

Forum Kritika: A Closer Look at *Manila by Night*

MARCOS, BROCKA, BERNAL, CITY FILMS, AND THE CONTESTATION FOR IMAGERY OF NATION

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Abstract

The essay maps out the contestation for imagery of nation with the Marcoses on the one hand, and two of the most outstanding filmmakers of the era on the other hand. The Marcoses set out a megalomania of infrastructures and images that echoed the Imeldific vision of “the true, the good, and the beautiful.” I counterpose the major city films of Lino Brocka (*Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*) and Ishmael Bernal (*Manila by Night*) to provide a contest to the official imagery of the nation. These two films uniquely evoke an intimate dialog with and critique of the Marcoses’ design of (what eventually became) Metro Manila and the nation, figuring contrary bodies and responses as consequences of collective lives under the jurisdiction and administration of the conjugal dictatorship.

Keywords

abject bodies, official imagery, martial law films, modernist film, Philippine art cinema

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PART OF THE RECONSOLIDATION OF POWER that the Marcoses had hoped for in the declaration of martial rule was to recreate a national legacy that originated and developed through what they imagined as the magnificence of their bodies and presences.¹ They proliferated their images alongside a robust imagery-building of

a modern yet traditionally anchored nation. The Marcoses thought of themselves as the ground zero of Philippine citizen formation. Portraits were done that mythologized the couple, either borrowing from a popular origin folktale or that reworked the national costumes to exude hyperfemininity in the case of Imelda and hypermasculinity in Ferdinand. A gendered face of the city and nation was developed by the Marcoses, with Ferdinand taking the masculine cudgels for national development and Imelda for the beautification and enhancement of national development.

The city was transformed as a showcase of national development, and such “showcase” or “display” mentality was often labeled megalomaniacal by critics of the Marcoses. The ego formation of the nation exuded the conjugal leadership, retrofitting Manila, and later Metropolitan Manila, to showcase a modern exuberance and to hide its massive poverty. As the Marcos dictatorship transformed and consolidated its power, an assemblage of protest art rebutted the intensification of fascist rule, human rights violation and corruption of the national economy. Literature, visual arts, dramatic arts, and film, among others, colluded to create a collective voice of dissent even as the Marcoses had used these artistic forms and expressions as avenues of their own imagery building. In popular music, for example, “Tie a Yellow Ribbon ’Round the Ole Oak Tree” became the theme song of the opposition under the elite leadership after Ninoy Aquino’s assassination in 1983. Signifying the practice of lining up the tree path to one’s home with yellow ribbons, the song coalesced the sentiment of the elite of a failed return and reunion with Aquino. The mass movement, however, chose to rework the anti-American colonial song by Constancio de Guzman from a poem by Jose Corazon de Jesus, “Bayan Ko” [My Country] as their anthem, adding a last stanza to reiterate the need for greater militancy, “Kay sarap mabuhay sa sariling bayan, kung walang alipin at may kalayaan; ang bayang sinisiil babangon lalaban din, ang Silanga’y pupula sa timyas ng paglaya” (“How wonderful to live in one’s own country, when enslavement and subjugation have been banished; a country oppressed will arise and rebel, and the East will turn red from the desire for freedom”). Even singer Celeste Legaspi and composer Nonoy Gallardo’s popular song, “Saranggola ni Pepe” [Pepe’s Kite] was publicly well-received for its enigmatic retelling of Rizal’s (Pepe is his nickname) unrealized aspiration for a liberated nation.

This essay examines the contestation of imagery of nation, with the Marcoses on the one hand, and Brocka and Bernal’s most famous city films on the other hand—*Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* and *Manila by Night*, respectively. The megalomania of the Marcoses found a counter-articulation in films, particularly the city film of the two most famous directors of the time. City films provide an analog of the literal city, in this case Manila, as a pivotal space for negotiating the film narrative, almost like a character that colludes and entraps other characters. City films incorporate Manila not just as a site but as a character, able to be mapped out differentially from the Marcoses’ designs and able to map out the

disenfranchised characters that inhabit the urban landscape. I first present an overview of the Marcoses' imagery building, then discuss how films of this period uniquely engaged and critiqued these official representations of the nation. I then focus on the two city films, and how these films uniquely mediated and intervened in the contestation for the imagery of nation. Having lived through and studied the period, I believe that such contestation is important in being able to call attention to the right to represent, in what ways, and in whose interest.

Official Megalomania

Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law on 21 September 1972 to consolidate his rule amidst the growing public disenchantment. Officially, Marcos echoed both the advancing Communist threat and the declining morality among Filipinos as the rationale for the official declaration of martial rule. Interestingly, Marcos hailed the contrary bodies and identities—the Communist and the immoral citizen as subversive—and sought to instill a new metropolitan citizen in martial rule as bannered by its *Bagong Lipunan* (New Society) theme, slogan (“sa ikauunlad ng bayan, disiplina ang kailangan” [“for national development, discipline will be essential”]) and programs (anthem, Green Revolution, and sequestering of all media units for the national government, among others).

Under this program, citizens were to conform to endorsed physical and fashion types (no long hair for men, no mini-skirt for women), conscripted into programs such as the Green Revolution to counter food decline and overpopulation, and obeyed the policy to require curfew violators to clear grass and clean the streets in the busiest streets of Manila. Having long hair for men was supposed to be indicative of a degenerative drug culture, and requiring people caught during the curfew hours to pull up grass was part of a public shame campaign. The type of soft-core films that proliferated prior to the declaration of martial rule was banned, and overtly socially motivated films that had the possibility of providing commentary were also discouraged because of stricter censorship. What then proliferated in the early years of martial rule were horror films that were not expected to relate to the newer social conditions.

In what would be termed a “conjugal dictatorship,” as popularized by Primitivo Mijares's eponymously titled exposé in 1976, Ferdinand mainstreamed Imelda in the political life of the New Society, appointing her as the first governor of a newly consolidated formation of cities and towns in the National Capitol Region, Metropolitan Manila, in 1975, and Minister of Human Settlements in 1978, with the prime task of providing housing along with other needs of the people, such as food, livelihood, and public works. Imelda transformed the city through megalomaniacal structures and enclaves, more to display modernist transformation than for the intended public purpose. Among her projects were the Cultural Center of the

Philippines (CCP) complex, the Light Rail Transit in Taft Avenue, and the staging of global events such as the IMF-World Bank meeting, the Miss Universe and Mr. Universe contests, and the several editions of the Manila International Film Festival. Her transformation of the metropolis included the building and literal whitewashing of walls to hide the communities of the urban poor, especially during the staging of global events, and to require schoolchildren (à la socialist China) to line the streets of parade routes to welcome visiting dignitaries.

The Marcoses orchestrated an imagery of their national development drive along the complementary cultural idiom of the modern yet traditionally grounded. Policies in politics and economics, and especially in culture, combined a nationalist and internationalist perspective. In culture, the arts were mobilized to echo the political and personal megalomania of the Marcoses. Leandro Locsin became their architect of choice, designing most of the high-end structures that evoked modern Western aesthetics, assumed First World efficiency, presented awe-inspiring façades whose designs integrated the geography of the tropics and, of course, the unique representability of national power. Locsin espoused a national architecture that was “the product of two great streams of culture, the Oriental and the Occidental ... to produce a new object of profound harmony.” His output has been described as evincing a “synthesis that underlies all his works, with his achievements in concrete reflecting his mastery of space and scale.” In fact, his architecture has been exalted even in the post-Marcos era, claiming a branding that “every Locsin Building is an original, and identifiable as a Locsin with themes of floating volume, the duality of light and heavy, buoyant and massive running in his major works” (National Commission for Culture and the Arts).

The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Complex became the centerpiece of Locsin’s design and the Marcoses’ visualization of a futurist “city on the hill.” Locsin designed the CCP’s main building, embodying Imelda’s metaphysical aesthetics of “the true, the good, and the beautiful,” a motto she would take to heart in the gendered task Ferdinand assigned to her in nation-building, and even thereafter in her political comeback during the 2010s. Imelda’s motto, initially from Plato but drawing heavily from Christian philosophers, called for a public aesthetics that was subservient to the larger universal ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness—largely abstract causes that came into being only as defined by the Marcoses’ operationalization of national power. Locsin also created in the CCP complex the Folk Arts Theater, a performance space for traditional arts, which used sea breeze for ventilation; the Philippine International Convention Center, the first convention center in Asia; the Philippine Center for International Trade and Exhibition (Philcote); and the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel. The propensity for mastery of the national space of the Marcoses is often referred to as an “edifice complex,” the penchant to use mega-infrastructure in the conceptualization and execution of national development objectives.²

The presidential bodies—rendered in the gendered robustness of then-young leaders Ferdinand and Imelda—evoked a consolidated power in various representations of the nation. Nation-building then became synonymous with the personalized and highly politicized image-building of the Marcoses. Imelda, for example, engineered the *terno* with butterfly sleeves not only to be fashionable but also to complement the feminine grandeur of power. Ferdinand made the short-sleeved, shirt-jacked *barong* embody the youthful exuberance of a working and masculine president. In so heralding these gendered variations of fashion, the Marcoses mobilized an inner circle of trusted personalities in an attempt to expand their power base. The Marcoses lacked the political and economic pedigree that often catapulted personalities into political and economic positions. For Ferdinand, it was the cronies that he gave access to business and political power, and which instigated what has been referred to as bureaucrat capitalism or the relinquishing of the national economic sphere to handpicked technocrats and businessmen. Imelda had her Blue Ladies, a select group of socially affluent women willing to share their cultural capital with the First Lady, and her group of gay designers and stylists offering their talent to enhance the distaff personification of the leadership.

The propping up of the national leadership translated into the Marcoses' ability to concentrate national power in their hands, dispensing favors to their privileged and willing inner circle of economically and socially mobile male and female movers of the nation. Other bodies were disenfranchised in this process of dispensation: properties and business holdings were sequestered from opposition families, resisters were either incarcerated or converted to the ways of the Marcoses, and the mass movement was stifled, among other consequences. It was only the underground movement that was able to thrive, inasmuch as its sites of operation were located in secret quarters and in the countryside, more distant from the surveillance and discipline of national power. However, the cultural sphere provided a counter-valence to the narrative of nation- and image-building of the Marcoses.

Filmic Counter-Imagery of Nation

Discourse is produced by a dialectics of power from above and below. What has been mapped out so far is the mobilization of representation and culture by the Marcoses. Film directors joined the fray created by critics of the Marcos dictatorship. Kidlat Tahimik's conceptual films interrogated small town life and global transformation. Nic Deocampo's documentaries focused on sex-show performers and other subjects of poverty. Lino Brocka's social melodramas evoked the limitations on individual growth and productive transformation. Ishmael Bernal's modernist films on social decay and the middle class critiqued the set yet supposedly limitless boundaries of the national condition. These filmmakers,

among others, provided counter-articulations in their popular and art films. But through their engagement with art cinema, the directors introduced the issues to an international audience. In the case of Brocka and Bernal, they were successful negotiators of commercial and art cinemas, able to infuse substance even in the most popular of their projects.

Critics chose to read these directors as intellectuals and artists critical of the Marcos dictatorship. Together with other artists and groups, cinema through Brocka and Bernal served to critically engage with the Marcoses and their rule. Because of the content of their films and their active involvement in anti-censorship issues, Brocka and Bernal had the most serious entanglements with the Board of Censors for Motion Pictures (BCMP). Some of their films were banned, and permits were not issued, effectively disallowing their films from competing or being exhibited abroad. Brocka even went to jail for participating in other concerns of the mass movement. In their long years of engagement with the Marcos dictatorship and thereafter, the National Democratic Front and the Communist Party of the Philippines honored Brocka and Bernal after their deaths with tributes worthy of their participation in the movement's struggle for people empowerment.

These four directors were in the forefront of direct intervention in Marcos rule. Tahimik in *Mababangong Bangungot* [Perfumed Nightmares, 1977] told the story of a man in search for life's meaning in a small town, interestingly named San Marcos. Deocampo's *Oliver* (1983) documented a sex-show performer who mimics a spider spinning its web, and the motivations of survival that had impelled the subject. Brocka and Bernal equally utilized the topic and theme of poverty under the dictatorship that had sought to render these scenes as invisible to an international audience. These directors were also in the forefront of the international art film festival market that became an important venue for contest and critique of the Marcos dictatorship.

Other filmmakers also engaged in interesting ways in the contest for imagery of the nation. Film star Sharon Cuneta's rise to fame was based on what had been coined by Imelda as the official aesthetics of the nation, "the true, the good, and the beautiful," that presented the mundane ultra-rich teenager's plight for personal love and happiness. Over time, the sex-oriented films allowed the greater visibility of banned body parts, especially female, that disrupted the homogeneity of power of the film censors, one of the strictest enforcers of the official imagery of the Marcoses. The action film told biographical stories of glorified criminals that were popular for their Robin-Hood qualities of "stealing from the rich to give to the poor" or fictional stories of familiar morally upright street-level (anti-)heroes who had pro-poor sympathies.

What also became remarkable with the intensification of dictatorial rule was the proliferation of films of high artistic merit that directly and indirectly engaged with the Marcoses' design for the nation and the production of affect in the growing disenchantment with the dictatorship. This affect in film simulated the abjection

and incorporation of national bodies in the dictatorship. The affect is produced in the landscape of poverty that becomes the motivation for characters to be alienated and confined in film and in the film narrative. Using actual locations of dump sites, seedy alleys and spaces in urban poor communities, the darkness of night in the city, the film characters are made to dwell in the abyss of poverty. This produces a claustrophobic feel of the city and nation, where characters live in confined spaces and have very little room for social mobility. Brocka and Bernal became the prime directors who produced the restrictive and alienated affect and being in mainstream cinema.

Brocka's City and Nostalgia for Political Struggle

Brocka is often referred as the most political of Filipino filmmakers. Like Bernal, however, he was allowed to do his own brand of film provided he remained commercially viable with his popular films. His films can be regarded as bookends of the Second Golden Age of Philippine cinema, with *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag* [Manila in the Claws of Neon, 1975] arguably opening and *Orapronobis* (1989) closing the era. *Maynila*, based on a popular serialized novel in the 1960s by Edgardo M. Reyes, narrates the quest of Julio Madiaga, a fisherman forced to leave his place to look for his sweetheart, Ligaya Paraiso, in Manila. Ligaya was recruited from their fishing community to work in the city, with the promise of also being able to study, but where she was instead drugged and forced into sexual slavery. Without any knowledge of her whereabouts, Julio sets out to find her, and the film follows his search in Manila's urban poor, working-class, and Chinese-enclave communities. He finds Ligaya, and makes a plan with her to escape. Ligaya is caught and is killed, and Julio avenges her death, killing her Chinese captor. In the process, Julio is cornered in a dark alley and is killed by bystanders.

Julio, both in the novel and in the film, is a necessary trespassing subject in the metropolis: a migrant body that provides the city with its cheap reserve army of labor. For the state, Julio's body, together with other subjugated bodies, is to be rendered docile, made productive through service and subservience to business. It's a dog-eat-dog world in the narrative, everyone reduced to her most abject condition by the film's end: Ligaya is murdered, and so is Julio; Julio's fellow construction worker, who daydreams of success as a pop singer, is killed in an on-site accident; a fellow peon is arrested for a minor infraction and is killed while in jail; his sister, who takes care of their paralyzed father, ends in a casa (a prostitution den), after the father dies through a fire that had gutted their squatter community. Only the cunning co-worker who studies and works in an advertising firm survives.

In the film, however, Brocka undertakes to foreground another modality of corporeal transformation. In two crucial scenes, Brocka introduces the political possibility of the mass movement as the other recourse for individual and social



Figure 1. *Maynila's* first color shot—Julio watches the Chinatown apartment where he suspects Ligaya might be held. (Publicity still by Cinema Artists)

transformation, a possibility however suppressed in the Marcos dictatorship during the film's production. *Maynila's* opening begins with a black-and-white sequence of early morning life in Chinatown—e.g., people cleaning the streets, jeepneys and *caretelas* (horse-drawn carriages) moving along, shops opening, people waking up and spitting on the streets, among others. The documentary feel of the city ends with a high-angle introduction of Julio gazing at an apartment unit, where he suspects Ligaya is held. Color is introduced as he moves slowly in the frame (fig. 1). His backdrop, however, includes political graffiti and cut-up slogans about workers and underground organizations of the youth. The political option is reintroduced when Julio is about to avenge Ligaya's death. He bids his friend goodbye and, upon crossing the street, he sees a rally, complete with a leader exhorting protesters via megaphone, streamers bearing slogans, red flags, and the mobilization of people. Even as Julio ignores the rally, the marking of another non-docile political body, especially a collective sea of bodies, an identity considered subversive, is rendered visually in film.

Brocka was reiterating the organized left's position that the mass movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, curtailed during the declaration of martial law, was the most effective means for individual and social transformation. A choice between this political option and the brutal killing of/by Julio, when individuals act based on individualized motives—to run counter to the state's abjection—is what is posed in *Maynila*. The first strike, after all, during the martial-law era, was by workers of an alcohol distillery company, La Tondeña, in 1975. What is also represented in *Maynila* is the serial exploitation of laborers—contractual, underpaid, concealment of actual salary rate in the payroll, *taiwan* (a usurious loan arrangement offered by middle persons when management fails to deliver the payroll on schedule), dangerous working conditions, and abject living quarters. Brocka also depicted another system of exploitation, the underground sex economy. To update the realism of Julio and Ligaya's being innocents lost in the city, both fell victim to prostitution and moral degeneracy. Ligaya being forced to marry, have a baby with, and cohabit with her captor, was one of the worst possible arrangements befalling a woman. The film is also replete with male sex prostitution, which was not part of the novel, and because of which the novelist sued and publicly debated with Brocka. Julio is cruised in a park, is recruited by a male sex worker, and does sex work himself. While these modalities of degeneracy were the basis for Marcos's official declaration of martial rule, these were not eradicated in Manila's society and neither in Brocka's update of the novel for a martial-law audience.

What Brocka was calling attention to in these newer incursions in the film version was the mobilization of national bodies for dual effects under martial rule. On the one hand, the sex workers, mainly hidden and working at night, were the dual-embodied figures mobilized by the Marcoses. The sex workers were integral to the Marcoses' official nation, made to attract foreign capital and to stir up the informal or underground economy on the one hand, and to be rendered invisible as marginal bodies deemed contrapuntal to the official nation on the other hand. Ironically, what were deemed immoral bodies that motivated the declaration of martial law returned in a major fashion, especially through the rise and decline of the dictatorship. Bodies of young women and men, including even children, were circuited in red-light districts, servicing the appetites of local and foreign clients, including American soldiers stationed in various massive military camps and installations all over the country. This proliferation of bodies performing sex work was also subsumed under a thriving sex-tourism industry.

On the other hand, the figure of the political protester was also made visible in Brocka's film, even at a time when protests were officially banned in the country. This banning did not break the backbone of protests that thrived prior to martial rule, but only made it more hidden or rendered in the creation of another underground sphere: the network of city and rural spaces that retransformed public protest into a thriving armed insurgency. With mounting international pressures on the

Marcoses to respect human rights and to tolerate dissent, an increasing number of protesters marched on the streets. Interestingly, at the height of the anti-Marcos protests, the first “people power” uprising of 1986 that deposed the dictatorship, millions convened at the premier highway in Metro Manila. The possibility of protest and the contrary figure of the protester briefly showcased in Brocka’s film foregrounded the political hope and recourse initially and officially banned during martial rule.

The tragic final rendering of Julio Madiaga running for his life after murdering the Chinese husband of Ligaya—being chased by bystanders and corralled into a dead-end street while male bystanders picked up whatever they could to maim and kill him—picked up from the Marcoses’ sterile imaging of national governance of providing for all, or that their modernization would yield economic redistribution and social justice. In the 1960s novel and in the 1970s film of *Maynila*, the place for the Marcoses’ modern nation had yet to materialize, experienced as a reality by the citizenry. Taken as a realist film with a social-realism utopia, *Maynila* can also be read as a derailing of the Marcosian project of image- and nation-building. Martial law and the dictatorship had produced only greater hardships, inequality, and sacrifice among the majority of the people, thus raising the question of who really benefited from the undertaking.

Bernal’s Trippy City and Its Abject Populace

Brocka’s *Maynila* is interesting because it was not only in dialogue with the Marcos dictatorship but it would also become the discursive base of Bernal’s *Manila by Night* (1980). By 1980, the Marcos dictatorship remained strong even as the aboveground and underground mass movements were already beginning to expand. *Manila by Night* took on Brocka’s representation of the contradictory function of moral degeneracy of the Marcos state: one of the bases of martial law, the repressed that will not go away, the necessary condition of human life that makes possible the production of docile subjects. *Manila by Night*, however, pushed the boundaries of acceptable morality to extremes that had never before been depicted on local screens.

The film is an ensemble of anti-Marcosian subjects or subjects deemed not appropriate in the New Society: Alex, a young addict who is clueless about his life; Manay Sharon, a gay designer who weaves into his daily life the concerns of his male lovers; Febrero, a taxi driver who impregnates Baby, an innocent night-shift waitress, but lives in with a female partner, Adelina, who leaves nightly dressed as a nurse but is actually a sex worker in a bordello for Japanese customers; Bea, a blind masseuse who has children from other men and supports a failed lover’s trip to work overseas; Kano, a lesbian drug pusher in love with (but who also pimps) Bea; and Virgie, Alex’s mother, who winds up popping pills to keep herself sane

from the memory of her past as a prostitute and from worrying about Alex. Each one has an intimate relationship or moment with another, or is connected in some way with the other characters. Drugs and sex are the underlying motivations that animate the encounters. What is echoed in the film are characters each of whom regards her life as a “trip” (whatever goes, a consequence of drug use) that runs into conflict whenever the character is interpolated by other characters when her own trip is disturbed.

Drug culture—and its aftermath in “trip,” “trippy,” and “trippiness” among other terms—is one of the sources of destabilization that provided an official basis for the declaration of martial rule. This subculture was to be have been expunged with the declaration of martial rule and the regularization of national power of the Marcoses. In fact, the only person officially executed during martial law was a foreigner who had been convicted of illegal drug trafficking. Similar to Brocka’s evocation of the mass movement as a nostalgia for things past and possibilities for the future, Bernal was evoking drug culture as the anti-thesis of the Marcoses’ construction of the then-present New Society. Sterilely posed with ruthless implications on the lives of citizens, the Marcoses’ temporal present was interrogated by Bernal on two fronts: on ground level, relief was possible in the daily grind of ordinary people, including their use of prohibited but not prohibitive drugs; and on the level of national power, the government’s incapacity to put a stop to this subculture resulted in a resistance at the ground and everyday levels. In other words, the state is also held accountable for its perpetuation of narcopolitics: that which is tasked to police narcotics becomes the very hub for production and distribution to a general public of users. Bernal’s rendition of the prevalence of “trip” and “trippiness” at the height of martial law implicates and indicts the Marcoses’ state, rendering it powerful yet inutile, overbearing but absent, historical but not in the everyday.

The trippiness is echoed in various scenes: the addict and his girlfriend make out in a motel room with poppers, the lesbian and blind masseuse make out in a push cart beside a garbage dump after taking cough syrup, an assembly of characters dive into the dark and dirty waters of Manila Bay and hallucinate seeing fireworks and floating candles, and the addict sleeps off his fatigue in Manila’s premier park, among others. This is further punctuated with the choice of music (“Don’t Cry for Me Argentina” disco version, “Teach Your Children,” Filipino ballads and remakes, and electronica), and the constant over-the-top staging of street scenes: cross-dressers constantly on the streets, a minor character in a heart-shaped mascot costume, transvestites dancing with male partners in a public plaza, and so on. What the film suggests is that the streets and public spaces, especially those outside the purview of the elite, are alive and vibrant; and that queer politics counters the city and the state’s own heteronormative obsession over the New Society.

The trippiness is curtailed in the film’s end with the serial presentation of individual resolutions into further abjection: the blind masseuse distressfully fights it out with the lover who wants to force her into a live-sex act; the sex worker,



Figure 2. Various types of trippiness (clockwise from top left): Manay's friends, customer, and lover listen to a socialite's sexual adventures; cross-dressers at the breakwater of Manila Bay celebrate, motivating the lesbian drug pusher, addicted student, and their friends to participate; the blind masseuse resists her lover's plans to get her to participate in live sex for money; and the addict refreshes himself with water from a street sweeper. (Frame captures by Joel David)

who dresses in public as a nurse, is mysteriously murdered; the designer breaks down from the dreary weight of other people's lives; the blind masseuse betrays her lesbian drug-pusher lover; the pusher is chased and caught by undercover police; and the addict's mother also develops her own addiction to sedatives (fig. 2). The trippy undercurrent of the underclass and public ground-level life are curtailed when one intrudes and trespasses within the ranks of the equally abject individuals, or when state personnel (undercover police) intervene.

However, the film's denouement involves one of lingering trippiness, an affect from the state's fascism and double-standard implementation of martial rule with the real society unquoted in the filmic diegesis. As a matter of fact, the polyphony

of underclass action—exaltation and degeneration of the New Society—is emphasized in the film’s ending sequence:

After Kano’s arrest, Alex finds himself alone. Some trannies pass by him.

TRANNIES: Ay, nakakaloka! E talaga namang luka-luka yon e! [This is crazy. She is really crazy.]

Walking toward Luneta, Alex sees an old man cleaning the sidewalk.

ALEX: Mama, puwede ho bang makahingi ng tubig ninyo? Maghihilamos lang ho ako. [Sir, may I have some water? I will just wash my face.]

MAN: Aba oo, sigé hijo. [Surely, kid.]

ALEX: Salamat ho. [Thank you.]

Alex washes his face from a pail of water.

ALEX: (after washing) Salamat ho.

MAN: Okey.

Baby is seen boarding a jeepney, her stomach swollen with child. Jeepney blares out “Taksil.” Alex lingers by breakwater, where guitarist plays “Teach Your Children” and tranny in heart-shaped costume loiters. Glimpses of Virgie taking tranquilizers and Manay arranging religious statues. Alex walks down Luneta, where exercisers are seen shadow-boxing and doing martial arts exercises to the breaking dawn. Exhausted, he lies down on the grass, flowers surrounding him like a halo. The whole park, with early-rising weekend citizens, is then seen against the morning sun.

(Bernal, Seq. 51: Alex’s wandering; dialogue translation by author.)

The drama of the final scene encapsulates disparate bodies coming into the site of the national park. The exuberance of bodies exercising at the break of dawn calls to mind the Marcoses’ kinetic bodies. The body of the young male character is the contrapuntal figure to the Marcoses’ bodies. Having survived a maddening night of violence and escape, he is dazed, remaining as the narco-subject critical of the state, a trespasser in the nation’s equivocation of space and activity.

In the current available DVD version, state intervention is made more pronounced with the sudden intrusion of the audio of a non-diegetic male voice narrating the remolding of the characters (see video excerpt “Sequences 50/51: Alex evades capture, wanders around the city” <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5nZ16bOt3I&feature=youtu.be>> [Produced by Regal Films]): the addict goes into rehab and is now hopeful of getting on track with his life, the drug pusher will

rot in jail, the waitress luckily married a doctor who understood her condition, the addict's mother becomes a social worker ministering to sex workers (having once been one herself), the blind masseuse becomes a respected waitress in a restaurant staffed by blind workers, and the designer turns his back on his gayness after going through a religious seminar.

The moral "re-education" of the abject characters, of course, creates an illogical spring into the modernist movie: a historical impediment only inducible through an incursion into the modernist trippy rendition of city and nation. If in *Maynila*, the lead characters fall one by one into the tragic wayside of the nation, the abjection-prone yet uncontrollable characters of *Manila by Night* are represented as representable only through their enforced emplacement into a socially and historically given order: an official social-realist intrusion, incursion and reinterpretation of another world order rendered in Bernal's modernist text.

Modernist Filmmaking and Representations of the City

The film remains a cult classic for Filipino cineastes because of its modern and modernizing treatment, a divergent characterization of national cinema that harps on realism and its aftermath. Film blogger Adrian Mendizabal wrote:

What Bernal contained in *Manila by Night* is a series of complex strategies in filmmaking. Not only did he structure *Manila by Night* with a temporal divide of day and night, but he constructs it from the interior by using the character's subjective persona to redefine its filmic space. His methods used in the film vary from the creation of subtle effects such as mise-en-scène entrapment to the creation of expressionistic effects such as his usage of the red-blue overlay.

What Bernal also achieved was related to the Marcoses' use of tradition and modernity in their image- and nation-building strategies. Bernal was negotiating for an idiom of critique and dissent, from the filmic traditions of realism and romanticism on the one hand, and Western modernities on the other. For Mendizabal and other intellectuals who appreciated Bernal and *Manila by Night*, it is precisely in the newness of a successfully localized Western film modernity that is the most significant contribution. This newness of adaptation in Western film modernity will again be echoed in the advent of the new digital independent film renaissance in the 2000s.

Brocka's *Maynila* will also be exalted for this new idiom of Western film modernity. The film blog *Cinema of the World* wrote:

Manila: In the Claws of Darkness is the most impressive of [Brocka's] films noirs, made with bows to the American cinema, to Italian neo-realism, and to his own

country's tradition of star-driven melodramas, but with the force of a Third-World director determined to say something about his own society. It is the richly romantic but realistic odyssey of a boy named Julio, who arrives in Manila from the country to search for his childhood sweetheart. The darkness of the title refers to the capital itself, which, said Brocka, exerts an invisible force on the lives of its people. ("Lino Brocka")

The similar contour of appreciation for Bernal's film also rests in Brocka—the capacity to draw from Western film modernities to relocate and rehistoricize the contemporary overtures and subtleties of Marcosian power. In both films, the rearticulation of film narrative, and the adapted idioms of renarrativizing social realities become a powerful site of engagement with the Marcoses.

Bernal's excessive transcendence of Marcosian morality makes for less overt political subversion in film, but nonetheless equally stresses the flaws, contradictions, and excessiveness of the morality of the Marcos dictatorship. Both Brocka and Bernal countered the megalomania of the Marcos dictatorship that rallied with the "the true, the good and the beautiful," a tagline that is still used by Imelda in her contemporary political comeback, through the proliferation of images and imagery of mass poverty, individual entrapment, social immobility and abjection, and an inutile state that is unresponsive to the conditions of its citizenry. What Brocka and Bernal were representing on film were images of contrary citizenship and counter-citizenship claims to Marcos dictatorial governance: that it is failed governance that leads to the catastrophic resolution of citizens seeking to better themselves. For Brocka, at least in *Maynila*, it was a non-choice between the greater deterioration of people and the then-non-existence of a people's movement. For Bernal, it was the relief of *jouissance* in the time and place of the Marcos dictatorship. While Bernal proliferated the screen with the abject city and its citizens, Brocka rendered the abjected political back into the conditions of possibility under the Marcos dictatorship.

Contestation for the Right to Represent Nation

The production and consumption of images of the nation in the 1970s and 1980s foregrounded the national power of mobilization of the Marcoses on the one hand, and the rendering of contrary figures, responses, and representations in the various arts that had sought to dialogue with and critique official imagery building. This seriality of representations evokes the time and place of concerned artists and intellectuals, able to provide a counter-mobilization of the discourse of representation. What was being made as the impetus in the contestation is the right to represent the nation. The issue of representation is a foundational issue, generally officiated by the state and challenged through counter-representations by

anti-state forces and institutions. Through their films, Brocka and Bernal contested the official representational rights of the Marcoses, going beyond a critique that defied official imagery of the nation but provided for filmic representations toward alternative and oppositional claims.

This right is rendered in socio-civic duties as granted and officiated by the state, which defines and implements rights based on the exigencies of its leaders and offices. With the pointed leadership of the Marcoses, the exercise of rights was subsumed in the regime's practices of national development. Bernal and Brocka were attempting to grapple with the exercise of these rights even at a time of fascist rule under the Marcoses. Through their films, and the success and sufferance of their films under the Marcoses, the directors were exercising what they thought were their rights, including the right to free speech, and the right of the artist to her creative expression. Both took on a more serious leadership of the oppositional artistic community, becoming members and leaders of the Concerned Artists of the Philippines, a people's organization that espoused freedom from censorship and the right to artistic freedom. Furthermore, both directors were successful in registering their "contrary rights" as memorialized in national film history—Brocka's *Maynila* becomes the opening film of an imagined glorious film epoch, and Bernal's *Manila by Night* as its most important contribution.

What the two films undertake in their narrativization of abject subjects is the recognition of the role of the state in subject formation. What the Marcoses sought to engineer through its emphasis on youth labor for national development, with projects such as the *Kabataang Baranggay* (Youth Brigade), construction of export-processing zones that emplaced youth workers into modes of capitalist transformation, and the opening of the national economy for foreign capital penetration, was to place the country—especially its main asset, young inexpensive workers—into the circuits of global capitalism. On the one hand, as Marx has mentioned, "We see then, that, apart from extremely elastic bounds, the nature of the exchange of commodities itself imposes no limit to the working-day, no limit to surplus-labor." This means that the oversupply of labor allows the capitalist to optimally exploit these bodies. On the other hand, there is what Marx called "antimony" or "right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges," that in the end, "between equal rights [of the capitalist and laborers] force decides" (*Das Kapital*). Value is extracted in laborers, while in other non-laboring bodies—the non-subjects in Brocka and Bernal's films—they become necessarily expendable and disposable bodies, nonetheless integral to the formation of the discourse of power of the Marcoses.

In Brocka and Bernal, the abject subjects are capable neither of capitalist transformation nor further aggrandizement by the state machinery. They are always-already abjected, and therefore are in the subaltern peripheries for any further state domination and transformation. In Marx's work, the formation of the worker is also always-already in a state of impermanence, able to represent both

the cartological figure of worker and the personification of capital in the constant transformation of the worker. In the Philippine state, the Marcoses sought to create an ideal imagery of citizen formation, that which is based on their own politicized bodies, a kind of synecdochic personification in the masses of their bodies. The masses, however, like the film characters, are able to circumvent the state transformation by choosing to remain peripheralized, and in so doing undertake a contrary project of constructing divergent cartological figures of subaltern beings, devoid of wanting citizenship claims and direct relations with Marcoses' state.

The counter-citizenship claims in Brocka and Bernal's films were a reaction to the Marcoses' orchestration of representation that rendered invisible the main currents of a national culture, giving way to the megalomaniacal self-rendering of the dictatorship. However, the Marcoses also had personal motivations in constructing excess for their national imagery building and national development. Without a political and economic pedigree, the excess stems from a sublimation of their own feelings of lack. Ferdinand harped on a meteoric rise to power that also raised questions about his war medals, brilliant performance in the bar exams, assassination charges, and of course, the massive human rights violation during his dictatorship in hopes of maintaining the trajectory of rise and control at the top. Imelda's own background of coming from an illegitimate family, childhood poverty, and a controversial beauty title among others were struggled with and eclipsed through the exercise of excess in the administration of national power.

The gender distinction in the rise to power is informative in explaining the compensation mechanisms, also gendered, in the maintenance and slippage of national power in the Marcoses. Similar to popular writing about the modernist filmmaking style of Brocka and Bernal, a turn to popular political writing and documentary of the Marcoses allows for the intervention of media institutions and operations in the formation of the discourse of representationalism of power. In Napoleon Rama's essay of Ferdinand as the *Philippines Free Press's* 1966 Man of the Year, the excessive climb to and maintenance of being on top are echoed early on:

To be on top and to stay at the top has been Ferdinand Edralin Marcos' lifetime dream. In school, he was always at the head of his class; in the bar examinations, he was top-notch; during the war years, he was, according to army records, the bravest among the brave, the most bemedaled soldier; in the House of Representatives, he was minority floor leader; in the Senate, he was the Senate President; in the Liberal Party, he was party president; in the Nacionalista Party, he was standard-bearer; in Ilocandia, of course, he is the supreme political leader.

Ferdinand's ascent to power is predicated on a natural trajectory of a lifetime quest for over-achievement. Imelda also harped on the basis for her then-contemporary megalomaniacal excess with her own compensatory skills for a massive lack generated by historical circumstances of her birth and cultural origins:

born into poverty, illegitimate, provincial, female, lacking educational support, but being beautiful. While Marcos utilized his masculine qualities—bar topnotcher, bemedaled soldier, astute politician—Imelda used her feminine qualities for maximum political results. In the official media release of the Biography Channel, Imelda's segment is introduced thus:

Portrait of the colorful and controversial former First Lady of the Philippines, who went on buying sprees that included New York City skyscrapers and 3,000 pairs of shoes. Although once a heroine to the millions of peasants, Imelda and her dictator husband Ferdinand amassed personal fortunes of billions of dollars while in power. Many believe the money was stolen from the government and international loans designed to help the poor. ("Imelda Marcos")

While Imelda used her feminine attributes and skills, these were also criticized for a tragic-comic excess, similar to Marie Antoinette's, that harped on women as incapable of political positions and analyses. Imelda was vilified for her feminine excess attributed to her misrecognition and misrepresentation of national power.

The circumstances of government of the Marcoses allowed for the privileging of their nation-building aspirations. But even with what seemed early on as limitless projects and financing, their resources dwindled as the crisis of the dictatorship developed. Brocka directly engaged with this right through a focus on realism that allowed his city film to foreground the conditions of the possible, including subversion and dissent and the eminence of political action. The intensification of the crisis allowed for a wider window of opportunity for Bernal, articulating in his city film a modernist rendering of subjective interpolation of the metropolis and its populace.

What Brocka and Bernal enacted in their films was the crisis of representation of the Marcoses and their dictatorship. On the one hand, the Marcoses' interiorization of national power led to an exterior nation on the brink: those that were not part of the inner circle were slowly yet massively disenfranchised. By a certain point, from the assassination of oppositionist Benigno Aquino in 1983, the official representation of national power did not hold any more truth claims. This created a historical contest to the right to represent the nation. On the one hand, the people and their movement grew in strength and numbers, able to repoliticize and remobilize counter-subjects of the nation. On the other hand, the elites coalesced in Aquino's widow Corazon to be the centerpiece of a newer alternative to the Marcoses. Brocka and Bernal early on had called into question the capacity of the Marcoses and their state to represent the nation.

Brocka and Bernal's proposition against the Marcoses was attuned to Marx's idea that crisis becomes the enforced unity between elements that have become independent on the one hand, and the enforced separation of the elements that are essentially coming out of one locus on the other hand. The Marcoses represented

this crisis, so that as their dictatorship progressed and waned, independent elements started to evolve on their own. These include the rise of the people's mass movement, the armed insurgency, and the coalescing of opposition political parties among others on the grand scale of nation-building and transformation. On the ground level, however, and as shown in the films, the crisis was not so much felt but already transformed, rendering the conditions of possibilities for temporal happiness and long-term disenfranchisement in subaltern sites. Such acts of everyday life and survival remained attuned to the crisis constituency and management of the Marcoses, coming out of this primordial origin like all things framed by the Marcoses and their crisis. The crisis management of the state on the one hand, and the taking-on and making-do of people at the ground and everyday levels on the other hand, create the hegemony of the Marcoses: an uneasy status quo where neither the Marcoses are fully in power nor the people fully dominated.

The inevitability of crisis, however, did very little to affect the lives of subaltern citizens, except to more readily plunge them into the greater abyss of the crisis. As represented in the films, martial law had done little to enforce its claim to ideal citizenry and citizen transformation on the ground level. The crisis had been taken up in the films, as the motivation for Julio to look for his fate in the city, or for people to easily take into their own hands their quest for individual and social justice in *Maynila*; and to savor the *jouissance* of subaltern life even under state surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms depicted in *Manila by Night*. The films do not reiterate state transformation, only citing the state as primordial source of the crisis in the everyday. The films, however, implicate the state further, citing its absence in the ways that the subaltern citizenry had already transformed the crisis into their familiar negotiations and engagements in the crisis.

Ironically, when the Marcoses were deposed in February 1986, the quality of film production began to decline. By 1989, as I would argue, Brocka's *Orapronobis* closed the era. The "right to represent" no longer became the preeminent discourse of representation in the post-Marcos years. Brocka's death in 1991 and Bernal's in 1996 closed for the time being the era of a rights-motivated filmmaking practice. What then proliferated in Philippine art cinema during this intermittent period were remakes and adaptations of literary classics, and other attempts to redefine the national cinema without the baggage of the realism of poverty.

The international art film festival market would not concur with a Philippine cinema-without-poverty, which made local critics call into question—similar to the response of the Marcoses—the visibility of massive lack and excess of poverty as self-Orientalism created by Brocka and Bernal. The international film festival market then reduced the opening for Philippine cinema to its audiences. It would take the independent cinema movement—pioneered by Lav Diaz using digital technology and which culminated in nine-hour epic sagas of everyday lives—and that reemphasized and re-proliferated cinema with poverty scenes and subaltern characters for Philippine cinema to again be recognized and have access to foreign

circuits. In its worst output, this cinema was accused of “poverty porn,” in the reified use, magnitude, and depth of exploration of the conditions of poverty in the country. In its best productions, this cinema was hailed for bringing Philippine cinema back to life, which may also come to mean that the national cinema will again be capable of mobilizing and reinvigorating the rights-based approach and claims for actual disenfranchised peoples and human conditions.

Post-Marcos, Post-Brocka, Post-Bernal

What the post-era (after Marcos, Brocka and Bernal) effected was a cultural turn after the crisis of representation in the 1983–86 era, with 1986 being pivotal as the year the dictatorship was toppled and Corazon Aquino was installed in power. The cultural turn ironically was an offshoot of the lack of interest in culture as outlined by Press Secretary Teodoro “Teddy Boy” Locsin, Jr. upon taking office. The negation of culture in the new national administration was an offshoot of the reaction to the megalomania of the Marcoses, experienced mostly in the cultural realm. Aquino’s earlier campaign pronouncement to be the opposite of the Marcoses—anti-corruption, anti-people, anti-poverty—also enacted a moral ground in which to differentially stand. Aquino’s positioning rested primarily on culture, as a kind of historical and social imagination of life in the post-Marcos era.

This produced a cultural turn in the Aquino era: culture was beyond crisis but considered negligible and unrepresentable in the moral righteousness of the new national administration. Puritan morality took over culture, the newer form was something to be felt, converted into, and considered a cause for transformation of the self, and eventually of the nation. The unintended dismissal of culture gave rise to a new moral order that embodied the historical experience and class background of Aquino and her new technocrats that operationalized national development.

In negotiating with the historical past and legacy of the Marcoses, the highest cultural award of the state, the National Artist Award, was handed to those who had collaborated with the dictatorship (Leandro Locsin, 1990; Lucrecia Kasilag, 1989; Virgilio Almario, 2003; Ramon Obusan, 2006), as well as its critics (Lino Brocka, 1997; Ishmael Bernal, 2001; Bienvenido Lumbera, 2006). The cultural impasse that developed during Aquino’s administration seeped through the succeeding administrations. Subsequent presidencies personally included selections not submitted through the regular screening process: Carlos Quirino, 1997; Alejandro Roces, 2003; and Abdulmari Asia Imao, 2006. The lingering impasse, at least in the case of the National Artist selection, erupted with the insertion of three names and delisting of one recommendation during Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s administration in 2009.

In the visual arts, however, the cultural impasse was broken in the 1990s in what Jonathan Beller called “syncretic realism,” with artists like Emmanuel Garibay, Elmer Borlongan, Julie Lluich, and the later works of Imelda Cajipe-Andaya, who:

endeavor to return the concept to art practice—that is, the images strive to transmit conceptual thinking about the world and politics via the artwork. This (re)politicization of the artwork is at once a response to the perceived shearing off of social reference in abstract art and to the fact that after abstraction, images are unavoidably abstract (because, historically speaking, the visual itself has become a technology of abstraction). (Beller 19)

The political and historical abstraction in the post-Marcos era had to be reimagined differentially. In film, this reimagination fell in the hands of conceptual filmmaker Lav Diaz with his first forays into feature filmmaking in *Serafin Geronimo: Kriminal ng Barrio Concepcion* [Criminal of Barrio Concepcion, 1998], *Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan* [Naked Under the Moon, 1999], and *Batang West Side* [West Side Kid, 2002], and culminating in his nine-hour films of hyper-neorealism, *Ebolusyon ng Pamilyang Pilipino* [Evolution of the Filipino Family, 2004], *Heremias: Unang Aklat* [Book One, 2006], *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007), and *Melancholia* (2008). Together with other directors of the pre-independent cinema movement (Jeffrey Jeturian, Raymond Red, Jon Red, and Mark Meily, among others), officially mentioned to have started in 2005 with Aureaus Solito’s *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* [The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros] during the first year of the Cinemalaya Film Festival, Diaz early on negotiated a film idiom with which to break free of the cultural impasse of the past.

He articulated his own ideal of filmmaking as a project that draws resonance from *Kidlat Tahimik* and Brocka:

I don’t really think about length when I make films. I’m a slave to the process, following the characters and the story and where they lead. It’s a very organic process for me, I just keep shooting and shooting once there’s an idea. When I watch the footage later, if I think there’s still more to be done I have to shoot it. I don’t think, “Oh, it’s already seven hours” or “There’s already fifty hours of footage.” Perhaps I think this way because, with regard to the history of my people, we don’t really have a concept of time, we just have a concept of space. (Diaz)

The rendering of a new emphasis of Philippine film in Diaz—geography and space—stresses two issues: first, the new space of Philippine cinema—excess abject poverty—that grounds the heavy weight of newer social realities; and second, the transcendence of space over time, space controlling time that anchors the time of the present as a juncture for social realities.

Diaz's delineation of his self-aesthetics also characterizes the films of the new digital independent films or indie cinema. This indie cinema, however, remains problematic as the funding source and management for this movement remains vested in business interests and government institutions. The major movers for this movement are Cinemalaya, beginning in 2005 as an alliance backed by businessman Antonio "Tonyboy" Conjuangco, Jr. and the Cultural Center of the Philippines; and Cinema One, also in 2005, by an affiliate of the largest media conglomerate in the country, ABS-CBN. Interestingly, a third player, the Film Development Council of the Philippines, the government arm in charge of stimulating the film industry, also entered the picture of indie-cinema production in 2012. Even with the issue of independence, indie cinema has a boutique production look and feel: subaltern characters, abject poverty, gritty scenes, emblematic Third-Cinema practices, and day-in-the-life narratives that are in dialogue with Diaz's articulation of his aesthetics. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's seminal work on Third Cinema calls for an anti-imperialist (Hollywood) cinema, both in production and reception, specifically coming out of the neocolonial and decolonizing conditions of the Third World. With the independent filmmakers, the direction for a way out of Hollywood and its surrogate in local commercial cinema is the motivation to come up with innovations that resonate with Third Cinema.

Two figures of the newer independent cinema movement remade the masterpieces of Brocka and Bernal in 2009. Omnibus and ominously titled *Manila*, it comprises two segments. *Manila's* night segment was done by prolific filmmaker Adolfo Alix, Jr., and was a remake of another masterpiece by Brocka, *Jaguar* (1979), starring the most bankable male star in the country then, Piolo Pascual. In the day segment, art film director Raya Martin remade Bernal's *Manila by Night* by starting with the morning after the addict (Pascual) had lain dazed in the Luneta (Rizal Park), which was the closing scene of the Bernal film. The remakes proved to be a major disappointment because they made neither a big leap from the original nor an interesting take on the earlier directors' own films. What the younger filmmakers missed out was the older films' capacity to undertake a political project outside the aesthetic domain of film, and provide a cutting-edge political commentary about the times.

The originary signification (dissent) is made passive in newer independent films that harp on day-in-the-life focusing of a subaltern character unable to make a major transformation by the film's end because of the heavy weight of issues of poverty. This has been rendered in the aesthetics of a local neorealism, akin to the Italian promulgators, that however is unable to realize a self-referentiality of filmic and actual social realities. Oftentimes, too, the subaltern endures and does not survive the massive weight of poverty issues, representing the subaltern's impoverished life as beyond redemption. Nihilism pervades in this batch of newer independent films.

While the members of this generation of indie filmmakers profess to adore and emulate Brocka and Bernal, and proliferate their films with equally stunning images of poverty, subaltern characters, and counter-citizenship claims, very few are able to orchestrate the political project similar in the ingenuous ways the two directors have been able to. These films were in resonance with the possibility of a Third Cinema, a cut above the modernist ethos and politics of Second Cinema. The fact that this has been done, at least in the Philippines, until the 1980s, makes its marginalization in present-day independent cinema a source of concern. Constrained by the lack of a local cinema-going audience, thereby focusing on an international art film festival audience, the media to reimagine a contrary nation, and to draw alternative citizenship claims, remains to be located. In the simultaneity of these aesthetic development and rights claims in art, *in the meantime*, the Marcoses were victorious in the 2010 elections, with Imelda being voted into the House of Representatives, son Bongbong into the Senate, and daughter Imee as governor of Ilocos Norte.³ What the discussion on Philippine film and society has resulted is the inextricable discursive connections and disjunctures among the two. The aesthetics of dissent in indie cinema has yet to articulate a politics of social dissent.

Brocka's *Maynila* and Bernal's *Manila by Night* reiterate Marx's sentiment on history making and sense-making:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*)

As Marx has suggested, it is only through a materialist and historical accounting of history—in terms of nation-building, experimentation in arts and aesthetics, and creative responses to crises—that the sequence of events can develop into a pivotal culture of dissent.

Notes

1. For a thorough documentation and periodization of the Marcos era, refer to "The Philippines: The Marcos Years"; also Tolentino.
2. For a discussion of edifice complex, see Lico. For a similar discussion on creative contestations, see Balance.
3. For an account of the 2010 elections victory of the Marcoses, see Cerojano.

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