philippine military. The song "Ako ay Pilipino" (I am Filipino) plays, half-ironically, half-sentimentally, in the background—as if the oppressed country was reaching for its nationhood. State and society contradict. Yet this belies that the military was then

[390] Lito Tiongson, *No Time for Crying* (1986), 16mm film. In a subsequent clip at a rally outside the US embassy, nationalist senator Jose W. Diokno cries "We are instruments of Imperialism and domination - not of equality and justice among nations!"

fragmenting; a coup leading to People Power was staged only three years later by rebel forces *not at all* acting in consort with the American military.

The film's epilogue features Ninoy Aquino's 1983 massive funeral train. A shot pans past a mural in front of the crowd depicting victims from various sectors of the united front then forming.[391] The narrator concludes that "As the fascist character of the Marcos regime continues to be exposed, the people's resistance has steadily grown in strength." As if to prove this, the video cuts to another protest, this time the September 1983 rally commemorating the anniversary of Martial Law. A militant banner states, "Dismantle US-Marcos Dictatorship!" and the crowd sings the student protest song "Awit ng Mendiola" (Song of Mendiola), embracing martyrdom.[392] From the investigative sequence to the gathering of evidence, to anti-imperialist arguments and finally, protests with a sea of red salutes—the conscientization arc is closed.

[391] Featuring Ninoy Aquino, Macling Dulag, Dr. Bobby De la Paz, Edgar "Edjop" Jopson, and Dr. Johnny Escandor, representing the opposition, the health and human rights sectors, the student movement, and the indigenous movement.

[392] "The fists are clenched in protest / A hundred thousand sons cry out in defiance / The heart throbs with love of country / To die is bliss, so she may be free." Nicanor Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture,* 173.

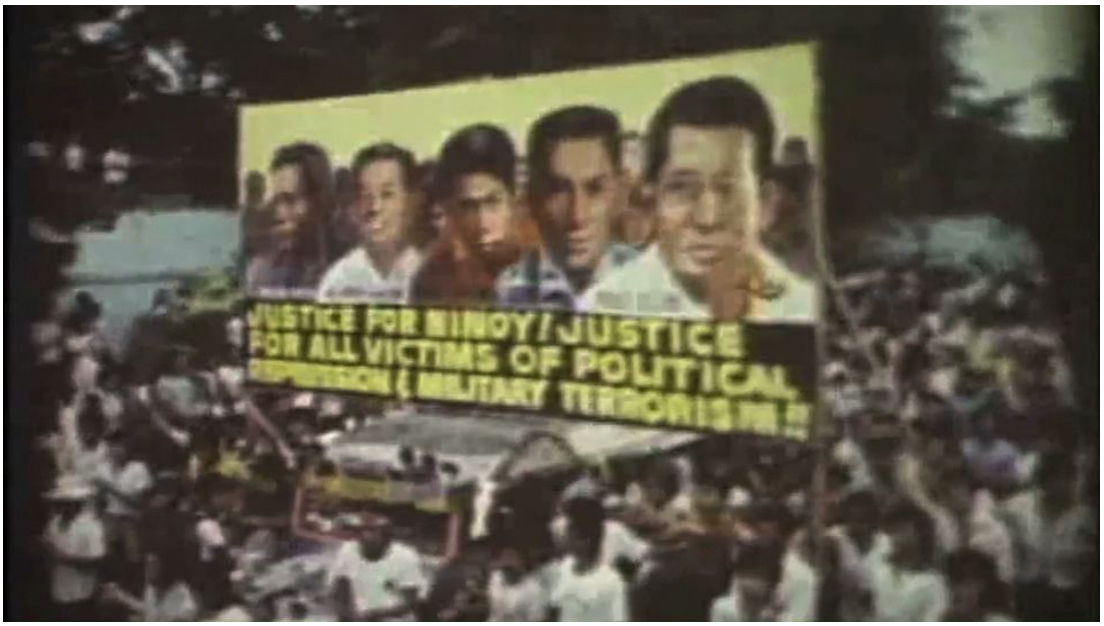

Figure 24. AsiaVisions' *Arrogance of Power* (1983). The mural represents the different sectors in the anti-Marcos united front. Still captures from VHS produced by AsiaVisions.

Figure 25-26. A sea of clenched fists ends *Arrogance of Power* (1983), left, while *Signos* (1984), right, ends with a playful child. Still captures from VHS produced by AsiaVisions and digital file uploaded to Vimeo.

Figure 27-28. Cardinal Sin in *Arrogance of Power* (1983), left, and *Signos* (1984), right; evidently from the same interview and likely the same camera. Still captures from VHS produced by AsiaVisions and digital file uploaded to Vimeo.

Pace Guillermo's "protest/revolutionary" distinction, it was not so much the protest movement as the bohemian art scene that created, however briefly, a dynamic space for cinema artists and independent filmmakers from different political

backgrounds—including on the Left[393]—sharing conversations, and Super-8 footage, over the dinner table.[394] And yet, while *Arrogance* practiced "documentary film as expose,"[395] *Signos* takes on board the political complexities of the moment and objectifies these as a problem in the work itself. This is due to the artistic license taken by the film's leading creator—"new cinema" director Mike de Leon. While Tiongson and others are also equally attributed, it bears all the artistic flourishes of de Leon and is indeed primarily considered "his film."

[393] Rose Roque, "Sineng Bayan: Kasaysayan at Filmography ng mga Politikal ng Kolektibong Pampelikula 1982-2014," unpublished master's thesis (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, Diliman, 2016), 96. According to Nick Deocampo, "It makes you respect and acknowledge…the role AsiaVisions [had] at that particular time [they were reputed]. It was a collective work. It can never be just Mike de Leon…there is equal respect for the other artists on Mike de Leon's part, but he needed a team and there was no other collective team to make such a daring kind of film." Translation mine.

[394] Sylvia Mayuga, in discussion with the author, January 25, 2019. "Lino brought the energy. He was a catalyst…Mike would withdraw and then seem to be snubbing everything and everyone. And then the moment he comes back through Pete. He always has an intermediary…to keep his dignity. He agrees with everybody and then he has all the readings to back it up. When he threw Bertolt Brecht at us we were all very confused. So what to do with our documentary? Because Mike was just shooting and shooting everything on the streets, you know? The parliament…the streets. How do we make a film? Hey, so okay we throw ideas around, ideas around. And he just absorbs all the ideas and then the very next day he throws us the script. Bertolt Brecht in Tagalog but fantastic everything fits so well. The artists all the quiet artists. Lino started the fire, okay? Pete kind of just made it grow larger. Mike withdrew and turned it into a film." While Brocka is not credited in the film, he is both interviewed and featured at an anti-censorship rally. It stands to reason that he had the role in its conceptualization that Mayuga claims—one which Maloy Quesada Tiongson corroborates. More importantly, Mayuaga refers to the larger coalescence of artists in the "Free the Artist Movement" that Brocka and De Leon collaboratively initiated.

[395] Nicanor Tiongson, *Politics of Culture,* 158.

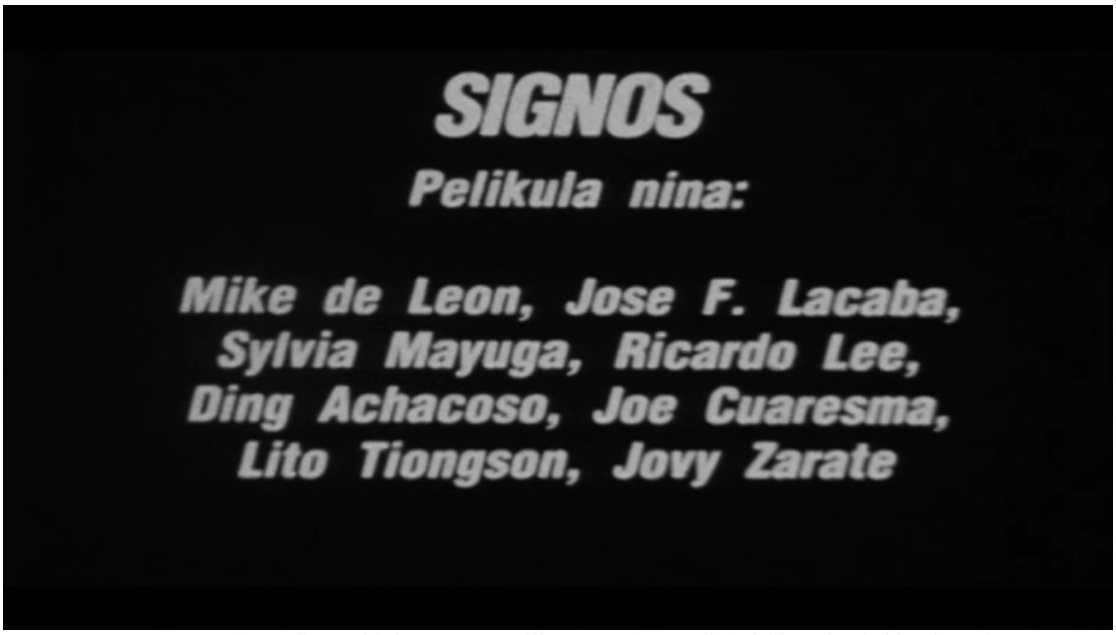

Figure 29. *Signo*s equally credits multiple creators. Still capture from a digital file uploaded by the artist to Vimeo.

While *Arrogance* shows the various political constituents in the ant-Marcos movement as a unified mass, with *Signos* the coalition is represented through questioning and destabilizing filmic unity—as a conglomeration of parts ready to burst asunder. The various fragments are held in tension through oscillating ironic and severe moods. In so doing, de Leon engaged with, appropriated, and put discourses and techniques from other artists (such as Brecht) in tension with reflections on his present—fusing montage with a talking-heads cross-section of the anti-Marcos united front.

The opening cue comes from a satirical (and censored) article likening Marcos' 1981 inauguration to a coronation.[396] De Leon literalizes the irony by inserting refrains from Handel's hallelujah chorus (sung by a thousand choirboys)[397]

[396] Letty Magsanoc's "There Goes the New Society, Welcome the New Republic" treated this spectacle as a coronation for an ailing ruler seated atop a corrupt Republic.
[397] Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions,* 144.

over photographic stills of Marcos and Imelda, their locked gazes intercut with footage of the military.[398] But the refrains are replaced by a siren. The film abruptly cuts to demonstrators chanting, no longer a religious anthem but the youth incantation, "Marcos, Hitler, Dictator, Lapdog."[399] As if it could become even more ironic, the film cuts to an urban poor demolition—torn down to the refrains of the 19th-century revolutionary song.[400] Even more bizarre, instead of a voice-of-God narrator, stanzas of Brecht's poem "To Posterity" are read in Tagalog translation. Written as a lament during the immediate pre-war period of Brecht's exile,[401] the poem is apropos of the approaching revolution. Shots of the city are shown; one imagines the narrator as a lonely wanderer, living in cerebral exile at an arm's length from the political movement. But these are followed by clips from a war-action film starring Fernando Poe Jr., footage of Aquino exiting the airplane before his murder, and the massive crowds at his public funeral procession.[402] The film's last image is of a child, seated on an adult's shoulders, fist raised. This shot can be interpreted as either a symbol of a gestating movement, or an alternative to the trope of a militant, muscular red salute. Indeed, through the film, de Leon focuses on the "yellow" (rather than National Democratic) Cory Aquino rallies.[403]

---

[398] The technique is reminiscent of the Cuban Third Cinema filmmaker Santiago Alvarez; raw, spontaneous, relying on a strong vocal soundtrack, pans over stills, and rapid cutting.
[399] Marcos, Hitler, Diktador, Tuta.
[400] "Pag-Ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa" (For the love of the homeland).
[401] Brecht fled from Germany to Daneland in 1939.
[402] *Philippines: Bangon!* (1976). At the end, the anthem sung at Cory Aquino rallies, "Bayan Ko"—originally written in Spanish during the revolutionary period, then rendered in Tagalog in 1929. The original (not communist version, which calls for the East to turn red with the blood of revolution) is played: "Ibong mang may laying lumipad, Kulungin mo at umiiyak, Bayan pa kayang sakdal dilag, Ang di magnasang makaalpas! Pilipinas kong minumutya, Pugad ng luha ko't dalita…Aking adhika, Makita kang sakdal laya! (Birds that freely claim the skies to fly / When imprisoned mourn, protest and cry! How more deeply will a land most fair / Yearn to break the chains of sad despair / Philippines, my life's sole burning fire / Cradle of my tears, my misery…All that I desire, To see you rise, forever free!).
[403] It is here no surprise that de Leon uses the traditional ending of the song rather than the anti-imperialist version advocating communist revolution.

Figure 30. Sylvia Mayuga (center) helped organize the final rally scene in *Sister Stella L.* (1984). Still capture from DVD produced by Regal Entertainment, Inc.
Figure 31. Mike De Leon (front center) with the bohemian scene, including Sylvia Mayuga (center back) and de Leon's long-time art director Cesar Hernando (back right). Image from *Lifestyle.Inq*, https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/354869/sylvia-mayuga-genius-endearing-oddball-original-human-being/.

Figure 32. Workers lay down in front of a truck exiting the plant in a picket scene in *Sister Stella L.* (1984). Still capture from DVD produced by Regal Entertainment, Inc.
Figure 33. A nearly identical image taken by Susan F. Quimpo at the Globe Steel Strike, September 25, 1984—several months after *Stella* was released. Image from *Rappler.com*, https://www.rappler.com/nation/in-photos-strike-globe-steel.

A Return to Commitment?

Thus far, our comparison of two aesthetic camps—occupied by Deocampo and Tiongson—converge aesthetically not at all. Further, the bohemian milieu more successfully mediated artistic collaboration than direct engagement in the protest movement. Granted, the commonality lies in a mutual struggle against a monolithic public sphere (i.e., the Marcosian developmental state). In the face of imminent revolution, the decline and transformation of this object necessitated re-thinking how the state related to cultural production. Just as Americans like Fraser were contemplating the entrenchment of the new social movements within the American

state, Filipinos attempted to theorize post-Fordist transformations in both politics and "structures of feeling."[404]

Reflecting on the economic crisis just prior to the revolution, Deocampo diagnosed a contradiction between art and commercialism—poorly financed "pocket revolts" wherein "neither aesthetics nor ideology…fostered a thread of continuity among the movements."[405] Tiongson instead emphasized that "local filmmakers…do not effectively control the means of production. Their work could be derailed anytime by a slight dip in the economy."[406] Only organization could ameliorate this problem. Yet AsiaVisions only ever engaged in "narrowcasting" to the movement—rather than a general public. Mass culture was opposed in a one-sided manner (anti-Hollywood), or affirmed as a "cultural mass" to be progressively transformed from the grassroots. This is not due to wrong or faulty theory, but rather, on the one hand, the magnetic pull of the "protest" movement's legitimation work for a popular front with shifting political players. On the other hand, shifting regimes of accumulation (Fordism to post-Fordism) presented a less favorable scenario for the growing and developing a European-style art-house cinema in the Philippines. In either case, the project of educating the *bakya crowd* with an "apparatus" of national cinema was abandoned.

Despite—or because of—the failure of the independent movement to replace the "new cinema" *as a mass industry*, oppositionality remains a key feature in its historiography and practice today. This failure corresponds with the fact that *democratization* accelerated the decline and "splintering of the Philippine Left."

---

[404] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990), 65.
[405] Deocampo, 93.
[406] Tiongson, "Alternative Cinema," 30. This bears out when one considers that Deocampo had only ten rolls of film for Revolutions, and that Kodak would soon stop processing Super-8 film in the Philippines.

Outmaneuvered by the liberals, the Left's *counterpublicity* was no longer welcome. Not unexpectedly, its disorientation contributed to a "deradicalization of discourses on independent cinema."[407]

For film historian Roland Tolentino, this reduced political horizon is a symptom of neoliberal economics and a "middle-class culturati."[408] Tolentino argues that at present, the difference between mainstream and the margins has blurred with new technology—video instead of film—and a de-industrialized modality of production. The division of labor of the studio and its craft guilds was displaced by the hotshot director desiring to accumulate enough cultural capital to go mainstream—avoiding *commitment* to national "audience development"[409] to which "new cinema" artists (i.e., Lino Brocka) aspired. If democratization has made cinema an authorship form available to the public, it is only for a niche market. It was not the best of both *independent* and mainstream worlds but the collapse of one into another. This trend was already evident in the late 1990s "pito-pito" films—completed in two weeks—that had, like the independents, become a "virtual cottage industry."[410]

Against this "liberal democratic middle-grounding," Tolentino calls for a return to the ethos and *commitment* of the film and video documentary collective Asia Visions.[411] This filmmaking opposes "state oppression" and inclines "to the interests

---

[407] Campos, 259.
[408] Tolentino, "Indie cinema."
[409] Roland Tolentino, "Indie cinema bilang kultural na kapital" ("Indie Cinema as Cultural Capital" KPK Column, *Bulatlat*), 2008. "Imbis na isipin ang problema ay audience development, ang itinatampok na diskurso ay pag-penetrate sa palengke."
[410] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014), 14.
[411] Roland Tolention, 2009. "Political film collectives: Introduction to ASEAC Panel." www.rolandtolentino.wordpress.com. http://rolandotolentino.wordpress.com/2009/01/25/political-film-collectives-introduction-to-aseac-panel/.

of the people,"[412] "cause-oriented groups," or the "people's progressive movement" for consciousness-raising, mobilization, and organizing. Collective planning and collaborative execution involving "immersion" in the environment characterize the production process.[413] "Film as resistance" is Tolentino's working concept for this revitalized and re-politicized cinema. Much like Guillermo's "protest/revolutionary art," this concept presumes a unity of oppositional artists with substantive political and aesthetic differences. Hence, Tolentino refers not only to AsiaVisions, but to Nick Deocampo's "gritty representation(s) of social reality" as "Third Cinema."[414]

Independent film historian Rose Roque takes issue with this comparison, arguing the "Third Cinema' label is a misnomer; Deocampo belongs by his own admission to the "auteur" (Second Cinema) camp. Roque argues if there is a Third Cinema in the Philippines, the mantle belongs not to the auteurs but to the film and video collectives[415]—who, while enjoying a moment of recognition after the revolution, have fallen out of public view. Focusing on AsiaVisions, she argues that what divides Second Cinema from Third Cinema is the modality of production. Film collectives are just that—collective in "decision-making, equal appreciation of each production activity, rotation of works, and strict interaction with audiences."[416] As proof, Roque points out that most AsiaVisions films did not credit the makers but instead attributed the collective. Protest art is not, pace Guillermo, a space for

[412] Tolentino, "Indie cinema." However, as Campos notes, indie films are intertwined with university education, primarily the main state school, University of the Philippines, Diliman.
[413] Tolentino, "Political film collectives," 2009.
[414] Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space,* 58.
[415] Rose Roque, "Sineng Bayan: Kasaysayan at Filmography ng mga Politikal ng Kolektibong Pampelikula 1982-2014," unpublished master's thesis (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, Diliman, 2016), 35.
[416] Roque, 6. Translation mine.

mitigating against political ideology but rather a prefiguration of collective social production.

However, Roque's "modality of production" argument is contradicted by the account of former AsiaVisions cameraman and editor Rey Ventura. Ventura chronicles anything but a "collective" filmmaking process. He claims production was "manipulat(ed)…for Party purposes."[417] Because he had not purchased the tapes, the collective vetoed his edit. "The editing, and the script, passed into other hands. Somewhere in the background…the Party line was being injected into the film."[418] While Ventura does not substantiate his claim, historian Ken Fuller chronicles parallel instances where "livestock…and collectively-owned farm machinery" were confiscated in certain Leftist coops in the name of combating "economism."[419] The nature of the Communist Party of the Philippines was (and is) such that decisions within groups that follow its ideological line—like the National Democratic Front—may well derive from members whose greater loyalty belongs to the party.

Upon closer inspection, however, there may have been an element of paranoia to Ventura's belief the party was superintending the process. While Tiongson was at times pressured to insert party slogans (perhaps by Ventura?), it seems probable he asserted ownership over material based on his estimation of what the public would find palatable. Maybe the confusion was compounded by the personal character of production—Tiongson did most of the editing and artistic synthesis independently. This is corroborated by his wife Maloy:

---

[417] Ray Ventura, *Underground in Japan* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), 65.
[418] Ventura, *Underground,* 72.
[419] Ken Fuller, *The Lost Vision: The Philippine Left 1986-2010.* (Quezon City: UP Press, 2015), 273.

> …strictly speaking they are a collective. But in the creative process, how is that collectivity played out?…knowing my husband he tends to be more individual in his approach…in terms of execution. So in terms of ideas in the ideation process, he would have like a collective to provide the…ideas inspiration. And then he would he would tend to put it together, execute it, in how he edits images he chooses…down to the music. [Although] someone else will help him execute it in terms of helping him out in the editing. So the collective process I think is in the big picture. But in the details, I don't think it's collective there.[420]

In sum, Tiongson did not promote collectivity when it came to the exercise of aesthetic judgment—which took place in the very intimate space of his bedroom. Hence, AsiaVision's works were "collective" only in a non-aesthetic sense. For that matter, "collective production" is not production within small and isolated sects (be it the Communist Party or a filmmaking affinity group), but *production by the consumers* rather than by specialists.[421] Rather than collective production, this dissertation uses *commitment* in defining the aesthetics of independent film and *counterpublicity* to describe its political tactics.

Mirrors and Truth

The analysis of Tiongson's (collective) work highlights tensions between aesthetic judgment and political demands. Consequent to capitalism's contradictions, Tiongson argued the independent movement rigidified into opposing aesthetic regimes—*cinema-as-art* emphasizing technique, style, and cinematic form, and *cinema-as-reality*—"capturing truth in celluloid."[422] Tiongson understood these tensions via a philosophy of art based in documentary "truth." Yet this philosophy

[420] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019.
[421] In this respect, Deocampo claims his work to be a collaborative "act of solidarity" with the gay or bisexual protagonist.
[422] Lito Tiongson, "Alternative Cinema," 28.

was ambivalent about the artist's (free) relationship to the aesthetic object. Tiongson argued that film could mediate and express an underlying, hidden reality—the suffering engendered by "ignorance" and "dictatorship." He believed the public was "paralyz[ed] with blinding fear," and that the horrific reality could only be recognized through a cinema that "holds up a mirror to nature."[423] Alternative cinema's contradictions undergird his argument for a social-realist "cinema of exposé." Truth is evident if only one can pierce the veil of a traumatic and traumatizing experience. When censorship was still in force and the major presses owned by "cronies," to articulate "truth," one would need to highlight infringements on freedom of speech[424] by reflecting the dominant culture's "deception and control."

Both Tiongson and Deocampo note that Filipino artists were constrained by vicissitudes of underdevelopment—a contingency limiting aesthetic debate. While Tiongson *was* invested in aesthetic expression, he also believed that a common protest experience undergirds possibilities of collective organization. He only glancingly concerned himself with mass culture—a problem more relentlessly pursued by Deocampo. The National Democratic movement would solve the problem of the "masses" at the grassroots. Alternative distribution networks remained "untapped," only "due to lack of cooperation [and] coordination among filmmakers, film groups and institutions."[425]

Nevertheless, the development of various aesthetic tendencies requires mediation, not principally through organization—but via art production. Tiongson did

[423] Tiongson, 30. The example given was Perseus and Medusa.
[424] Nicanor Tiongson, *The Politics of Culture,* 159.
[425] Lito Tiongson, "Alternative Cinema," 28.

not renounce art but instead attempted to work through its contradictions—however, not in the public sphere. As his wife Maloy put it, "it's not politically correct to expose these tensions in open forums." This was because "the principal objective was to arouse and organize and mobilize the widest number of people as much as possible."[426] Despite interest in experimenting with global developments such as "docufiction" and traditional theatrical and allegorical models,[427] AsiaVisions' collective vision remained pragmatic. According to Malloy:

> Lito left AsiaVisions because…there was pressure from the progressive movement…They would be covering all the rallies mass actions etc. So it was more like straight documentary…Lito…was already thinking of injecting art into their into their productions because he thinks that people will be bored if it's just straight documentary, especially if it's just about filming…all these mass actions. As an artist he thought that there are some themes, there are some subjects that are best represented using other creative means rather than documentaries. He felt strongly about that and he wasn't…warm to the idea of turning into…a documentation group for the progressive movement. That's why he…decided to leave.[428]

If a-priori considered impossible, every attempt at art becomes justification for failure, the throwing-up of "false programs of the negation of art."[429] One resolution to this contradiction lay in advocating the art of war—as Jose M. Sison called for in his poem "The Guerilla is Like a Poet." Politics becomes aesthetics. Tiongson's *cinema-as-reality,* similarly, risked setting aesthetics aside—in this case, for a politics of "truth." While this "truth" was a political position characterized by counter-hegemony, its ontological status in an abstraction ("the people") elides fundamental fissures amongst various groups that might, however, agree on the

[426] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019.
[427] For instance, based on the Filipino novel *Tata Selo.*
[428] Maloy Quesada Tiongson, in discussion with the author, February 2, 2019.
[429] Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Incomplete Project," 3-15, in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 10.

tactical removal of their opposition. It is assumed that organization—and struggle—is adequate to mediate political and aesthetic differences.[430] However, just as the history of the Left is characterized by fragmentation and the organization of defeat, this mediation did not take place—not within the "movement." The category of "the people" ends up hazy and unresolvable, or a schematic "bloc of four classes" to justify political positions.

Meanwhile, in attempting to lead the national liberation struggle, the Left ends up irrevocably divided on its own goal. Communism contradicts nationalism. The "vision for a just society" seems concrete as a counter-hegemonic position, but it is not clear what crystalizes "the people," whether struggle alone can mediate the fragmentation.

What seems most immediate (the vision) is the most mediated. "The people," as a process of becoming through struggle, can neither constitute nor get at some underlying, essential "truth;" appearances are essential because appearances mediate subject and object. There is no dispelling of untrue phenomena through opposition (to Marcos), rather, the phenomena are the real situation—Marcos is not an untruth that can be opposed by a truth-coming-into-being-in-opposition, but a real enough political phenomena with mass support. Mediation does not ameliorate a contradiction; mediation manifests the contradiction. If Tiongson and Deocampo observe a contradiction in the independent cinema, more mediation—the development of aesthetic (rather than political) tendency—would deepen (rather than

[430] Joma Sison The Struggle for National Democracy (Aklatangbayan.wordpress.com), 12. As the communist leader J. Sison put it, "These classes and organized groups mediate or bridge without exception the individual with the nation."

resolve) the contradiction. Otherwise, art's commodity character becomes obscure, oppositionality a tactic hiding various layers of mediation. Semblance and reality are muddled; the abstract is mistaken for the concrete.

For committed filmmakers, the immediate tactic (cinema-as-reality) is to dispel the false consciousness constituting the lived reality of the regime. However, opposition to this reality is not the correct science of understanding objective conditions. It is not that "the people" cannot see because the wool is pulled over their own eyes. Rather, mediation of anti-Marcos discontents in the form of a popular alliance brings to light an unstable unity. "Truth" becomes more multifarious and complex as the objective of disposing of Marcos is revealed. The question remains, as to whether the organizational mediation called for by Tiongson *might have* generated productive contradictions, giving birth to an actual new cinema that Deocampo also dreamed of, however skeptically—and if the "mirror" of film would reveal fundamental social truths—of ignorance and dictatorship—that was aesthetically more than a grim and determined, "poverty of aesthetics."

IV. Democratization and the Philippine Media Cartel

> Opinions are a private matter. The public has an interest only in judgments. Either it is a judging public, or it is none. But it is precisely the purpose of the public opinion generated by the press to make the public incapable of judging, to insinuate into it the attitude of someone irresponsible, uninformed.[431]

Structural Transformations of the Media

Figure 34. ABS-CBN Station ID, 1987. Still capture taken from *TheComputerParts* YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ld1Z3kYFeYQ.

On July 10, 2020, the Philippine congress refused to renew the broadcast franchise of ABS-CBN Corp., the largest media corporation in the Philippines. In handing down the decision, House Speaker Alan Cayetano quoted Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of

[431] Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 433.

private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself." To accusations that revoking the franchise would restrict press freedom, Ceyetano reasoned that "big business is just as likely to mold public opinion as the meanest tyrant."[432] Legally speaking, the Philippine constitution does provide Congress authority over the issuance of new television franchises. And television is constitutionally recognized as a tool for national development.[433]

If ABS-CBN can plausibly be considered a threat, this is a consequence not only of mediatized politics undermining and competing with the state's claims to the nation but of the Lopez family's role in the latter's development. ABS-CBN is the crown jewel of the multi-sectoral conglomerate through which the Lopezes celebrate their entrepreneurial achievements as public service. The corporation brought television to the nation—twice. Marcos seized the family's assets as it was on the verge of establishing a nationwide television network. The latter was recuperated only after the 1986 People Power revolution. The recovery was of symbolic import to the family—they believed that by "rebuild[ing]…*ipso facto*, they were also contributing to the rebuilding of their nation."[434]

At its peak, the Lopez empire encompassed not only television but print journalism, electricity, private freeways, water utilities, real estate, shopping malls and cinemas, a film company—Star Cinema—and the state-of-the-art ABS-CBN Film Archive. The archive's "new cinema" collection was derived from the defunct, flooded, and all but abandoned state archive established by Imelda Marcos. If there is

[432] Rappler, "Cayetano: ABS-CBN franchise not about press freedom but big business meddling with media," July 9, 2020, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4DwQNf0qrQ
[433] Philippine Constitution, "Section 24. The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building." https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/
[434] Roces, 145.

a hidden connection between knowledge and power,"[435] then Philippine national cinema is "constantly" at the mercy of ABS-CBN Corp.[436] This chapter argues that the progressive and developmental concerns of the "new cinema" were taken up and translated by ABS-CBN *as nationalism for an era beyond national cinema*. The corporation is motivated by interests both public and private—preserving the nation's film heritage while "celebrat(ing) its own workings "as a kind of moral crusade or creative magic."[437] Questions about its founders, the Lopez family, arise—at the level of *public opinion* and cultural memory—precisely because of the family's historical entanglement in the "democratic state."

Post-Fordist Nationalism

This dissertation has discussed how aesthetics mediate Philippine nationalism. All chapters turn to the 1986 People Power revolution. The revolution was not merely part of the "third wave" democratization of predominantly former catholic, authoritarian, developmental states,[438] but also the consequence of revolutions in production at the socioeconomic base. Moishe Postone characterizes the post-60s period as one of "capital revolution," or a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism.[439] In the Philippines, these shifts can be tracked in the intertwining of politics and culture. Prior to martial law, politics shifted towards specialized clientelistic structures,[440]

[435] Allan Sekula, "Reading an archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), 446.
[436] Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual archiving: Philosophy and principles, 3rd ed*. (Paris and Bangkok: UNESCO, 2016), 10, 74.
[437] Sekula, 446.
[438] Samuel Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Spring 1991): 12-34.
[439] Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. First published in 1993), 40.
[440] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "The spectre of populism in Philippine politics and society: artista, masa, Eraption!" *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2001): 10.

while a new political breed—the "artista candidate"—emerged, reproducing the illusion of clientelism without a party apparatus, unburdened by tradition, hierarchy, and easily accessible to a wide spectrum of the population."[441] The second chapter describes how the "new cinema" (1970s-80s) grappled with the Hollywood-inspired "commercial" cinema of the decade prior *as a residue of Fordism.*

Inhabiting precisely this moment, the Marcosian project attempted to construct "economies of scale" characteristic of the Fordist period (1930s-1960s). Under Marcos, the scope of state activity expanded—"produc[ing] the side effect of a disproportionate increase in the need for legitimation."[442]An apparatus of cinema[443] was deployed by the state as a symbol of largess and prestige, a sort of "simulation of patronage."[444] Yet culture is damaged and undermined "as soon as it is objectivistically prepared and strategically employed."[445] The apparatus collapsed nearly as quickly as it was constructed.

This destruction also created space for the rise of independent film within the anti-Marcos movement engaged in collective and counterpublic work. Chapter three argues that this movement's emphasis on art protest produced a superficial unity, eliding the antagonism between opposing camps. Refocusing the discussion on aesthetics highlighted contradictions within these *counterpublic* formulations. While

---

[441] Hedman, "The spectre of populism," 9-11.
[442] Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* 71.
[443] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014), 56. Tolentino writes "By "cinema as apparatus," I refer to how film culture has been used for hegemonic purposes (e.g., the dictatorship's efforts at nation-building)." For this dissertation, said "apparatus" extends beyond the government and intersects the film industry; the key heavyweight is not Marcos but Joseph "Erap" Estrada. Furthermore, as described in chapter two, a (failed) attempt to control this "apparatus" is made by none other than Lino Brocka.
[444] Vincente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 281-304.
[445] Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* 71

the independent movement posed radical possibilities, it also could "serve to veil and legitimate a new global form that combines decentralization and heterogeneity of production and consumption with increasing centralization of control and underlying homogeneity."[446] These efforts, largely stillborn, instead presaged what came next—"economies of scope" operating through flexible and competitive sub-contracting networks.[447]

The revolution was the end of both the developmental state and national cinema. Yet "the Marcosian "boss system" continued to thrive, "shift[ing] efforts" from managing the local economy to serving as brokers and fixers for transnational investment.[448] Following People Power, clientelism was not only specialized by democratization, but "spatialized" and rationalized, or transformed from "particularist" to "market corruption,"[449] a cash-nexus where the buyer need not belong to the politician's political or social group but only be the highest bidder. The "specifics and uniqueness of place" became more, rather than less important; the export processing zones "re-structured work" by "broaden[ing] the scope of labor control, extending it outside the factory" and into the community. Investors worked with local governments to recruit and manage an often gendered, flexible labor force in what Steve McKay calls "the political apparatus of flexible accumulation."[450] Not coincidentally, along with its ostensible manipulation of *public opinion*, ABS-CBN

---

[446] Moishe Postone, "Theorizing the Contemporary World: Robert Brenner, Giovanni Arrighi, David Harvey," in *Political Economy and Global Capitalism The 21st Century, Present and Future,* ed. Robert Albritton et al. 7-23 (New York: Anthem Press, 2010).
[447] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990), 155-156.
[448] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, *Philippine Society and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 108.
[449] Scott, "Analysis of Corruption," 320.
[450] Steve McKay, *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines* (New York: Cornell Press, 2006), 4.

was accused of hiring most of its workforce via forms of flexible, labor-only contracting.

Revolutions in the Public Sphere

One can analyze the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism not only through corresponding crises in politics and cinema but via transformations in the state and public sphere. In so doing, one charts a zig-zag path in the growth of ABS-CBN from traditional towards more advanced forms of media. The postwar moment was globally dominated by the politics of the New Deal in the United States and social welfare states more broadly. For Jurgen Habermas, this social welfare state's public sphere was riven by a contradiction between a liberal heritage of critical publicity and a collapsed civil-social public sphere which makes space "for a *staged and manipulative* publicity displayed by organizations over the heads of a mediatized public."[451]

No such Fordist social welfare state existed in the Philippines, and postwar "development" failed to diversify production and distribution of wealth, thereby enabling "elite democracy." The state was weak, the oligarchy strong. The market did not freely "allow take-overs, consolidation, and liquidation." Political power was needed to access war reparations, foreign exchange allocations, and zero-tariff access to the American market. Several landed agricultural exporters, including the Lopez family, "secured their operating capital through a consortia of kin or ritual kin, their own banking firms, or government finance allocated preferentially to elite

[451] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 232.

Filipinos"[452] These oligarchic families diversified into industry and became the dominant "segment of capital"[453] engaged in "rent seeking" activity—blurring the distinction between "official" and "private" spheres."[454] Unable to secure "political and procedural predictability," the national economy could not transition to "advanced forms of accumulation."[455]

The Lopez family's conglomerate was primarily responsible for developing television viewerships in the Philippines. While adopted early compared to other Asian nations, the Philippines lagged behind US viewership patterns, reaching only around 200,000 television sets by 1972.[456] The market's expansion was slowed due to difficulties in acquiring a broadcast license and the cost of importing technology, which became prohibitive due to currency devaluations. The Lopezes circumvented these barriers by acquiring a microwave network already in existence. This allowed ABS-CBN to begin constructing what then-CEO Genny Lopez termed "bridges on air," a connected and simultaneous broadcast system to a mass audience throughout the archipelagic nation. The plan was to "cover 35% of the Philippine population, and add 10 million potential viewers," increasing advertising rates at least tenfold.[457]

At that time, television was closely linked to the film industry. ABS-CBN toured cinema stars on variety and morning shows and cultivated the budding careers

---

[452] Alfred W. McCoy, "A Tale of Two Families: Generational Succession in Filipino and American Family Firms," in *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 3, no. 2 (2015): 185.
[453] Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 250.
[454] Paul Hutchcroft, "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state: The politics of private domestic commercial banking in the Philippines (Volumes I and II)," (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 46. See also Anderson, Benedict. "Cacique Democracy and the Philippines: Origins and Dreams," in *New Left Review* (May 1, 1988): 3-31 and Alfred McCoy, *An Anarchy of Families* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).
[455] Hutchcroft, 232-233.
[456] Raul Rodrigo, *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN* (Quezon City: ABS-CBN Publishing, 2006), 196.
[457] Rodrigo, *Kapitan,* 196.

of young superstars Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos. The Lopezs were "deadly," according to Nick Joaquin, not only due to their control over the culture industry but to a political base of "unknown numbers of people in the bureaucracy, in the judiciary, in the political field." This power was amplified by "their reckless use of funds" and the fact that "the Lopezes are known to fight to the end."[458]

In the turmoil leading up to martial law, the Lopezes' newspaper (The Daily Chronicle) was used as an anti-Marcos attack vehicle. Their radio stations and television network (ABS-CBN) weaponized student protests, which otherwise would not have reached a significant audience.[459] Despite having invested substantial funds, when martial law was declared in 1972, their network was shuttered. Part was "sold" to Marcos' cronies, who then gave favorable coverage to state-funded development projects. The government also established its own National Media Production Center (NMPC)—ironically, located in the sequestered ABS-CBN broadcast compound. The NMPC experiments in "simulbroadcast"—that is, broadcast simultaneous to radio and television—occupied every single radio and television channel from 7 PM-8 PM with Pulong Pulong sa Kaunlaran (Assembly for Progress). The news stories featured Marcos inaugurating various developmental projects. The show was not very well received, as listeners and viewers had no alternative options during this time slot. It was scrapped after several years.

Even after martial law's lifting in 1981, freedom of expression was curtailed, and newscasts were primarily in English—limiting the viewership. The takeover of

[458] Nick Joaquin (Quijano de Manila), "Why did Ninoy throw that bomb?," APL (May 1971), 52, cited in Joseph Scalice, "Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: Martial Law and the Communist Parties of the Philippines, 1957-1974," PhD dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 2017), 430.
[459] Scalice, "Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership," 431.

ABS-CBN by Marcos's crony Benedicto was an immensely contradictory scenario reflecting the grotesque character of "crony capitalism" then operant. Martial law gave the coalition of Left and nationalist-progressive forces powerful moral suasion. When Marcos fell, ABS-CBN was sufficiently unencumbered by a crisis in legitimacy. This required, as already stated, an act of "destructive creation," which would clear space for mediating new "structures of feeling" and "regimes of accumulation."[460]

Antinomies of Democratization

Modern revolutions occur not in the "main squares of a city" but rather the television broadcast stations.[461] This is due to a transformation in the relationship of the media to the nation; the latter, in certain respects, undermining the former. In what we might call the emergence of *screen capitalism,* the citizen is no longer a *citoyen* who participates out of individual voluntary will and on equal footing in the bourgeois ideal association.[462] And, unlike the theory of print capitalism, where citizens perform the "media ritual" of "imagining" the nation by reading the daily paper, *screen capitalism* destroys that very image of nation.[463] In this new context—dominated by the media cartel—the individual sees in the public sphere an objectification of experience, which renders interpersonal communications as insignificant.[464]

[460] Harvey, 338.
[461] Enzensberger, 7.
[462] Negt and Kluge, 258.
[463] T.J. Clark, "In a Pomegranate Chandelier," *London Review of Books,* Vol. 28 No. 18 (September 2006): 6-8.
[464] Negt and Kluge, 100.

As the moniker "people power" suggests, it seemed as though, contrary to the above, the 1986 revolution would open a democratic space of free public discourse. During the 1986 People Power revolution, civilians took over the major north-south highway (EDSA), allowing military rebels to consolidate their ranks and invade the major broadcast stations. At PTV-4—formerly ABS-CBN—several troops were wounded, and a reporter died from a heart attack. The seized station was christened "People's Television Network" and began broadcasting the revolution live. The following day, three soldiers were killed defending PTV-9 from the rebels. As the firefight raged, two Presidents of the Republic of the Philippines were sworn into office at roughly the same time. Cory Aquino took her oath in Club Pilipino and Ferdinand Marcos in Malacañang (the presidential palace). As he raised his hand to recite his oath, a shot at the television transmitter interrupted the oath-taking ceremony's transmission.[465] His grip on the media broken, Marcos fled.

The Lopez family immediately returned from exile in the United States. The recovery of large swaths of their vast, sequestered holdings—including former ABS-CBN and their newspaper *The Chronicle*—has been attributed to familial links with President Corazon Aquino.[466] However, there were restrictions against tri-media ownership of television, radio, and newsprint, and *The Chronicle* had to be sold off. The recuperation of PTV-9 was embroiled in controversy; that channel remained in government hands. Soon thereafter, a Lopez family member[467] sponsored a bill that would have had the company monopolize the entire telecommunications sector.[468]

---

[465] Nick Joaquin (Quejano de Manila), *Quartet of the Tiger Moon,* 89.
[466] Roces, *Kinship Politics,* 145-146.
[467] Senator "Albertito" Lopez
[468] Roces, 158.

Although this effort failed, the conglomerate quickly obtained market dominance and became the crown jewel in the family's multi-sectoral portfolio.

Having reestablished the family organization, ABS-CBN CEO Genny Lopez revisited his interrupted "bridges on air" concept. This would, as initially planned, link the country together via the spectral infrastructure of simultaneous news broadcast. Demarking the borders of the archipelago, the broadcast was to reflect the consciousness of the public, all with a framework that was responsive to colloquial Tagalog, amicable to cultural norms, and run by a family that epitomized the "true" Filipino traits of public service and economic independence. Rather than using a simpler tagline, such as "serving Filipinos," the more cumbersome, archaic "in the service of the Filipino" posited not only service in terms of civitas, but in the more allegorical sense posited by nationalist commentator Renato Constantino—*the* Filipino was being served and constructed at once—as democratic subject.

Yet the Lopez family's rapid recovery of pre-martial law possessions supported a widespread belief that *elite democracy* had returned as the dominant political paradigm. More recently, Mina Roces has disputed this account, finding the designation "oligarch" condemnatory, the inverse of hagiographic accounts written by hired historians. According to Roces, *elite democracy* accounts for neither political ideology nor the electoral successes of political dynasties. Finally, she argues the "rent-seeking" theory does not go beyond the earlier political patronage framework, itself rendered anachronistic by the transformation of patronage politics.

Roces instead identifies an oscillation between what she calls "Western values" and *politica de familia.* The latter term designates cultural practices

preferencing a core bilateral kinship group of "ritual kin," such as political or business allies. Both aspects are an interpenetrated part of Philippine politics and hence ambivalent in practice. She argues Philippine elites like the Lopezes have historically acted at certain moments in the interests of their kinship group yet have also fought to uphold liberal (Western) values—specifically, "the anti-Marcos nationalist ideology."[469] Roces's account may admit nuances that the *elite democracy* thesis elides. However, the comparison of "Western values" with anti-Marcos nationalism indicates a specific historical and political referent, and thus a transformation—rather than timeless principle.

Lisandro Claudio argues neither the *elite democracy* nor the frameworks that oppose it account for nationalism's symbolic character. Claudio emphasizes the revolution's memory and de-emphasizes politics, which played a limited role because "the groups involved in the anti-Marcos movement were too fractured" to rationalize their decision-making based on coalition-building. Instead, Claudio argues the *People Power narrative* presents a mythologizing, discursive, and "symbolic construction deployed and challenged for political ends."[470] The "consensus on what to reject"[471]—a vilified Marcos[472]—substituted for more clearly defined political

[469] See Roces, 18. This last claim sheds light on several problems in Roce's account. Her cultural framework is blindered to structural aspects of the elite democracy thesis. Mistaking liberalism for "Western values," she overlooks political-economic relations between state and society. The market is a domain of private exchange, rather than public, ownership. "Western values" (liberalism) is not an attitude, it is an ethos, a cosmos. One liberal family does not a liberal country make; the political-economic "wealth of the nation" is what matters. Liberalism—"Western values"—prevails, nationally, internationally, if only through the market.
[470] Lisandro Claudio, *Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolution and their Contradictions* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2013), 15.
[471] Lisandro Claudio and Rommel Curaming, "A Historicised (Re)Assessment of EDSA 'People Power' (1986)," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 134 (2010): 35.
[472] Claudio, *Taming People's Power,* 8.

coalitions. After the revolution, "the memory of Marcos and his downfall" served as the basis for an "anti-Marcos nationalism."[473]

Claudio's theory leverages a cultural memory politics framework that assumes political mediation occurs on "screens"—television. With this, we return to the problem of advanced media and screen capitalism. As already stated, television was a central site of the revolution. The social process mediating its memory corresponds with democratization, a new nationalist ("third wave) movement within which the Lopez and ABS-CBN played key roles. Yet the mediation of "official history" by a private entity raises several wrinkles in Claudio's theory of the *People Power narrative*.

If, through the efforts of the Lopez family, the *People Power narrative* vouchsafes democratization, what are the "real social circumstances" by which it was constructed as a memory politics?[474] The answer can only be television and cinema, which act as a "technologies of memory" defining how the past is interpreted, producing, blocking, and *entangling* "concepts of the nation" with "official" discourses and individual recollections." This *entanglement* is a dialectical movement between cultural memory ("objects and narratives") and history.[475] Yet this movement also leaves a structural "gap between event and representation."[476] Contradictions arise between the experience and representation of a traumatic event,[477] which media represses or "screens." In this sense, images of the *People*

[473] Claudio, *Taming People's Power,* 17.
[474] Negt and Kluge, 80.
[475] Sturken 1997, 5.
[476] Claudio, *Taming People's Power*, 17.
[477] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

Power narrative both frame and project the suffering of martial law[478] as trauma to national identity.[479]

To produce this narrative, the Lopez family did not need to beat the anti-Marcos drum or remind the nation of its victimization—but, instead, to rebuild—and in the process, perform a complex synthesis of entertainment sprinkled with displays of "historiographic power."[480] In 1987 ABS-CBN was re-branded as the "Star Network…through a live extravaganza titled *Pagbabalík ng Mga Bituin* (Return of the Stars)."[481] Intuiting a genuine thirst for information and political engagement following years of martial law, Freddy Garcia, the network's general manager, developed a strategy hinging on star power and a "public service" news concept with an entertaining twist. Garcia recruited the most prominent film operation, Regal Films, "in order to access its stars, production capability and working capital"[482] while pirating talent from opposing networks. More importantly, he developed a concept for a tabloid, infotainment news show called "TV Patrol." The goal was to create an audience by soft-selling national news with a dramatic twist. Garcia analogized the concept to the religious instruction of a priest: "…first, we have to give them what they want…sensational stories…then…teach them the values they need."[483]

The show quickly became notorious for shock journalism, mainly its depicting of dead crime victims. The Lopez family's initial media investment had been a

[478] Sturken, *Tangled Memories,* 7.
[479] Sturken, 17.
[480] John T. Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 166.
[481] Rodrigo, 303.
[482] Rodrigo, 300.
[483] Rodrigo, 323.

newspaper (The Chronicle). Geny Lopez was initially "taken aback" by the TV Patrol's content. His intentions of "giving the best newscast, informing the people, stressing the best values, giving them wholesome entertainment"[484]—precisely the values of a newspaper—were met by a television audience passively exposing itself to programming, at once "maintaining psychic equilibrium and discipline.[485]

In fact, "TV Patrol's" gruesome crime revelations were *not* an invitation to citizenship values but rather conformity in the face of perceived social danger. Ideologies of nationalism contributed in this regard. As the nationalist perspective would have it, the "true" Filipino exercised national sovereignty in producing both goods and ideology. The sentimentality of the "bayan" writ large as nation—democratic, and culturally distinct—jived with the sentimental (and no doubt, sincere) belief that the Lopez family stood for entrepreneurialism in service of the nation. The show's leading TV host and television icon, Noli de Castro, formulated the catchline "Magandang gabi, bayan"—literally meaning "Good evening, town" but figuratively referring to all citizens of the nation.

As facilitators of this "speaking to" the nation, the Lopezes were branded exemplary citizens, members of and in service to the community, like everyone else, *bayanis*. At the same time, they were a fourth estate working to mediate the concerns of the *masa* (the lower C-D-E classes) visible, active, and "engaged." The Lopez empire had become more than a family affair, and ABS-CBN was now a media cartel in the *advanced sense.* The success of the Lopez clan (or its diffuse bilateral "kinship group") was the success of the nation. Its failure was the failure of the revolution.

---

[484] Rodrigo, 323.
[485] Negt and Kluge, 96-101.

In short, the *People Power narrative* is produced by the *entanglement* of the anti-Marcos movement, the counter-public media, and the newly formed state. It is a "mnemonic" means towards reconstructing national "wholeness."[486] We must, however, fill in several gaps in this account. First, the concept of e*ntanglement* takes for granted that the state *is* power, permanent, separate, and distinct from the media and public spheres of protest. As the rupture of 1986 shows, however, dramatic transfers of power, if not a revolutionary re-constitution of the state, occurred. Second, there is evidence of a transformation towards *advanced* forms of media arising in the 1970s and taking on a new "democratized" form in the 1990s. The developmental public sphere smashed by the 1986 revolution was reconstructed with "new technical and organizational elements"[487]—in the form of a cartel, and as an "illusory public sphere." This illusory public sphere consolidated the counter-public spheres of democratization—expressing an "anti-Marcos nationalist ideology."[488] Roce's virtue is to identify this ideology as self-contradictory—the interpenetration of liberalism (Western values) and *politica de familia.* However, we must consider this contradiction in light of the *advanced media*—historically, rather than as a pendulum swing from one extreme to another.

In the case of our primary example, ABS-CBN, "traditional" spheres of television and film production were transformed into singular components in a complex "interconnected and interdependent" ecosystem. This system corresponded

[486] Michael Bernard and Jan Kubik, "Introduction," *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4. This is defined as "the dominant pattern of memory politics that exists in a given society at a given moment in reference to a specific highly consequential past event or process."
[487] Negt and Kluge, 150.
[488] Roces, 19.

to the other component parts of the Lopez multi-sectoral conglomerate. There is, in turn, a "fixed state of interdependence between the enterprise as a whole, the masses of readers and users organized by it."[489] The *advanced media* relies on the *public sphere as an illusory synthesis of totality.* This synthesis is illusory in that it papers over a temporal contradiction. Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge write:

> …the public sphere…must sustain the claim that it represents the totality of society. On account of its mechanisms of exclusion, it cannot, however, fulfill this claim. It disintegrates rapidly because at no time does it possess the substance it purports to have. The public sphere must overcome this disintegration through permanent variation.[490]

Democratization both achieved and curtailed this permanent variation through anti-Marcos nationalism—which excluded a massive pro-Marcos segment of society. Democratization enlarged the national democratic space, yet unleashed centripetal or delegitimizing forces of labor exportation (the "Overseas Filipino Worker" phenomenon), the growth of both the informal sector and export processing zones—defined together as the "political apparatus of flexible accumulation."[491] Mediating this "context of living," ABS-CBN's projections of the *People Power narrative* expressed both a "profound shift in the structure of feeling"[492] and the interlocking and, at times, contradictory public-private interests of the Lopez family and the nation. This contradiction can be described as a "social monopoly of indirect power"[493] or a non-public "public sphere of production" which bypassed traditional sites of public acclamation by seeking "direct access to the private sphere of the

[489] Negt and Kluge, 131-132.
[490] Negt and Kluge, 79.
[491] Steve McKay, *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines* (New York: Cornell Press, 2006), 5.
[492] Harvey, 65.
[493] Negt and Kluge, 66.

individual."[494] This (overlaid) public sphere was the sum total of private production spheres, leveraging the concept of the public sphere per se to self-legitimate—"only ambivalently so."[495] In the remainder of this chapter, several instances of the *People Power narrative* taken from the ABS-CBN's broadcasting and branding will show how the Lopezes' national reach and ambition was entangled with symbols of the private (domestic) spheres, past and present, constituting a nonpublic public sphere or *illusory synthesis of totality.*

Historiographic Power and the Kapamylia Network

To the extent that experience is mediated through television, archives, and eventually, cultural memory, the result is as much repetition as newness. According to Huyssen, this is experienced *as a specific phenomenon of postmodernity*, a transformation in modern temporality.[496] The dialectic of history runs in a loop, and the future "fold(s) itself back into the past" into exhausted cultural memory thematics of national language, history, nation, and race.[497] John Caldwell calls this "emerging penchant for excessive 'historification'" in television "historical exhibitionism."[498] Cultural technologies (i.e., TV) imbued with "historiographic power" and drawing from exhausted yet recognizable themes, mediate an overdetermined historical consciousness. For the individual television viewer, this content—marked by

[494] Negt and Kluge, xlvi.
[495] Negt and Kluge xlvii.
[496] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 6-7. That is to say, as a shift from earlier forms of indexical technology, which accompanied and facilitated historicist *antiquarianism* (Kracauer 1995). To the extent that history becomes obsessively indexical, it is overripe—its authors and its subjects suppress change by re-inscribing an untimely culture on the present. If modernism thereby suffers the *hypertrophy* of memory, postmodernism is its *atrophy*
[497] Huyssen, *Twilight Memories,* 8.
[498] Caldwell, *Televisuality,* 165.

identarian "overwrought telling"[499]—is embraced as a signifier of cultural community.

As already stated, the ABS-CBN satellite network broadcasted simultaneous daily news through the entire archipelagic nation, playing an integrative function. These broadcasts were periodically interspersed with commemorative documentaries and television movie previews extolling the 1986 revolution—articulating the *People Power narrative*. Each year, a mass rally is held on the revolution's anniversary, accompanied by live coverage by major TV networks and increasingly sophisticated commemorative documentary specials. These "event status" documentary specials are juxtaposed to the "everyday" news and entertainment content, expressing historiographic power."[500]

One recent example is ABS-CBN's historical documentary, *EDSA 25: Sulyap sa Kasaysayan* (EDSA: A Brief History, 2011),[501] which uses multi-layered visual language to link past and present. The documentary begins with a close-up of the tying of ribbons on passers-by outside of the People Power shrine; the video footage is in black and white while the ribbon is colored yellow.[502] Intercut are POV shots of one individual passing out flyers on the street with the text "Sariwain ang diwa mapayapang rebolusyon" (Renew the spirit of peaceful revolution) and photos of individuals holding large framed photographs with iconic archival images associated

[499] Caldwell, 192.
[500] Caldwell, 166. John Caldwell also argues the very idea of "oppositionality" as practiced by video art and the avant garde was claimed by the dominant media, as "the game of radicality had rapidly shifted to the commercial world." Although this shift is if anything even more evident in the Philippine context, the contradictions it presented did little to kill the "mythologies of the "opposition" and the notion of the "independent" media.
[501] EDSA—Epifanio de los Santos Avenue—refers to the highway where protesters gathered, blocking Marcos troops from attacking rebel forces during the People Power revolution.
[502] This references the yellow ribbons that Ninoy Aquino's well-wishers wore (and which became the color of the Liberal Party) that fateful 1983 day that he returned to and was gunned down on the tarmac of the Manila airport.

with the revolution. One shows the lifeless body of Ninoy Aquino on the airport tarmac; a solder is frozen in time, lifting the body. Then, suddenly, the image comes alive, and the moving, archival video footage (shot right after the killing by a reporter) fills the frame.

The film continues to intercut the ribbons, the flyers, and the picture frames on the street, encasing live video footage—now collaged with newspaper text through which an animated yellow ribbon snakes. The themes are "history come alive," "Aquino magic," and "the miracle of EDSA." Through the magic of video technology, the Liberal Party's memory of "tying a yellow ribbon for Ninoy"—derived from Aquino's favorite song—is brilliantly rendered as a participatory affair. As the viewing public partakes of the Aquino magic, what is ostensibly a public spectacle is experienced in the private living rooms of Kapamylia fans. Not only can the public, through these "interactions," i.e., the dispersing of literature, tying of ribbons of the arms of passersby, depictions of history inside of domestic mementos (a household picture frame), project themselves "into history." The docudrama acts as a "screen memory" that screens out the trauma and social disintegration of revolution through the conveyance of a triumphant *People Power narrative*. At the same time, the Lopez family brand is associated with the historiographic power of the "yellow revolution" while distinguishing ABS-CBN everyday content from "event status."[503]

[503] Caldwell, 160-180.

Figure 35-37. *EDSA 25: Sulyap sa Kasaysayan* (2011). Left, a yellow ribbon is tied on a passerby. Middle, video from Ninoy Aquino's assassination "comes alive." Right, "EDSA: Renew the Spirit of Peaceful Revolution;" the yellow ribbon, animated, metaphorically "comes to life" with a holy glow, but also resembles the network's other animated titles. Still capture taken from ABS-CBN News YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZPt4Tb_O2A.

A similar historiographic power is also on display for viewers visiting a Lopez-owned movie theater. It has become obligatory that the Lupang Hinirang (national anthem) be played before each movie; Lopez theaters carry a customized music video to accompany the anthem. Even a cursory look at the most recent iteration of this short Lupang Hinirang film immediately points to the many interconnections between ABS-CBN and the Aquino-led Liberal party. Consider, for instance, the yellow dress of Cory's daughter Cris (below, left)—the Liberal party color. Or the appearance of Piolo Pascual—star of Chito S. Roño's martial-law epic *Dekada '70* touting the anti-Marcos nationalism—now bearing the Philippine flag at the head of ABS-CBN's stable of stars, rushing through Old Intramuros. These star's unambiguous patriotic zeal is rendered in cinematic quality, thanks in no small part to the fact that ABS-CBN owns a production company—Star Cinema—which, as of the writing of this paper, controls most of the national film market. This is not to say that the corporation has the corner on nationalist spectacles—rather, national spectacles are its domain, from cinema to its cinema archives to its television news coverage that links up the archipelagic nation.

Figure 38-39. Right, Piolo Pascual, and left, Cris Aquino—ABS-CBN's stable of stars—figure prominently in this Lupang Hinirang version circa 2011. Still capture taken from mychosdotcom YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKZwCUTahxc.

The above hagiographic spectacles not only tell but also expose a wrinkle in the *People Power narrative.* The Lopez family's cultural nationalism and propagation of the narrative as part of, and indeed, necessarily a commercial enterprise, means this same nationalism is offered as a commodity. These nationalist commodities' "incorporation…into the nonpublic public sphere of the media cartel" gives value to the product,[504] which, however, the consumer/citizen passively producing said [505] cartel cannot appropriate.[506] This begs the question of how the experience of a diverse public is re-incorporated—in an illusory synthesis—as a news product. Specifically, an explanation is required as to how the public's lived experience is mediated—not only as (1) a technical process, but also as (2) a reflection of the public sphere of production which incorporates contradictory private and public legitimations (3) with overriding emphasis on personal security concerns. Such an account would show that the media cartel remediated cinema's "historiographic power" and that cinematic nationalism attains a new form under changed (i.e., post-Fordist) circumstances.

These problems are clarified when one considers that ABS-CBN's viewership is not a monolithic bloc; its audience is constructed through market research and

[504] Negt and Kluge 132.
[505] Negt and Kluge, 150.
[506] Negt and Kluge, 133.

segmentation like any other major network. Major news networks structure the news environment so that news is produced, so to speak, in bulk—for a "variety of news programs" which select and customize stories perceived as attractive to their respective audiences.[507] Profitability is achieved via market segmentation constructed through quantitative research that indicates, for instance, that children and homemakers are the primary viewers in Metro Manila.[508] Focus groups are then convened to ascertain more granular and qualitative marketing criteria. In the newsgathering process, material is collected by research teams in a central clearinghouse and vetted in daily story "conferences" for the various programs within the network, targeting first and foremost, the primary news channel, and then the different niche market segments.

As stated above, ABS-CBN pursues a "tabloid" news format. According to media scholar Estelle Marie M. Ladrido, this format's market segment corresponds with "C, D, and E socio-economic classifications, also known as the Philippine *masa.*"[509] These are the middle and lower classes[510] whose major news concern is "security." Desire for safety translates into a preponderance of crime and entertainment stories, with politics taking a much smaller portion of the airtime and even so, subject to "dumbing down" to simplify the story, or making it more dramatic—what is called "writing to video."[511] These techniques "indicate how audience preferences are used tactically to draw viewer attention from their private

[507] Marie M. Estelle Ladrido, *Magandang Gabi, Bayan: Nation, Journalism Discourse, and Television News in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017), 137.
[508] Ladrido, *Magandang Gabi,* 187.
[509] Ladrido, 190.
[510] Ladrido, 184.
[511] Ladrido, 191.

spheres of personal security toward the life of the nation."[512] As "appeals of sensationalism," they also satisfy the viewer, who "with relatively weak libidinal investment…can conceive of a situation in which he himself mobilizes all his sensual and intellectual powers at the same time."[513]

In sum, ABS-CBN segments its public as a market, allowing it to speak to the largest number of people possible. Viewers have the option to consume any number of program offerings. However, their selection is nothing less than the brand in its entirety, which in turn "sells" "the life context and learning context that are preorganized in the media cartel." This "macrocommodity" brings together education, entertainment, and information "into one overall complex" without which "these individual commodities revert to an earlier phase of valorization with respect to" their use-value and exchange-value.[514] In other words, a media "product" or advertisement acquires value precisely because it is connected to totality's apparent "life-enhancing function," so construed. The viewer's diffuse experience, which he cannot organize, is abandoned in favor of the program's prefabricated experiential model. In this sense, ABS-CBN does not perform an integrative function as Genny Lopez imagined but rather legitimates different and contradictory interests. That is to say, it "has above all the function of directing attention to topical areas—that is, of pushing other themes, problems, and arguments below the threshold of attention and, thereby, of withholding them from opinion-formation."[515] What the Lopezes built was—rather

[512] Ladrido, 197.
[513] Negt and Kluge, 107.
[514] Negt and Kluge, 130.
[515] Habermas, 70.

than a national public sphere or a tool of elite domination—a "nonpublic public sphere," that of the media cartel.[516]

Conclusion

The media cartel corresponds to post-Fordist transformations in state-society relations. With the People Power revolution, "civil society [became] far more fluid than the elite democracy framework allows."[517] It is no longer possible for the oligarchs to subvert public opinion as before. Rather, democratization produced a division between the *mass* and *civic spheres*—a fragmented "dual public sphere" with a "contact zone" where groups exercise moralistic pressure to "legitimize their own intellectual and moral leadership."[518] The consciousness industry re-organizes this stratified society. Here opinions require the character of an article of faith. The demonization of the "mass sphere," the poor and abject inhabitants of the informal sector and, if they are lucky, of transnational manufacturing corporations, are subject to a disciplining "civic sphere" insofar as they are proven to be pliant labor, managed by the very elected officials representing the Philippine's experiment in local government.[519]

Post-Fordist politics can also be termed "the politics of public opinion." This politics is expressed through the rise of public surveys and polls in the 1990s, which are instruments "not of political knowledge but of political action," devaluing other

[516] Negt and Kluge 133-134.
[517] Wataru Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 22.
[518] Kusaka, *Moral Politics,* 2.
[519] Barangays or LGU/local government unit, the smallest unit of government.

forms of collective action.[520] Public opinion exists, according to Bourdieu, as "a pure and simple artefact whose function is to dissimulate the fact that the state of the opinion at a given moment is a system of forces, of tensions."[521] Public opinion's commodification in the media cartel is precisely the source of its usefulness. Its use-value flows from the "consciousness of concrete individuals, who see themselves as customers [who] because of their increasing societilization…develop a need for a synthesis of…particularized modes of existence, a need that remains unsatisfied in the real production process."[522]

As mentioned above, the state exercised power through "delegation" rather than directly. The political public sphere and the (private) media conglomerate had developed a modus-vivendi. In this context, various firms in the Lopez-run multi-sectoral conglomerate could "communicate with the potential voters on all channels and from all sides by way of entertainment, the news, and educational programming—always in the direct flow of communication."[523] Meanwhile, political parties had limited recourse to "influence the formation of voter will…individual television speeches, public meetings, pamphlets"[524] usually during the election season.

This returns us to the point at which we departed—the revocation of ABS-CBN's broadcast license and the claim that "big business is just as likely to mold public opinion as the meanest tyrant." Cayetano's invocation of Roosevelt indicates a

[520] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "The Politics of "Public Opinion" in the Philippines," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 4 (2010): 111.
[521] Pierre Bourdieu, "Public Opinion Does Not Exist," eds. Armand Matelart and Seth Siegelaub, *Communication and Class Struggle* (New York: International General, 1979), 125.
[522] Negt and Kluge, 132-133.
[523] Negt and Kluge, 35.
[524] Negt and Kluge, 35.

repetition of the 1930s when the Philippines was still part of the commonwealth. Rooseveltian politics do not, however, carry the same ideological cachet without the context of the global New Deal—which reached its apogee as Fordist-Keynesian "state directed" politics of the 1950s-60s. As noted above, the Philippine postwar "patrimonial oligarchic state" was characterized by a strong elite and a weak state. Precisely when the New Deal coalition went into crisis clientelist networks in the Philippines began to disintegrate, with Ferdinand Marcos opposing both communists and oligarchs. Martial law was a "revolution from the center" that would check both extremes. The Lopezes were not only active political opponents but prior allies who bankrolled Marcos' presidential campaign. Cayetano-Duterte were not involved in a struggle of any such nature.

It was as if the Lopez-Marcos feud needed resurrecting to appropriate the symbolic "revolution from the center." But if so, Cayetano-Duterte dredged up the 1970s because the Lopezes also sustained a memory of the 1980s—the *People power narrative*—which had, as cultural memory, come under broad dispute, if not disrepute. Hence, the demise of ABS-CBN as a broadcast corporation—if it has (perhaps only temporarily) indeed come to that—indicates the conclusion of the *People Power narrative* and its politics of public opinion. In the process, the state shows itself to be "not an independent power" but "a battlefield,"[525] where "maintaining a system that corresponds to the contradictions of its social order" gives it a "flexible and accommodating shape." There is an oscillation between centralization and decentralization of authority, which returns contradictions to the

[525] Negt and Kluge, 67.

political domain.[526] Through entanglements of social movements and even revolutions within the state, the legitimacy of public authority is reconstituted. The capitalist regime beyond this reconstitution is uncertain. New and emerging forms will nevertheless express "constraints on contingency exerted by capital as a structuring form of social life," in turn "constraining the scope of decision making, and hence, democracy."[527]

[526] Negt and Kluge, 69.
[527] Moishe Postone, "History and Helplessness," 94-95.

V. Conclusion

Historical Revisionism?

In an academic conference on the Marcos dictatorship, Maria Serena Diokno (then chair of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines or NHCP) exhorted other attendees to assert their own history as "what we know it to be, rather than what the Marcos family or others say it is."[528] The "us" takes much for granted. Who, exactly, is *us*, what are the politics, what does it exclude? Cultural historian Lisandro Claudio argues the accusation that history is being revised belies a broader mnemonic politics—the *People Power narrative*. This narrative projects a false unity for Claudio, obscuring differences, and lack of political cohesion among the anti-Marcos camp.[529] For sociologist Watura Kusaka, the fact that the revolution was settled through a split within the military coupled with an "extra-constitutional mobilization of people" resulted in lingering legitimation issues. Political disintegration and socioeconomic stratification in the 1990s was elided through a moralistic "we/they" division of the public into *civic* and *mass* spheres.[530] The latter public—generally more sanguine about Marcos legacy—was "other" against whom Diokno invoked history "as we know it to be."

In 2016 President Rodrigo Duterte allowed the burial of Ferdinand Marcos' embalmed body at the Heroes Cemetery. Shortly thereafter, Diokno resigned from her

[528] Lisandro Claudio, *Taming People's Power* (Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2013), 18.
[529] Claudio, *Taming People's Power,* 19.
[530] Watura Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 81.

state post. An appeal by a group of former martial law detainees was lodged and reviewed by the Supreme Court, which responded as follows:

> There are certain things that are better left for history – not this Court – to adjudge. The Court could only do so much in accordance with the clearly established rules and principles. Beyond that, it is ultimately for the people themselves, as the sovereign, to decide, a task that may require the better perspective that the passage of time provides. In the meantime, the country must move on and let this issue rest.[531]

This essentially punted the ball back to the executive. When asked why he would allow the burial, Duterte quipped, "Whether or not he performed worse or better, there is no study, there is no movie about it…It's just the challenges and allegations of the other side which is not enough."[532] This off-the-cuff remark roughly summarized the supreme court decision. Numerous journalists jumped on the comment, "fact-checking" the president's statement and submitting lists of books, essays, and films condemning Marcos' record. However, based on Duterte's excellent (at that time) 87% approval rating, the court of public opinion seemed to concur that it was indeed time to move on.

Revolutions or Refrains?

Yet, a trauma to national memory persists. In 2018 the specter of Marcos was again raised by a slew of *indie* (independent) films commemorating the 46th anniversary of the declaration of martial law. These films can be said to leverage history as "counter-registers to the official nation."[533] If the *indie's* precursor, the

[531] Rappler.com, "FULL TEXT: SC decision on the Marcos burial case," Nov. 11, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/152005-full-text-supreme-court-decision-marcos-burial
[532] Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM), "Media Inteview - Lima, Peru 11/18/2016," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fL4NEQlqhw.
[533] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014), 57.

"new cinema," depended on the anti-Marcos movement for a semblance of unity,[534] then Duterte's assertion that "there is no movie about it" presumes the full disappearance of that semblance. There was a glaring paucity of films dealing directly with either martial law or the People Power revolution for many years. The exceptions are few—a documentary by the Catholic Communication Foundation for Asia titled *EDSA People Power: The Philippine Experience* (1986). There were, as discussed in chapter two, the AsiaVisions films. Nick Deocampo's *Revolutions Happen like Refrains in a Song* (1987). A fictional miniseries called *A Dangerous Life* (1988) was made by Australian television. Kidlat Tahamik's decade-long *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow?* (1994). Thereafter, *Escapo* (1996), several TV specials were made by ABS-CBN and GMA-7, Lito Tiongson's *Batas Militar* (Martial Law, 1997), and the epic *Dekada '70* (2002).

The more recent *indie* movement has made up for this past dearth, usually by dramatizing activism in an exceedingly partisan manner rather than dissecting the political machinations of the martial law context. Preceding the current profusion of millennial *indies* came an aesthetic experiment inspired by Deocampo's *Revolutions*—John Torres' *Refrains Happen Like Revolutions in a Song* (2010). Torres subjects Decampo's film to an inter-generational debate on cinema and revolution. By reversing the position of "revolutions" and "refrains," Torres prioritizes the aesthetic and quotidian over the political, raising problems of subjective interferences and repetitions in a revolutionary process. After all, a revolution might not be an act of victorious emancipation but a remediated morass of

[534] Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 260.

tangled, obfuscatory strivings. The title is a misnomer, for the story mentions neither revolution nor its epicenter in Manila. If any revolutions are found, they are in Torres' innovative approach towards documentary method and form—in the aesthetic object, the verse. He sees revolution in the intensity and wonder of life on the remote Panay island, which seems depicted in an observational fashion but is actually re-enacted with mundane dialogue and occasional recitations of local mythology.

Torres' rejoinder to Deocampo's *Revolutions* points to the malleability of history as a function of cultural memory. It expresses unease with the concepts of a nation associated with the *People Power narrative*, rejecting dualistic (counter-discourse, good versus evil) constructions. That Torres elides the politics of People Power and 1980s protest art for a nuanced aesthetic approach is a subtle polemic against *committed* iconography and Nick Deocampo's auteurist film-songs. At a time when discourse on national film had become reified,[535] it is a movement as far as possible away from the trope of the artist-citizen. By abandoning the biographical, Torres also takes leave of the heroic task of transforming himself through art—relegating what this dissertation labels *commitment* and *counterpublicity* to the dustbin of film history.

Private or State Archives?

Yet history cannot be so quickly disposed of—if only because of forces acting to preserve and shape its representations. According to Allan Sekula, just as an artwork's specificity is lost when it is removed from the original context and placed in an archive, meaning is "liberated from the actual contingencies of use." This

[535] Campos, *End of National Cinema,* x.

liberation decontextualizes and re-animates the archival object's use-value,[536] however, usually in moral celebration of the archive.[537] Through managing and constructing knowledge, archives express power.[538] Following Benjamin, Sekula calls for a *materialist cultural history* to constrain and focus historiography on contradictory aspects of photographic archives (such as interpenetrated industrial and sentimental realism). This concept sheds light on constructions of the *People Power narrative* by the ABS-CBN Corp. The corporation's active restoration of Philippine "new cinema" titles is not merely a prestige project expressing the familial power of its founders, the Lopez family (although it is that). When the ABS-CBN Film Archive's head Leo Katigbak states: "I think the greatest disservice we can do to future generations is not providing them the means to remember and appreciate the past,"[539] he is both sincere and correct—if not for the family's intervention, a larger chunk of cinematic legacy would certainly have perished.

Despite this apparently neutral perspective, the archive came into conflict with "new cinema" director Mike de Leon when the Asian Film Archive in Singapore (AFA) offered to restore *Batch 81'* (1981), often read as a martial-law allegory, and *Sister Stella L.* (1984), featuring activists nuns fighting for labor rights. The latter film's producer—Mother Lily of Regal Films—had promised her archival library to ABS-CBN, unbeknownst to De Leon. Cherished as one of the essential nationalist films of the 1980s, *Stella* would be a valuable addition to their restoration lineup.

---

[536]Allan Sekula, "Reading an archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), 444.
[537] Sekula, "Reading an archive," 446.
[538] Selkula, 446.
[539] ABS-CBN News Releases, "ABS-CBN's "Sagip Pelikula" earns international acclaim for cultural preservation," July 19, 2019, https://www.abs-cbn.com/newsroom/news-releases/2019/7/19/abs-cbns-sagip-pelikula-earns-international-acc?lang=en.

When Regal failed to exempt it for the AFA restoration, De Leon lashed out in a highly-publicized tirade, making clear his feelings for "that outfit" (ABS-CBN's restoration lab), insulting Mother Lily, and finally, confessing his ambivalence about the film, which he considered his "worst…a mere piece of anti-Marcos propaganda demagoguery with the most extreme wooden acting."[540]

De Leon's crankiness and Monteverde's profit-driven mentality are good grist for the gossip mill. Yet their idiosyncrasies also symptomize mnemonic politics and the literal decay of the "new cinema" (de Leon was an exemplar).[541] As chapters two and four discuss, the nature of postwar industrialization inhibited the rationalization and stability that a national film archive—which was shuttered after the revolution—would require. The current Philippine Film Archive (PFA)—(re)established only in 2011[542]—was then mandated to consolidate all scattered government and private collections.[543] It remains smaller, and its facilities inferior to those at ABS-CBN—giving the latter moral grounds to maintain their collection. In a personal interview with the author, Katigbak pointed out that the PFA's ruling was never enacted into law. The agency was vulnerable to bureaucratic turnover and could not guarantee against piracy or provide optimal facilities safe from flooding with adequate climate

[540] De Leon's irritation was perhaps compounded by the likelihood that Regal's archive ("if you can call it one") had no serviceable master negatives. See https://www.pep.ph/guide/movies/23839/mike-de-leon-airs-grievances-against-mother-lily-about-restoration-of-sister-stella-l

[541] The remaining options are Singapore's pan-Asian archive, versus ABS-CBN's private, market-driven approach. The AFA, as the key regional public film archive, frames its mission as preserving Asian "national cinema." The archive functions not only to legitimate the Singaporean welfare-state; is founding in 2005 followed the crystallization of pan-Asian cinema within the context of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and ASEAN's market integration. An ABS-CBN Film Archive restoration would, on the other hand, memorialize Stella as a commercial venture that exists, per the corporation's tagline, "in the service of the Filipino." The tagline invokes both the People Power narrative and the Lopez family's place therein, and national sovereignty of the postwar Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) or Fordist period.

[542] Bliss Lim, "Analysis and Recommendations in the wake of the 2013 Philippine Cinema Heritage Summit" (Manila: National Film Archives of the Philippines, 2013), 26.

[543] Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. labels the situation "pockets of archives."

control. Unfortunately, this last point was true of many archives in the country, including Regal's own. Based on years of un-airconditioned storage, both Regal and PFA's copies of Stella have probably deteriorated beyond repair.[544]

Aesthetic Education or Creative Destruction?

Understandably, De Leon looks back on *Stella* as his "worst"—a mainstream social realist film done in a style he had earlier dismissed as "radical chic." Nevertheless, his place in cultural histories of the "new cinema" hinges on primarily this work[545] and its "nationalist valuation."[546] It is a "conscientization" film that depicts poor factory workers coming together with middle-class characters (a nun and reporter) to form a cross-class alliance against oppression and injustice. De Leon claimed the film was not propaganda for the united front.[547] The goal, rather, was to model a process of self-sacrifice and personal transformation for the viewer, who is called on "to build the nation [on the basis of] solidarity with the oppressed."[548] As such, *Stella* bridges (or visualizes bridging) the "great divide" between the poor and the middle class, a long longed-for aim of the nationalist intelligentsia which finally materialized in mobilizations leading up to the People Power revolution.

Stella's conscientization concept—derived from Paulo Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed"—was consistent with the political ethos of the postwar cultural turn discussed in chapters one and two. In the most militant instantiations, the artist's role

---

[544] Mary del Pilar, head archivist of ABS-CBN Film Archive, believes the negatives of *Stella* likely beyond repair: "the deterioration would have started already by the late 90's and once the composition starts irreversible. So gradually it's beginning to decompose. So I would say the film needed already a restoration at this time." Mary Del Pilar, in conversation with the author, October 24, 2018.
[545] Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema,* 93.
[546] Campos*,* 103.
[547] Mario E. Bautista, "Mike de Leon: Director of the Moment," *Movie Flash Magazine,* 1984. https://pelikulaatbp.blogspot.com/2011/01/mike-de-leon-director-of-moment-movie.html
[548] Campos, 110.

was one of *commitment*—a remolding of both art and life through political action and organization.[549] This remolding would liberate and make the artist able to assume leadership within their culture—modeling an ideal of citizenship.[550] However, cultural politics belonged not only to *counterpublic* movements but the state; they were, in fact, bedrock upon which a national discipline rested, effecting first an inner transformation towards outer, social change.[551]

The cultural turn raised new possibilities for constructing national experience in film.[552] But, as discussed throughout this dissertation, the cultural turn's basis lay in structural destabilization. Filipino viewers were increasingly urbanized in the postwar period—both middle-class and poor—and "less firmly integrated into local clientelist structures."[553] Shifts in clientelism accompanied an entrenchment of poverty and socioeconomic stratification. The "great divide" between classes motivated the nationalist intelligentsia to educate the *bakya class* in the backward barrios, consumers of Hollywoodesque kitsch, "unsophisticated, undiscriminating, uncouth even."[554]

The actor-producers who ruled the 1960s kitsch cinema—foremost among them Joseph "Erap" Estrada—lacked this pedagogical attitude. Erap was disdainful of

---

[549] Tiongson, Nicanor G. *The Politics of Culture: The Philippine Experience* (Philippine Educational Theater Association: Manila, 1984), 2.
[550] Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (2000; reis., Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 25.
[551] Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 62-63.
[552] Rafael Ma. Gurrero, *Readings in Philippine Cinema* (Quezon City: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines), 5. "Too long beholden to the standards and models of the foreign cinema, the Filipino film-maker can no longer concern himself merely with esoteric themes and formal considerations. Indubitably, the Philippine cinema is of the Third World; and though the language of film is a universal one, the growing complexities of life in our ever-changing society increasingly oblige our cinema to be most universal by being most Filipino."
[553] Thomas C. Nowak and Kay A. Snyder, "Clientelist Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?" *The American Political Science Review*, Sep., 1974, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1974): 1166.
[554] Bienvenido Lumbera, "Approaches to Philippine Film," in *The Urian Anthology: 1970-1979*, ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson (Manila: M. L. Morato, 1983), 100.

intellectuals and artists alike. Instead, he opted to court the *bakya class* aesthetically and politically *where it was*—even if it meant copying American commercial cinema (James Dean) and American political style (Ronald Regan). The "new cinema's" general line of attack was contra this commercial, Hollywood trend. Its three central figures discussed in this dissertation—Ishmael Bernal, Lino Brocka, and Mike de Leon—articulated this general line from different perspectives. Bernal claimed his generation "introduced social realism, and psychological insights into characters, breaking down stereotypes, the bad cliches."[555] Brocka injected psychological realism, documentary aspirations,[556] and "social themes" into melodrama and neo-noir films.[557] De Leon took yet another approach by reflexively decomposing "new cinema" experiments—particularly his own. Patrick Campos argues this "forced erasure" modeled how "the producer brings the consumer in contact with the production process, presumably improving the apparatus for other producers in the process."[558]

This last reading—admittedly not de Leon's—points towards an explanation of *Stella's* "radical chic"—the ability to embody and synthesize trends taken by "conventionally politicized" mainstream cinema.[559] As the Freire reference suggests, (and as chapter three describes), directions were also taken from politicization *outside* the mainstream. Before the 1983 Aquino assassination, writers, artists, and filmmakers within the art community had gathered around a project of De Leon's

[555] Aruna Vasudev, "Ishmael Bernal: Cast in Another Mould," *Cinemaya* 25 (Spring 1995)
[556] Rafael Ma. Guerrero, "Lino Brocka: Dramatic Sense, Documentary Aspirations," ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero, *Readings in Philippine Cinema* (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 226-235.
[557] Lino Brocka, "Philippine Movies: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, ed. Rafael Ma. Guerrero (Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983), 260-61.
[558] Campos, 112.
[559] Campos, 93.

closely linked with *Stella*—the Super-8 documentary *Signos*. A space opened by *Signos* emanating from the freewheeling, bohemian Malate conjoined artists with counter-culture and the Left. This art culture fertilized the production of *Stella* ideologically and *Signos* aesthetically, fomenting aesthetic experiments and dialogue with artists from other times and places

This "internationalist" experience was not unknown to the Left—yet it contradicted nationalist film criticism, which had already broken down the linkages between form and content along national lines.[560] It was probably for this reason that the "new cinema" was and would remain largely a "bifurcated effort between the mainstream and independent filmmaking."[561] While the space opened up by the protest movement fertilized transnational and transhistorical aesthetic traversals in *Signos,* the reverse was not true of *Stella*—which was "synchronized with the politicized movement that Philippine mainstream cinema" was then taking.[562] If *Signos* was a path not taken by the "new cinema," *Stella* consolidated aesthetic tropes (i.e., "conscientization") into a commodity, imploding the genre—an admission that the "new cinema" was drying up.

Campos' assertion that de Leon's films act as a "model" for aesthetic experiments and cliches common at that time raises the mutability of film form in history—and the periodic "creative destruction" of aesthetics. Over time, patterns emerge. The *artist-citizen* of democratization resembles Benjamin's *operating writer.* In each instance, there is a disconnect between artist and viewer. For Jurgen

[560] I.e. the MPP controversy over Nunal sa Tubig. See chapter two of this dissertation.
[561] Roland Tolentino, *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines* (Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014), 58.
[562] Campos, 93.

Habermas, this disconnect expresses a process of historical reification (i.e., specialization). If the bourgeoisie appropriated aesthetic judgments through the art-commodity, under capitalism, formerly integrated fields of knowledge—not only art but also science and morality—have become autonomous domains "administered by experts."[563] Aesthetic experience assumes a vicarious use-value—a predigested "reflected effect" with immediate power.[564] *Judgment*, meant to be an educator of the imagination, *has been already exercised* in advance by an image of "now" not discontinuous with life.[565] This *now* is an image of technique, science, technology, and—in the case of cinema—cultural fad. The avant-garde imitates the technical processes of art, while kitsch imitates the avant-garde.

If *Stella* is a reified (or frozen) model of committed filmmaking, synthesizing various efforts in political filmmaking at that time, it came on the heels of the "new cinema's critique of Filipino kitsch—which was seen as copying American mass culture. The 1960s had been an extremely productive decade for the Filipino film industry, and the "new cinema" directors had a rich supply to draw from. To put it another way, the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism provided a generative lexicon with which the Philippine "new cinema" artists played. Nationalist critics construed this historical shift as something which could be mastered—through a calculated appeal to the general audience. This appeal was formulated as a "double conjecture" ameliorating backward ("folk" or "feudal") culture through a canon-formation program. Through this canon, critics intended to inject economic

[563] Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Incomplete Project," 3-15, in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 14.
[564] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism 1939-1944* (1986; reis., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 16.
[565] Greenberg, "Avant-Garde," 16.

nationalism into the *bakya's* sympathies for American kitsch—a project also amenable to communists' anti-imperialism. Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed," the protocols of the *national democrat,* Mao's "dialectical" transformation of the *petitburgis* artist to the *kasama* (comrade)—all required a *committed* artist to mediate a vision for "masses" who could not represent themselves.

This critical vision expressed an aestheticized politics. A clear articulation is given by Renato Constantino, for whom cinema was both a site for cultural imperialism and the reclamation of national consciousness. American cinema reinforced counter-identification with national culture. Neo-imperialist values were perpetuated through cinema, which acted as an "ideological battering ram"[566]—re-colonizing consciousness,[567] contaminating the recovery of a national *counterconsciousness* that Constantino believed characterized the revolutionary period (1896-1898). This revolutionary counter-consciousness would be reappropriated by using the media (and cinema) to spread nationalist values.

It should already be clear that the critical project to re-appropriate aesthetic experience presumed a constant mediation between national cinema and national citizen.[568] Thanks to the statist legacies of economic nationalism and Stalinism (i.e., "socialism in one country"), contradiction was relocated from history to the national. The deepening of the national was construed as a working-through and ameliorating contradiction, eventually towards greater internationalism (and perhaps, later,

[566] Renato Constantino, *Insight and Foresight,* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1977), 131-132.
[567] Renato Constantino, *Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience* (Quezon City: Renato Constantino, 1974), 49. Cinema was propaganda that "seep[ed] down to the barrios through media which should [have otherwise] been vehicles for the propagation of a Filipino identity."
[568] Jose M. Sison, *The Struggle for National Democracy* (Aklatangbayan.wordpress.com), 12. "These classes and organized groups mediate or bridge without exception the individual with the nation."

socialism).[569] National rebellion becomes justification for a particular type of cultural autonomy—though de-commercialization, de-Americanization, de-colonization, de-Westernization. Nevertheless, this rebellion was ambivalent and always *counterpublic*, against the (American) other with whom it remained face-to-face.

Beneath this ambivalence towards Hollywood lay the nationalist's inability to guide mass culture's "creative destruction" along aesthetically progressive lines. Due to gaps between aesthetic pedagogy and consumption, art remained unavailable to "everyday praxis."[570] For Daniel Bell, this is because capitalism homogenizes and breaks down any standpoint of authentic culture. The viewer loses confidence exercising cultural judgment; power has shifted "to the artist, who brings the viewer into his own field of action."[571] Similar patterns occur in journalism, where "the most available expert is the professional manufacturer of opinion.[572] These "experts" constitute a "cultural mass" who have, in effect, institutionalized the "impulse to rebellion." This sociological group—comparable to the Philippine "nationalist intelligentsia," or "middle-class culterati"[573]—transmits, rather than creates culture, through the medium of higher education, broadcast media, etc., constitutes a market itself, and produces for the wider "mass-cultural audience."[574]

---

[569] Rafael Ma. Guerrero, *Readings in Philippine Cinema* (Manila: Experimental Cinema of the Philippines), 5. As Rafael Ma. Guerrero put it, "the growing complexities of life in our ever-changing society increasingly oblige our cinema to be most universal by being most Filipino."
[570] Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 9. "(w)hat accrues to culture through specialized treatment and reflection does not immediately and necessarily become the property of everyday praxis."
[571] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 25.
[572] Bell, *Cultural Contradictions,* 16.
[573] Roland Tolentino, 2008. "Indie cinema bilang kultural na kapital," *KPK Column, Bulatlat*, August 3 (2008), http://rolandotolentino.wordpress .com/2008/08/03/indie-cinema-bilang-kultural-na-kapital-kpk-column-bulatlat/.
[574] Bell, 20-21.

If the *national democrat* belongs and contributes to the constitution of a "cultural mass," its *counterconsciousness* reinscribes the great divide as "exclusive and incompatible enclaves."[575] Cultural activism is the "interplay of the "movement" and the integrative logic of administrative capitalism."[576] In a post-Fordist economy, the knowledge industry takes on a leading role. Not coincidentally, the major state university, University of the Philippines Diliman, was at the center of both nationalist cultural criticism and the student revolt. The movement's denunciations of "Western values" obfuscated how liberalism is *not* "Western" but a universal politics. In mistaking the abstract (American imperialism, "Western values") for the concrete (capital), this nationalism is "vacuous" and, therefore, swiftly appropriated. Nothing prevents *counterconscious* dissent from being put to good technocratic use.

Putting only a slight twist in Constantino's ideas, Marcos traced the failure of Philippine modernization to the "incompatibility between liberal democracy and the cultural values generated by the nation's colonial past."[577] Like Constantino, he attempted to reconcile a progressive cultural program with a psychologically decolonial, rehabilitative and anticolonial politics.[578] In 1978—the same year as the publication of Constantino's *Neocolonial Identity and Counterconsciousness*—Marcos strategized his own plan for decolonization, involving "a cultural liberation program directed toward an understanding, appreciation, and internalization of our rich cultural heritage as a foundation for developing pride in ourselves as a people."[579] The regeneration of nationalism fell within the purview of the state, which

[575] Hau, *Necessary Fictions,* 125.
[576] Adolph Reed, "Black Particularity Reconsidered." *Telos* (March 20, 1979 no. 39): 74.
[577] Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions,* 55.
[578] Espiritu, 62.
[579] Espiritu, 62.

sought to reeducate citizens by providing a "space of emotional contact, recognition, and reflection.[580] And at the end of the day, while the public enthusiastically consumed Tagalog cinema, it largely spurned explicitly nationalist art.

Public or Private Opinion?

The post-Fordist epoch was advanced by *third wave democratization*—in the Philippines, through the People Power revolution. This revolution restructured state-society relations, delegating Marcosian cultural politics to the private sector. As discussed in chapter four, while the method was upended, the media cartel was one vehicle to sustain the substance. ABS-CBN was (and is) controlled by the Lopez family, Marcos's main rivals before martial law. Following People Power, the family set about rebuilding their sequestered businesses; this meant "that *ipso facto*, they were also contributing to the rebuilding of their nation."[581]

Here, the media cartel had a vital role to play. Ostensibly a corporate entity, the public sphere constituted by the cartel projected an image of national unity, into which were incorporated commodities (shows, advertised products) and its own family brand. ABS-CBN was "in the service of the Filipino." At its height, the family held major stakes in telecommunications (radio, television) and manufacturing, construction, power, water, toll roads, shopping malls, a film production company, a film archive, and movie theaters.

However, this did not mean that as oligarchs, they could subvert public opinion. Civil society had become far more fluid than the pre-Marcosian elite

[580] Espiritu, 4.
[581] Mina Roces, *Kinship Politics: Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1946-2000* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2001), 145.

democracy, and "politics of public opinion" had emerged. So-called after the opinion polls fast becoming bellwethers for parties to support or junk prospective candidates, Southeast Asian Studies scholar Eva Lotta Hedman claimed their function was to dissimulate the actual forces and tensions in society.[582] In other words, the "politics of public opinion" screened the substance out of politics, which under post-Fordism is the management of society.

The expansive and integrated character of the Lopez holdings reflected a diminished role for the state and an enlarged role for the private sector. However, this was not the private sector in the classical sense, but what Alexander Negt and Oscar Kluge call a *nonpublic public sector*. The Lopez family's cultural nationalism, namely, their propagation of the *People Power narrative*—meant this nationalism was also offered as a commodity. However, while the customer/citizen constitutes the media cartel, they cannot appropriate what is is always private; the relations of production under capitalism "robs those who participate passively with the media cartel of their status as producers."[583] The media cartel organizes and synthesizes fractured experience, which consists of the consciousness of increasingly socially integrated consumers who "develop a need for a synthesis of…particularized modes of existence"—which, however, remains unmet.[584] The use-value on offer by the media cartel is the illusion of a synthesized totality—the nation—which is achieved, not so much through national cinema, but rather spectacles of historiographic power and infotainment.

---

[582] Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "The Politics of "Public Opinion" in the Philippines," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 4 (2010): 111.
[583] Negt and Kluge, 133.
[584] Negt and Kluge, 132-133.

At the time of his tragic death in 1991, Lino Brocka was working for ABS-CBN's talent development program and contracted a tele-drama series with the corporation.[585] The political arena had become more complex. He had acquired more foes and found the new censorship climate insufferable—it was "even worse in many ways because with Marcos, we knew who our enemy was, and there was only one."[586] As a consequence of *democratization,* the *public* and *private spheres* were muddled in ways they had not been under Marcos. And the Filipino audience that Brocka had sought to build passed into other hands. Four months after Brocka's death, Erap figured as one of the "magnificent twelve" (or "dirty dozen," depending on who you ask) senators voting to rescind the US military bases agreement. Three years later, Erap became Vice President. The Left entered a long decline. And the "new cinema's" (ambivalent) attack on Hollywood faded away.

Art or Politics?

While the "new cinema" achieved novel results, its criticism stressed politics, obscuring aesthetic debate. To clarify the art-politics dilemma confronting the "new cinema" critics, this dissertation has reconstructed disputes on committed art arising in prior moments of political ferment. Patrick Campos has recovered Benjamin's concept to critique national cinema, which he calls a "model." He argues Mike de Leon "models" prior efforts of cinema, including his own. As such, his films act as a vehicle of criticism of other films—exploding genre conventions. Theorists of national cinema misinterpreted these efforts, reading his films—particularly *Sister*

[585] Butch Francisco, "Lino Brocka: The Craft and Business of Television" in *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993), 71.
[586] Diego Cagahastian, "It's like 1985 for Brocka," Tempo, May 18, 1989.

Stella L.—along committed, nationalist lines. Campos' intervention is salutary for artists, yet to fulfill the concept's critical purpose as intended by Benjamin, it must be pushed further. This is because Benjamin was not offering a theory for doing better art, but diagnosing art's reification—that is, aesthetic reason instrumentalized in neither the service of a discipline nor its (national) public, but rather, capital.

As Campos intuits, the mass audience does not easily appropriate aesthetic innovation, which often reifies—i.e., becomes specialized artistic knowledge. Expressions of experience are difficult, if not impossible, for the artist to convey directly to the consumer—a problem hardly clarified by critics of national cinema. That Campos judges these critics' discourse as reified today should indicate that there is more at stake than simply better "modeling." Rather, an intervention is needed on the part of the critic. Benjamin's criticism, and its dialectical theory of history, must be clearly stated. As Adorno put it in a letter to Benjamin, their joint project was one of "the dialectical disenchantment of myth." Yet he doubted this was clear in Benjamin's provocation that the film camera performed a mechanical "test" on the actor, from whom the audience was distanced and thus, positioned as critic. We know from Brechtian theory the concept of a "smoker's" theater, which dispels the mystifications of drama through alienation effects. Benjamin, Adorno argued, was here attempting to out-Brecht Brecht; the kitsch film is not more revolutionary than high art but more auratic. Adorno's position was Benjamin should have instead focused on the contradictions of high and low art.

In *The Author as Producer,* Benjamin instructively points out that both "political tendency" (commitment) and "art-for-arts-sake" are antinomical—in

unresolvable conflict. Instead, he proposes the concept of "aesthetic tendency," focusing on the artist's role as a producer of art. If the artist fails to teach (first and foremost) other artists in practicing art, they teach no one. This may explain the artist's function but does not resolve the aforementioned antinomy; at best, it "keeps culture *moving.*"[587] Adorno's critique clarifies the role of criticism. If the artist sustains and objectifies aesthetic experience, the critic "bring[s] to consciousness what was before only dimly perceived."[588] This means criticism cannot legitimate a work of art but only affect its critical analysis as a social object. Because art is non-identical to life and hence to political movements, aesthetic judgement is not exercised by "communities of interpretation," and art is not reducible to political tendency.

In closing, it is of value to consider Hannah Arendt's view on mass society, which "wants not culture, but entertainment and the wares offered by the entertainment industry are indeed consumed by society just as are any other consumer goods."[589] It is the reappropriation of this good in the name of the nation that this dissertation has called into question. This last point should, on the one hand, dissuade artists from valorizing the culture industry as redemptive in itself; rather, it "contains an element of calculated reproduction of the low." While certainly there was low art in the past, this calculation was not its rationale.[590] Yet this "calculated reproduction of the low," for Adorno, "has the same value as the dialectic of the highest [art];"[591]

[587] Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," 7.
[588] Susan Buck-Morss, "Response to the Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October 77* (Summer 1996): 29–31.
[589] Bell, *Cultural Contradictions,* 23
[590] Theodor Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," *New German Critique*, No. 24/25, Special Double Issue on New German Cinema (Autumn, 1981 - Winter, 1982): 204.
[591] Theodor Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Politics and Aesthetics*, (London: Verso, 1977), 123.

not so the middle term in between. While Erap's films certainly map onto "low art," the work of the "new cinema" is certainly not high art. It is unclear to what extent these films figure as the "middle term" against which Adorno raised a note of caution. Film criticism would need to push beyond *commitment, counterpublicity,* and the rebellion against commercialism (Hollywood) to address this concern.

Coda

This dissertation began with dissatisfaction with art and the question "literature and art for whom?" This brings to mind an anecdote. On the muggy second day of the 2014 University of the Philippines Diliman Digital Divide conference, while chatting with film professor Rob Rownd, I was confident enough to assert that since "film is dead" (my exact words)—in the sense that not much of interest was on offer—I had abandoned it for collaborative documentary work. Rob—who had been in both Hollywood and the Filipino industry many years, shook his head and said, "Yes, and I've seen it happen several times." A cinema history that does not account for capitalism's cyclical, creative destruction will prove inadequate to the *progressive* response of artists prepared to "question all solidified theses." And much the worse if the artist's *progressivism* is not aesthetic but political. The two types are not compatible; political progressivism all too often hides a cunning conservatism[592]—an investment in turning back change.

Part of the novelty in Lino Brocka's work is due to this conservative tendency. Clearly, he was in solidarity with the psychic damage inflicted on the urban poor by

[592] Chris Cutrone, "The End of the Guilded Age: Discontents of the Second Industrial Revolutin today," *Platypus Review 102* (December 2017-January 2018).

these cycles. Further investigations along these lines may be fruitful. Yet were it not for the "new cinema" as an avant-garde—its milieu, its internal contradictions, its ambivalent relationship to Hollywood—it is doubtful the "new cinema's" *aesthetic tendencies* (if they can be so-called) would pack the same punch. Without the weight of a concerted aesthetic project, artists achieve nothing but what Nick Deocampo calls "pocket revolts." The artist is thereafter swept away by the winds of change.

How infectious ideology is. It flits from fad to fad. Yet the weight of dead ideas and dead labor makes for a heavy load on the artist, who wades through a veritable swamp of "discourses reified." Meanwhile, the twists and turns in aesthetic judgment are not straightforwardly—if at all—appropriated by the consumer through consumption. That much is certain. Deocampo's short film movement attempted to change this—and the political collectives tried to create a "peoples cinema;" however, the concept fared better under its antithesis—management by the media conglomerate.

More broadly, the entire dissertation has been a personal reckoning with Brecht and Benjamin. Unfortunately, it took years to understand *The Author as Producer,* and that primer for media studies and digital art students, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.*[593] My enlightenment regarding the former text has to do with Benjamin's notion of the "operating writer." As stated in chapter one, instead of producing a work of art, Tretyakov organizes a collective farm—the experience was recounted in literature, which influenced collective farming. Benjamin specifies that such a scenario—one which this dissertation compares to the

[593] Too long—but that is what I get for skipping the second half of Chris Cutrone's Adorno class!

democratizing *artist-citizen*—emerges in non-capitalist countries like the Soviet Union. In contrast, the reader grows closer to the author in the newspaper in capitalist countries, which exploits their impatient demands for information.

The two scenarios mirror each other, only with a significant difference—there is a breakdown in mediation in the art commodity of capitalist countries. I unwittingly attempted to apply the concept to the Philippines, believing art (film) dead. I must confess, while I did so in a semi-unconscious and very ideological manner, Benjamin shares some blame, for in seeking to convert Brecht over to a dialectical position, he appears to advocate for the *operating writer*—a problematic concept insofar as it is not contradictory. Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* further fudges the matter with Brechtian motifs—specifically, as mentioned above, the use of *distantiation* and *test.* Yet Benjamin's dialectical position was historical—capitalism's contradictions point beyond themselves towards socialism. I was not willfully misled but certainly confused—much like the ostensible *artist-citizens* of democratization—in ways that my own experience, and Adorno's critique, helped clarify.[594]

Benjamin's critique of the operating writer and Adorno's critique of *commitment* retain salience today, as evidenced by Claire Bishop's observation of an "ethical turn" in contemporary art practice. Bishop reasons that with the collapse of 'grand narrative' politics, there emerges a tendency towards "art as project," which replaces the discrete art object with "an open-ended, post-studio, research-based,

[594] Adorno's critique of Benjamin is sufficient, but it must also be properly put into context with Trotsky and Krackauer.

social process, extending over time and mutable in form."[595] These methodologies appear precisely when any so-called "social project" seems lacking. The "artistic project" and the "political project," contingently linked in the 90s, and are now characterized by a move away from "site-specificity" to "embedding the artist in the social field."[596] Bishop upholds the necessarily contradictory character of participatory or social art: "the artistic and the social critique are not directly compatible...and exist in continual tension with one another."[597] Participatory art appears as a symptom of this tension in moments of revolution (1917, 1968, 1989).

Taking Bishop at her word, this dissertation has drawn comparisons between democratization in the Philippines (i.e., 1986) and prior revolutionary epochs. It has dissected *committed* stances in filmmaking at that time, including MAKIISA I and debate within the independent film movement. *Commitment* here appears as ideological baggage, obscuring the object of critique in ways the "new cinema," insofar as it aimed to critique Hollywood, did not. I hope that these observations go some ways towards minimizing the false starts, missed connections, and paths not taken on other artist's crooked roads towards *aesthetic tendency* and the critical recognition thereof.

[595] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 194.
[596] Bishop, 205.
[597] Bishop, 276.

Bibliography

Abinales, Patricio. *Fellow Traveler: Essays on Filipino Communism.* Quezon City: UP Press, 2001.

_____. *State and Society in the Philippines.* New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

_____. *The Revolution Falters: The Left in Philippine Politics After 1986.* Ithaca, New York: Cornel Press, Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1996.

Abinales, Patricio and Lisandro Claudio. " Dutertismo, Maoismo, Nasyonalismo." In *The Duterte Reader*, edited by Nicole Curato, 93-110. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2017.

Adorno, Theodor. "Commitment," in *Politics and Aesthetics*, 75-89. London: Verso, 1977.

_____. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum, 1973.

_____. "Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Politics and Aesthetics*, 120-127. London: Verso, 1977.

_____. "On Jazz." *Discourse.* Vol. 12, No 1, A Special Issue on Music (Fall-Winter 1989-90), 45-69.

_____. "Reflections on class theory," in *Can one live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader* (Redwood City: Stanford 2003), 95.

_____. *Marginalia to Theory and Praxis*. New York: Colombia University Press, 2005.

_____. "Transparencies on Film," *New German Critique*, No. 24/25, Special Double Issue on New German Cinema (Autumn, 1981 - Winter, 1982), pp. 199-205.

Alvarez, Santiago. "5 Frames are 5 Frames, not 6, but 5," interviewed by *Cineaste*, 1975, In *The Documentary Film Reader,* 605-608. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Anderson, Benedict. "Cacique Democracy and the Philippines: Origins and Dreams." *New Left Review* (May 1, 1988): 3-31.

_____. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 2006.

Anderson, Steve, "Past Indiscretions: Digital Archives and Recombinant History," in *Transmedia Frictions The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities,* edited by Marsha Kinder and Tara McPherson, 100-113. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.

_____. *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past.* Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth University Press, 2011.

_____. "Critical Interfaces and Digital Making." *Visible Language.* Volume 49, Issue 3 (December 2015): 120-139.

_____. *Difference Analyzer*. Custom video display application. <http://differenceanalyzer.net/>

Baumgartel, Tilman. *Kino-Sine: Philippine-German Cinema Relations.* Manila: Geother-Institut, 2007.

Bell, Daniel. "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education,* Vol. 6 No. ½, Special Double Issue: Capitalism, Culture, and Education (January-April 1972), 11-32.

Benjamin, Walter. "Diary from August 7, 1931, to the Day of My Death." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* 501-505. Edited by Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

_____. "The Author as Producer." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 2 Part 2,* 768-782. Edited bv Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

_____. "On the Concept of History." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 4,* 389-400. Edited by Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith Editorial Board. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

_____. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations,* 217-251. New York: First Schocken Paperback, 1968 (2007).

_____. "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations,* 253-264. Edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968 (2007).

Bernard, Michael and Jan Kubik. Introduction to *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, by Michael Bernard and Jan Kubik. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. New York: Verso, 2012.

Bonner, Raymond. *Waltzing with a Dictator.* New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

Breton, André. *Manifestoes of Surrealism,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 222.

Brocka, Lino. "Philippine Movies: Some Problems and Prospects." In *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 259-262. Edited by Rafael Ma. Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.

_____, dir. *Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim,* 1984. Joint production of Malaya Films and Stephan Films. VHS. Publication date and source unknown.

_____, dir. *Fight for Us* (Orapronobis)*,* 1989. Cannon Films. Laserdisc.

Buck-Morss, Susan. "Response to the Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October 77* (Summer 1996), 29–31.

Buenaventura, Augusto, dir. *Sa Kuko ng Agila*, 1989. Rich Film Inc. Publication date unknown. VCD.

Caldwell, John T. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
_____. ""Both Sides of the Fence": Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production (a Portfolio of Interviews)," in *Production Culture*, 214-229. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Campos, Patrick. *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century.* Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016.

Capino, José B. *Dream Factories of a Former Colony: American Fantasies, Philippine Cinema.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
_____. *Martial Law Melodrama: Lino Brocka's Cinema Politics*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.

Caouette, Dominique. *Constructing and Controlling People's Power from the Grassroots: Philippine Social Movement Activism in Historical Perspective.* Unpublished draft, 2012.

Chapman, William, 1987. Inside the Philippine Revolution: The New People's Army and its Struggle for Power. New York: W.W. Norton.

Chua, Michael. "Direk Mike De Leon and the Legacy of Doña Sisang." *Manila Times,* April 7, 2018. https://staging.manilatimes.net/2018/04/07/opinion/analysis/direk-mike-de-leon-and-the-legacy-of-dona-sisang/391027/.

Clark, T.J. "In a Pomegranate Chandelier." *London Review of Books*, Vol. 28 No. 18 (September 2006): 6-8.

Claudio, Lisandro and Rommel Curaming. "A Historicised (Re)Assessment of EDSA 'People Power' (1986)." Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 134, 2010.

Claudio, Lisandro. *Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolution and their Contradictions.* Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2013.
_____. *Liberalism in the Postcolony*: *Thinking the State in 20th Century Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2017.

Constantino, Renato. *Dissent and Counter-Consciousness.* London: The Merlin Press, 1970.
_____. *Insight and Foresight.* Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1977.

_____. *The Philippines: The Continuing Past.* Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978a.
_____. *Neocolonialism and Counter-Consciousness.* London: The Merlin Press, 1978b.

Cutrone, Chris. Professor, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, in discussion with Bopha Hul and Ye-Bhit Hong November 12, 2020.
_____. "An incomplete project? Art and politics after postmodernism," presented at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, October 26, 2010. http://chriscutrone.platypus1917.org/?p=955. (Accessed February 10, 2015) .
_____. "Critique of Revolutionary Art: Trotsky, Benjamin, Adorno, and Greenberg," *Caesura*, https://caesuramag.org/posts/critique-of-revolutionary-art-trotsky-benjamin-adorno-and-greenberg
_____. "Friedrich Hayek and the legacy of Milton Friedman Neo-liberalism and the question of freedom (In part, a response to Naomi Klein)." In *The Platypus Review* No. 8 (November 2008).
_____. "Capital in history: The need for a Marxian philosophy of history of the Left." In *The Platypus Review* 7 (October 2008).
_____. "The End of the Gilded Age: Discontents of the Second Industrial revolution today." In *The Platypus Review* 102 (December 2017-January 2018).

Dalisay, Jose Jr. "From Gingoog to Greenhills: Lino and His Writers." In *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 74-85. Edited by Rafael Ma. Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.

Daniel, Sharon. "On Politics and Aesthetics," in *Studies in Documentary Film: iDocs special edition*, Volume 6, issue 2, edited by Judith Aston, Jonathan Dovey and Sandra Gaudenzi (Bristol: Intellectual Journals, 2012) 215-227.
_____. *Public Secrets*. Interactive web documentary. *Vectors Journal,* Issue 4, 2008. http://vectors.usc.edu/issues/4/publicsecrets/
_____. *Blood Sugar*. 2006, interactive web documentary. In *Vectors Journal,* Issue 6, 2010. http://vectorsjournal.org/issues/6/bloodsugar/

David, Joel. "Review of *Contestable Nation-Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos- Brocka Philippines*, by Roland Tolentino," *International Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 14 No. 1 (January 2017), 112-115.
_____. "Millennial Traversals: Outliers, Juvenilia, & Quondam Popcult Blabbery, Part I: Traversals Within Cinema." In *UNITAS* Vol. 88 No. 1. Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2015.
_____. "Millennial Traversals: Outliers, Juvenilia, & Quondam Popcult Blabbery, Part II: Expanded Perspectives." In *UNITAS* Vol. 89 No. 2. Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2015.
_____. "Awake in the Dark: Philippine Film during the Marcos Era." In *Philippine Studies: Have We Gone Beyond St. Louis?* Ed. Priscelina Patajo-Legasto. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008, 227-243.
_____. *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective*. Quezon City: University

of the Philippines Press, 1998.
_____. "State of Local Criticism." *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema*. Pasig: Anvil 1990.
_____. "A Second Golden Age." 1-17. In *The National Pastime: Contemporary Philippine Cinema*. Pasig: Anvil, 1990.
_____. "*Book Texts*—A Second Golden Age." Amauteurish, October 22, 2020. https://amauteurish.com/2020/10/22/book-texts-a-second-golden-age/
_____. "*Book Texts*—Pinoy Film Reviews I: Celluloid (Pre-1990s) Era." Amateurish, October 7, 2020. https://amauteurish.com/2020/10/22/book-texts-pinoy-film-reviews-i/.

del Mundo, Jr., Clodualdo. "*Maynila, sa Mga Kuko ng Liwinag* and *Manila by Night:* The City according to Brocka and Bernal." In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989*, ed. Nicanor Tiongson. Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001, pp. 89.
_____. "Kapit sa Patalim and Orapronobis: Stories of our Country and Brocka's Melodramatic Strategy," 184-190. In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*. Edited by Mario A. Hernando. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993.

Deleuze, Giles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

De Leon, Mike, dir. *Sister Stella L*. 1984; Regal Films Inc., 2006. DVD.
_____. *Signos.* 1984. *Citizen Jake* Vimeo channel. https://vimeo.com/304516355.

Deocampo, Nick. *Short Film: Emergence of a New Philippine Cinema.* Manila: Communication Foundation for Asia, 1985.
_____. *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines*. National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003. *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines*. National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003.
_____. "Into the Light: Philippine Alternative Cinema and the *Neuer Deutscher Film*," 20-28. In *Kino-Sine: Philippine-German Cinema Relations*. Edited by Tilman Baumgärtel. Manila: Geothe-Institut, 2007.
_____. *Film: American Influences on Philippine Cinema.* Pasig: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2017.
_____. *Oliver,* 1983. 8mm film.
_____. *Revolutions Happen like Refrains in a Song,* 1987. 8mm film.

Deza, Alfonso B. *Mythopoeic Poe.* Quezon City: Great Books Publishing, 2006.

Dormiendo, Justino. "Brocka's Breakthroughs: An interview with Lino Brocka." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*, edited by Mario A. Hernando, 207-210. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993.

Dormiendo, Justino. "Brocka's Breakthroughs: An Interview with Lino Brocka." In

Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times, ed. Mario A. Hernando. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993, 207-210.

Dumont, Jean-Paul. "The Visayan Male 'Barkada': Manly Behavior and Male Identity on a Philippine Island," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Fourth Quarter 1993): 401-437.

Edmondson, Ray. *Audiovisual archiving: Philosophy and principles* (3rd ed.) Paris and Bangkok: UNESCO, 2016.

Elsaesser, Thomas. *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

Enwezor, Okwui. "Documentary/Verité: Bio-politics, Human Rights, and the Figure of "Truth" in contemporary Art." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*. Volume 5, Issue 1 (2004): 11-42.

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. *The Culture Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media.* New York: Seabury Press, 1974.

Espiritu, Talitha. *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017.

Flores, Patrick. "Social Realism: The Turns of a Term." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry.* Issue 34 (October 2013): 62-75.

Foster, Hal. "The Artist as Ethnographer?" In *Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century,* 171-204. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text, No. 25/26* (1990): 56-80.

Francisco, Butch. "Lino Brocka: The Craft and Business of Television." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and His Times*, ed. Mario A. Hernando, 49-73. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993.

Fuller, Ken. *The Lost Vision: The Philippine Left 1986-2010.* Quezon City: UP Press, 2015.

GazaSderot: Life in Spite of Everything. Khalil al Muzayyen and Robby Elmaliahz. Interactive web documentary. Isy-les-Moulineaux: Arte.tv, 2009. <http://gaza-sderot.arte.tv/>

Golay, Frank H. The *Philippines, Public Policy and National Economic Development*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961.

Chua, Michael. “Direk Mike De Leon and the Legacy of Doña Sisang.” *Manila Times,* April 7, 2018. https://staging.manilatimes.net/2018/04/07/opinion/analysis/direk-mike-de-leon-and-the-legacy-of-dona-sisang/391027/.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the historical Method.* Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 1992.

Greenberg, Clement. “Avant-garde and Kitsch.” In *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism Volume I, Perceptions and Judgements, 1939-1944.* Edited by John O’ Brien. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. First published 1955.

Guerrero, Rafael Ma., ed. *Readings in Philippine Cinema*. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.
_____. “Lino Brocka: Dramatic Sense, Documentary Aspirations,” ed. Guerrero, Rafael Ma. *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 226-235. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.

Guillermo, Alice G. “Of Workers and the City.” In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989*, 120-123. Edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson. Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001.
_____. *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970-1990*. Quezon City: UP Press, 2001.
_____. *Social Realism in the Philippines.* Manila: Asphodel, 1987.
_____. *Images of Change: Essays and Reviews*. Quezon City: Kalikasan, 1988.

Habermas, Jurgen. “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” 3-15. In *Postmodern Culture*. Edited by Hal Foster. London: Pluto Press, 1985.
_____. “Dual-Layered Time: Personal notes on philosopher Theodor W. Adorno in the ’50s.” *Logos* 2.4 (Fall 2003).
_____. *Legitimation Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. First published in 1988.
_____. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991. First published in 1989.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990.

Hau, Caroline. *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018. First published in 2000.

Hawes, Gary. *The Philippine State and the Marcos Regime: The Politics of Export.* London: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Hedman, Eva-Lotta E. "The spectre of populism in Philippine politics and society:

artista, masa, Eraption!" *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2001): 5-44.
_____. "Transformismo and Philippine Democracy," in Philippine Society and Politics in the Twentieth Century, 13-35. New York: Routledge, 2000.
_____. "The Politics of "Public Opinion" in the Philippines." Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 4 (2010): 97-118.

Hernando, Mario A., ed. *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993.

Huntington, Samuel. "Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Spring 1991): 12-34.

Hutchcroft, Paul D. and Emmanuel S. de Dios. "Political Economy." *The Philippine Economy: Development, Policies, and Challenges,* edited by Arsenio M. Balisacan and Hal Hill, 45-73. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Hutchcroft, Paul D. "Predatory oligarchy, patrimonial state: The politics of private domestic commercial banking in the Philippines (Volumes I and II)." PhD diss, Yale University Press, 1993.
_____. *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
_____. "Dreams of redemption: localist strategies of political reform in the Philippines" in *Social Difference and Constitutionalism in Pan-Asia*, 75-108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Hutchison, Jane. "Labor Politics in Southeast Asia." *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Politics,* edited by Richard Robinson, 40-52. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2011.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Ileto, Reynaldo C. *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989.

Jaucian, Don. "Rescuing the Lost Film Heritige of the Philippines." *CNN Philippines.com, April 7, 2017*. <http://cnnphilippines.com/life/entertainment/film/2017/04/07/film-restoration.html1>

Jameson, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Social Text*, No. 1 (Winter 1979): 130-148.

Joaquin, Nick (Quejano de Manila). "Gun Duel at LVN." In *Reportage on Crime,* 44-56. Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1977.

_____. “Erap in a New Role,” in *Joseph Estrada and Other Sketches*. Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1977.
_____. *Nora Aunor and Other Profiles.* Manila: National Book Store, Inc., 1977.
_____. *Quartet of the Tiger Moon.* Metro Manila: Book Stop, Inc., 1986.
_____. “Mr. Box Office.” In *Readings in Philippine Cinema,* 144-156. Edited by Rafael Ma Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.
_____. *Manila, My Manila: A History for the Young*. Manila: Republic of the Philippines, 1990, 329–34.

Kahana, Jonathan. *The Documentary Film Reader.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Marx, Karl. “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of State," 57-198. *Early Writings*. Edited by Quentin Hoare, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton. Pelican Books: New York. 1975.

Kerkvliet, Benedict. "Toward a More Comprehensive Analysis of Philippine Politics: Beyond the Patron-Client, Factional Framework," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 26 (September 1995), 401-19.
_____. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Kusaka, Wataru. *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor.* Singapore: NUS Press, 2017.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1993): 421-436.
_____. “The Mass Ornament.” In *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Edited by Thomas Levine, 75-86. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Lacaba, Pete. “Notes on Bakya: Being an Apologia of sorts for Filipino Masscult.” In *Readings in Philippine Cinema*, 117-123. Edited by Rafael Ma. Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.

Ladrido, Marie M. Estelle. *Magandang Gabi, Bayan: Nation, Journalism Discourse, and Television News in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017.

Liebman, Stuart. "On New German Cinema, Art, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere: And Interview with Alexander Kluge." In *October* Vol. 46 (Autumn, 1988): 23-59.

Lumbera, Bienvenido. “The History and Prospects of the Filipino Film,” 22-47. In *The Urian Anthology: 1970-1979*. Edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson. Manila: M. L. Morato, 1983.
_____. “Approaches to Philippine Film.” In *The Urian Anthology: 1970-1979*. Edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson, 94-101. Manila: M. L. Morato, 1983.

_____. “Nunal sa Tubig Revisited,” 240-245. In The Urian Anthology 1970-1979. Ed. Nicanor G. Tiongson. Metro Manila: Morato, 1983.
_____. “Philippine Problems in Film History.” In *Readings in Philippine Cinema,* 65-79. Edited by Rafael Ma Guerrero. Manila: Experimental Center of the Philippines, 1983.

Maglipon, Jo-Ann Q. “The Brocka Battles.” In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times*, edited by Mario A. Hernando, 118-153. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993.

MacKenzie, Scott. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*. UC Press: Berkeley, 2014.
_____. “Societe Nouvelle: The Challenge for Change in the Alternative Public Sphere.” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall/Autumn 1996).

Martin, Stewart. “The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity.” *Radical Philosophy* 146 (November/December 2007), 15-25.

Mendoza, Psyche. "The Labor movement: Impact of Herrera Law after 28 years." *Business Mirror.* (Makati, Philippines) April 30, 2017. < http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/the-labor-movement-impact-of-herrera-law-after-28-years/>

Mercado, Monina A. *Doña Sisang and Filipino Movies*. Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1977.

McKay, Steven C. 2006. "The Scalar Strategies of Capital, State and Labor in the Evolving Philippine Economic Zones." *Journal of Comparative Asian Development*, 5:2 (February 2006), 203-227.
_____. 2006. *Satanic Mills or Silicon Islands? The Politics of High-Tech Production in the Philippines.* New York: Cornell Press, 2006.

McCarthy, Anna. *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950’s*. New York: The New Press, 2010.

McCoy, Alfred and Ed. C. De Jesus. *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982.
_____. *An Anarchy of Families*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.
_____. “A Tale of Two Families: Generational Succession in Filipino and American Family Firms.” *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 3, no. 2 (2015): 159–90.

Negt, Oskar and Alexander Kluge. *Public Sphere of Experience: Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. New York: Verso, 2016.

Nemenzo, Francisco. “The Left and the Traditional Opposition.” In May, R. J. and Nemenzo, Francisco, eds., *The Philippines after Marcos*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985.
_____. “An Irrepressible Revolution: The Decline and Resurgence of the Philippines Communist Movement”, Paper presented at the Work in Progress Seminar, Research School of Pacific Studies. Canberra: Australia National University, November 1984.

Nichols, Bill. *Newsreel: Documentary Filmmaking on the American Left*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
_____. “The Voice of Documentary.” In *The Documentary Film Reader.* Edited by Jonathan Kahana, 639-651. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Use and Abuse of History.* New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1949.

Nolasco, Edmundo F. *Unyonista: The Chronicles of a Social Justice Crusader.* Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2011.

Nowak, Thomas C. and Kay A. Snyder. “Clientelist Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?” *The American Political Science Review*, Sep., 1974, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1974): 1147-1170.

Phongpaichit, Pasuk and Kosuke Mizuno. "Estrada and the Populist Temptation in the Philippines," in *Populism in Asia*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2009.

Postone, Moishe. Postone, Moishe. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. First published in 1993.
_____. “History and Helplessness.” *Public Culture* 18:1 (2006): 93-110.
_____. “Theorizing the Contemporary World: Robert Brenner, Giovanni Arrighi, David Harvey.” In *Political Economy and Global Capitalism The 21st Century, Present and Future,* edited by Robert Albritton et al. 7-23. New York: Anthem Press, 2010.

Philippines: Bangon! Arise: Songs of the Philippine National Democratic Struggle. New York: Paredon, 1976.

Quimpo, Nathan. “Oligarchic Patrimonialism, Bossism, Electoral Clientelism, and Contested Democracy in the Philippines.” In *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Jan., 2005): 229-250.
_____. *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 2012. First published in 2008.

Rafael, Vincente. *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

_____. “Mis-Education, Translation and The *Barakada* of Languages,” *Kritika Kultura* 21/22 (2013/2014).

Reed, Adolph. “Black Particularity Reconsidered.” *Telos* (March 20, 1979 no. 39): 71-93.
_____. *Class Notes.* New York: The New Press, 2000.

Reyes, Edgardo dir. *Bangkang Papel sa Dagat ng Apoy*. 1984; Cine Suerte. Publication date unknown. VCD.

Roces, Mina. *Kinship Politics: Kinship Politics in Postwar Philippines: The Lopez Family, 1946-2000.* Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2001.

Rodrigo, Raul. *Kapitan: Geny Lopez and the Making of ABS-CBN.* Quezon City: ABS-CBN Publishing, 2006.

Roque, Rose. "Sineng Bayan: Kasaysayan at Filmography ng mga Politikal ng Kolektibong Pampelikula 1982-2014." Unpublished master's thesis, University of the Philippines, Diliman, 2016.

Rudin, Daniel. “Negotiating Documentary Space.” Austin: University of Texas, 2012. Masters thesis.

Santiago, Arminda V. “The Struggle of the oppressed: Lino Brocka and the New Cinema of the Philippines.” Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, Denton, 1993.
Santos, Josefina M. C. “Out of Reach: Television, the public sphere and civil society in the Philippines,” 131-147. In *Television, Regulation and Civil Society in Asia.* Edited by Philip Kitley. London: Routledge, 2003.

Scalice, Joseph. “Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: Martial Law and the Communist Parties of the Philippines, 1957-1974.” PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2017. https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/etd/ucb/text/Scalice_berkeley_0028E_17195.pdf.

Schluipmann, Heide. “Femininity as Productive Force: Kluge and Critical Theory.” *New German Critique*, Winter 1990, No. 49, Special Issue on Alexander Kluge (Winter, 1900): 69-78.

Scipes, Kim. *KMU: Building Genuine Trade Unionism in the Philippines, 1980-1994*. Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1996.

Scott, James C., “The Analysis of Corruption in Developing Nations,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (June 1969 Vol. 11 N. 3): 315-341.

Sekula, Allan. "Reading an archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells, 443-452. New York: Routledge, 2003.
_____. "The Body and The Archive." *October,* Vol. 39 (Winter, 1986): 3-64.

Sison, Jose M. "On the Tasks of Cadres in the Cultural Field." Read at the First National Congress of Panulat para sa Kaunlaran ng Sambayanan, PAKSA, December 18-19 1971, Gonzales Hall, UP-Diliman Quezon City. <http://avhrc-kultura.blogspot.com/2007/05/on-tasks-of-cadres-in-cultural-field.html>
_____. *"Report to the Second National Congress."* 1967, Philippine Radical Papers Archive. 16/23.14.

Sison, José Maria, (with Rainer Werning), 1989. The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View. New York: Crane Russak.
_____. *Struggle for National Democracy*, Aklatangbayan.wordpress.com. https://aklatangbayan.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/stuggle_for_national_democracy_third_ed_-_book.pdf

Sotto, Agustin L. "Interview with Lino Brocka on "Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwinag," In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times,* ed. Mario A. Hernando. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993, 223-226.
_____. "Filmography." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times,* ed. Mario A. Hernando. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993, 245-308.
_____. "A Close Look at Pinoy Action Movies." In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989,* 60-65. Edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson. Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001.
_____. "Lino Brocka: The International Director." In *Lino Brocka: The Artist and his Times,* ed. Mario A. Hernando. Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1993, 101-117.

Sotto, Agustin L. and Pet Clato. "Two Filipino Films Make Waves in France." In *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989,* 60-65. Edited by Nicanor G. Tiongson. Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001.

Stam, Robert. "Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant Gardes," in *The Documentary Film Reader,* 534-544. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Steketee, Anoek and Eefje Blankevoort, dir. *Love radio*. Interactive web documentary. Utrecht: Kummer & Herrman, 2014. <http://www.loveradio-rwanda.org/>

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Takagi, Yusuke. “The ‘Filipino First’ Policy and the Central Bank, 1958-1961: Island of Strength and Economic Decolonization.” *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* (January 2014).

Thalhofer, Florian and Berke Bas. *Planet Galeta*. Interactive web documentary. Berlin: Kloos and Co., 2010. <http://planetgalata.com/>

Tolentino, Roland. *Geopolitics Of The Visible: Essays On Philippine Film Cultures*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000.
_____. *Contestable Nation Space: Cinema, Cultural Politics, and Transnationalism in the Marcos-Brocka Philippines*. Quezon City: UP Diliman Press, 2014.
_____. “Indie cinema bilang kultural na kapital.” *KPK Column, Bulatlat*, August 3 (2008), http://rolandotolentino.wordpress .com/2008/08/03/indie-cinema-bilang-kultural-na-kapital-kpk-column-bulatlat/.
_____. “Political film collectives: Introduction to ASEAC Panel.” January 25, 2009. http://rolandotolentino.wordpress.com/2009/01/25/political-film-collectives-introduction-to-aseac-panel/.

Tiongson, Lito. “Alternative Cinema: Development and Prospects.” *Diliman Review,* Issue No. 5 & 6 (1986), 26-30.
_____. “The Making of No Time for Crying,” 67-92. In *Making Documentaries and News Features in the Philippines*. Edited by Isabel Enriquez Kenny. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, 1995/2006.
_____, dir. *Arrogance of Power*, 1983. AsiaVisions. VHS.
_____, dir. *No Time for Crying,* 1986. AsiaVisions. VHS.

Tiongson, Nicanor G. *The Politics of Culture: The Philippine Experience.* Philippine Educational Theater Association: Manila, 1984.
_____, ed. *The Urian Anthology: 1970-1979.* Manila: M. L. Morato, 1983.
_____, ed. *The Urian Anthology: 1980-1989.* Manila: Antonio P. Tuviera, 2001.

Trotsky, Leon. *Literature and Revolution.* New York: Russell & Russell, 1957.
_____. *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969.
_____. “Art and Politics in Our Epoch.” In *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art,* 104-114. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977.
_____. *The Lessons from October*. New York: Pioneer Publishers, 2002. First published in 1937.

Tse-Tung, Mao (Mao Zedong). *Talks at Yenan Forum on Literature and Art.* Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967.

Vasudev, Aruna. “Ishmael Bernal: Cast in Another Mould.” *Cinemaya* 27 (Spring 1995), 16-23.

Velasco, Renato S. “Philippine Democracy: Promise and Performance.” In *Democratization in East and Southeast Asia,* ed. Anek Laothamatas, 77-112. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997.

Ventura, Ray. *Underground in Japan*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1992.

Waugh, Thomas. *The Conscience of Cinema: The works of Joris Ivens, 1926-1989.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

West, Louis A. *Militant Labor in the Philippines*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

Williams, Linda. “Mega-melodrama! Vertical and Horizontal Suspensions of the ‘Classical,’” *Modern Drama* 55, no. 4 (2012): 524, 530.

Wu, Guo. “Speaking Bitterness: Political Education in Land Reform and Military Training Under the CCP,” 1947-1951. In *The Chinese Historical Review* Volume 21, 2014-Issue 1, 2014.

Wurfel, David. “Trade Union Development and Labor Relations Policy in the Philippines.” ILR Review Volume 12 issue 4 (July 1959).