

# Akda: The Asian Journal of Literature, Culture, Performance

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Manuscript 1055

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# *11 Days in August* and the “Ghosts in the Machine”

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## Abstract

This essay will put forward a case of political mimesis in the film *11 Days in August* (1983), which contributed to the buildup of social movements in the Philippines that ended the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. By describing the processes “imaging back” and “bodying back” (Gaines), the documentary film experience is freed from the rigidity and confinement with the visible, opening it up to affective faculties to acquire meanings into our lived realities. Explored in these two aspects of the mimetic faculty is the notion of orchestrating the film’s body and that of the spectator into the filmmaker’s filmic rhythm. These elements heighten viewers’ engagement with the film material, themselves partaking into becoming one with the “ghosts in the machine” that spill forth affective qualities and open up possibilities, not necessarily of radical social change, but of meaningful collective action.

**Keywords:** People power, political mimesis, film body, documentary

## Almost a non-event

Ninoy Aquino’s assassination on August 21, 1983, may have remained a historic “non-event” occupying the sidelines of newspaper archives, if not because of dissident and alternative media who bravely defied the censors. Attempts at downplaying the murder of a known political opposition leader only backfired and further triggered the curiosity of ordinary folks. The bloodstained lifeless Ninoy became the locus of state-initiated destruction and collective pain that failed miserably in erasing the trace and voice of dissent. As Elaine Scarry (1985) argued, intense pain and death destroys a person’s world as experienced by reducing the body into its barest until it diminishes significance,

or it can be that the body swells and the deafening silence turns into noise that could fill the universe.

Moved by this historic incident, one small team of women filmmakers under the Electronic Media Division of the church-based Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), gathered their cameras and recording paraphernalia to film the days following the death of Ninoy until his burial. The product of this collective is the documentary film *11 Days in August* (1983), directed by Eva Mari G. Salvador, a young, budding filmmaker at that time. Salvador is now head of the Arts Education department of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

With the country still under the dictatorship, the post-production, screening, and distribution of *11 Days*

was done clandestinely. The film was released shortly a month after Ninoy's burial and was disseminated widely, albeit underground. The network of the Catholic church, schools, and left-leaning organizations proved to be an efficient distribution channel of the film, as copies of the film and discrete, pocket screenings were held in Metro Manila and far-flung provinces.

This paper argues that *11 Days in August* triggers political mimesis or a spectator's offscreen internalization, application, or continuation of the struggle depicted on screen. The film's coverage of Ninoy's assassination and funeral march propels a dialectic mediation between sentient "bodies" inhabiting the screen and the equally affective *co-per/forming* body of the spectator. Filmic qualities facilitate the activation of our vision's reversibility.

In film, we witness the filmmaker's act of seeing and listening, as well as become aware of our own perspective as spectators traversing these spaces, unscathed. Film stimulates our mimetic faculty or the "nature that culture uses to create second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other" (Taussig xiv). This, however, is not to say that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between Salvador's film and the mass actions that happened between 1983 to 1986. In itself, film has no explicit and direct power to alter reality (Gaines 85). Besides, other factors also come into play, such as the radio and print media platforms, cultural elements, intensified friction among political elites, and the economic debacle that triggered successive mass protests in that period. But it is in connection with politically enlightened individuals and movements that film could influence and effect social change. Its power lies in how individuals employ the documentary film as a creative political intervention, internalized and embodied.

### Embodying grief

In *Mimesis and Alterity*, Taussig described sympathetic magic as a process of bringing "sensuousness to sense" or the "suturing of nature and artifice" so as to manifest, in the copy, the same power as with the original (xvii). The notion of sympathetic magic, as Taussig further asserts, has become more pronounced upon the invention of the camera and immersive technologies of new media. If so, this

becomes a point of interest specifically in looking into the documentary film genre and in how it implicates the notion of the body and biopolitics through media.

Gaines (93–94) elaborated on Taussig's concept of "sympathetic magic" by asserting that there are two ways by which the mimetic faculty propels the dialectic mediation of filmic experience. There is the production aspect or the *imaging back*, and the reception aspect or the *bodying back* experienced by viewers in watching films.

*Imaging back* takes place in the filmmaker's encounter of the historical world and the actual recording using the filmic techniques at her disposal. But more than a mechanical act, *imaging back* accentuates the filmmaker's position, locating her in the broader context of the filmed event. *Imaging back* is the filmmaker's mediated vision and expression. The actual screening then, is its "arrival" experienced multi-sensorily by the spectator.

*Bodying back*, on the other hand, is the bodily and multisensory encounter of the spectator with the film material, constructed by the filmmaker, that stimulates affective qualities and bodily sensations. It is also considered a co-performance, a partial stepping into the position of the filmmaker, accessing the "magic" of the represented subject captured by the film.

In the interplay of *imaging back* and *bodying back*, the spectator's vision is actively "worked out" so that the dimension of the viewed-visible connects with the political context of its "arrival" to a new space and time. Viewed at another historical time and space by the spectator, the film experience becomes a conceptual bridge that heightens similarities and differences, identification and non-identification, of immersion as well as critical distance. In this sense, the documentary film may serve as a cognitive and sentient trigger capable of transposing meaningful imagination into collective action.

*Imaging back* and *bodying back* are overlapping and complementary processes experienced by both filmmaker and the viewer, exceeding the confines of visual and auditory faculties. As Sobchack succinctly puts it, the film experience is a

...direct and mediated experience of direct experience as mediation...Watching a film, we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved. As viewers...we spontaneously and invisibly

perform these existential acts directly for and as ourselves in relation *to* the film before us. (10)

When a thunderous marching crowd is captured on film and viewed by the audience, how do we take into account the experience, knowledge, expression, and affective qualities that are invisibly *per/formed*, experienced or enacted by the spectator? I assert that this contemporary application of the mimetic faculty, this conjuring of sensuous knowledge, experience, and expression *per/formed* by the active film spectator, provides an opportunity and fertile ground for the flourishing of political consciousness.

### Inscribing the body

"When it happened, we just had to do something. *Medyo tago kong ginagawa ito* [I did this covertly], with some fear. But at that time the feeling of the people became different. Especially at the wake. People were deeply hurt," Eva Salvador, the filmmaker recalls (Salvador, 2019, personal communication).

Salvador describes an event that throbs, a *bodily* experience of the *world* as she witnesses and experiences it unfolds through her objective and subjective act of looking, feeling, and sense-making. The filmmaker was captivated by an event that she may have not fully grasped at that very moment. Yet it is the gaping historical and political uncertainty that moved Salvador and her team to *image back* and inscribe the bodies of their subjects as well as their own. Thereby the filmmaker's film becomes a vivid postcard addressed to a future audience who may receive it and "read what was never written" (Benjamin 336).

Salvador and her creative team's work for the church-based CFA was inevitably immersive and closely linked with the ordinary people, specifically the labor and peasant groups. Before Ninoy's death, Salvador's team had been busy filming labor strikes, student rallies, and gathering interviews of human rights victims under Martial Law. To differentiate themselves from other media, they were rather called the "Welcome media" alluding to their parallel role as a church-based organization that welcomes all those who need help (Salvador, 2019, personal communication). In describing how they shot the film, Salvador recalls:

Spiritually, there was a "force" guiding us. I remember a scene at the wake at the cathedral sa

[at] España [street] where there were long lines of people going to the wake. As in, maybe 5 blocks or more. I mean, imagine the exposure? *Ang dali silang pagbabarilin* [They can be gunned down easily]. We went into the church, shot the wake...and it was so overwhelming seeing ordinary people breaking down when they saw Ninoy's face. I saw where they were exiting. I said let's interview them there. I need to capture that emotion. (Salvador, personal communication 2019)

Because the so-called main event was the wake of Aquino, it was expected that the focus of the shooting was on his remains and the family members that surround the hearse. Instead, the film traverses the crowd to converse with individuals who came from various walks of life. The people approached by Salvador's team did not shy away from the camera and the microphone, and their utterances reveal a tinge of nascent political awakening. Anchored by this intuitive, invisible "guiding force," Salvador's team proffered a kind of seeing or witnessing that foregrounds the expression and thoughts of the people with utmost respect, putting them in equal footing with other social "actors." As her camera hovers over the swelling crowd, what is unseen yet very much present in the process of her *imaging back* is the state-initiated repression and violence still at play but surprisingly overpowered by the sheer volume of people.

Gaines explains that *imaging back* is "to represent their own faces and bodies...and to show them against a backdrop of the historical conflicts within which they lost or triumphed" (95). In this sense, the filmmaker has performed the mimetic faculty by acting on the urge to do something. The filmmaker may have no idea at all of the consequences unfolding in front of her camera. Vague as it may be at the first instance, the filmmaker keenly observes and evaluates an unfolding reality that is always on the run, or as Trinh Minh-ha aptly puts it, a "reality [that] runs away, reality denies reality" (99, 101). More so, the filmmaker here is not an innocent onlooker but spatially and politically positioned, a dynamic body simultaneously experiencing, documenting, expressing, and generating knowledge.

Through the act of filming and a 'body-first' mode of knowing (Taussig, 1993), Salvador and her team were able to seal a fragment of history, incarnating the collective aspiration of the people, into the film medium. The film body then becomes the product of

the filmmaker's *imaging back*, that in turn, serves as a "bridge" by and through which further mediation comes into play as it encounters its audience in another space and time. As Taussig alludes in his notion of "sympathetic magic," it is through the copy, or in this case, the film, that history can be made accessible. This enables the reactivation of its potent "powers" of affecting people in multiple ways.

To examine the film material further, let us take specific parts and try to analyze how *imaging back* and *bodying back* are exemplified thereby effecting political mimesis.

### Reclaiming images, conjuring power

There was only black screen. Then we hear Ninoy's voice warning the media to be very quick at the moment he steps out of the plane, anticipating that he might be shot. The sound of a plane touching down the runway follows. A gunshot was heard. The film then cuts quickly to a tight shot of Ninoy's face, bloodstained, lying cold inside a coffin. These are the first few shots in the opening sequence of *11 Days in August*.

Doña Aurora Aquino, Ninoy's mother, then appears, recounting with such calmness and resolve, consciously avoiding eye contact with the cameras, how she failed to dissuade her son from returning from exile. The film then quickens pace as it shows actual footage of Ninoy escorted by uniformed men. Suddenly, chaos erupted. The camera was shrugged away from the plane's emergency staircase. Gun shots followed. Sprawled in the airport tarmac were two bodies, that of Ninoy in white suit, and another body in blue, that of Rolando Galman, the alleged assassin.

These first shots of the film alone have powerfully encapsulated its main statement—a murder unfolds under the watch of authorities. Positioning Ninoy's bloodstained cadaver at the beginning of the film, is to

reclaim an image that was repeatedly denied exposure from any mainstream media outlet. Here, the viewer is made to see what the regime dares to conceal—a glaring evidence of brutality. By this mode of *imaging back*, the filmmaker provided a raw visual access to the slain bodies and to the actual rampage minutes before the first shot was fired. The viewers, sitting in another time and place, were made to experience and share the moments leading to the assassination. Similar to how the filmmaker encountered the event, the viewer is also offered a "body-first" mode of knowing through the multi-sensory constructs afforded by the film. But more than the significant sharing of experience, the viewer according to Shobchack,

is always at some level aware of the double and reversible nature of cinematic perception, that is, of perception as expression, of perception as a process of *mediating* consciousness' relations with the world. The viewer, therefore, shares cinematic space with the film but must also negotiate it, contribute to and perform the constitution of its experiential significance. (Shobchack 10)

It is along this line that *bodying back* operates at the level of the overall sensual experience and perception of the viewer. The specific footage showing the visual and auditory elements of Ninoy's assassination brought a plethora of arguments and discussions that bleed beyond the screen. The viewer's access to Ninoy's image in the tarmac serves as an anchor from where one engages into meaningful understanding, notwithstanding the mediated perception and expression already inscribed by the filmmaker. Various re-enactments were done in aid of investigation by both government-initiated bodies and independent groups. These iterations were presented and debated upon profusely because of their contending interpretations pertaining to the Aquino assassination.



Figure 1. (from left) Ninoy, escorted by AVESCOM personnel upon arrival; bodies of Ninoy (in white suit) and Galman (in blue) sprawled in the tarmac; Ninoy's uncleansed body viewed by people during his wake.



There are two contending parties that are *bodying back*, mediating the people's judgment and perception of the event several weeks or months after the 1983 assassination. One is that of the military and the other is that of the opposition and independent bodies calling for justice. For the opposition and independent bodies, the motivation of their *bodying back* is to reveal that the authorities had total control of the situation and therefore the assassin could be from among the military escorts. On the other hand, the military version pushes for the lone-communist assassin theory, who appears to be extremely cunning or well-connected to have penetrated the tightly secured airport tarmac just to deliver the fatal blow on Ninoy.

In the process of watching the film, there is a "doubling" of the experience and at the same time a reversal of the cinematic perception, an intimate encounter and critical distance. This stage is very important to note because it is in this specific phase of the mediation process that the "invisible" and otherwise intentionally concealed elements are brought to the fore for examination and critique. True enough, the film footage became a reference to many elements surrounding the incident, such as the movement, physical appearance, and disposition of the military escorts, the interval of shots and captured voices heard during the incident, the position of key witnesses in relation to ground zero to assume that they have witnessed the actual shooting, and the overall atmosphere of terror and fear that pervades the event. This explains why the government has enforced strict censorship and control over the images of the Aquino assassination, to the point of confiscating film negatives from photographers, intimidating camera operators, and practically any possible eyewitness of the event.

Throughout the film, Ninoy's body is the central theme and object. Dead, yet invisibly acting upon people who gaze at his appearance. It is as if by contemplating at Ninoy face, one acquires a certain shamanistic magic or strength comparable to how Filipinos fanatically revere the image and celebrate the feast of the Black Nazarene. To quote Horacio Paredes:

The face with its singularly haunting look and the smudges that the final violence left will haunt the Filipino people for a long time. Like Jose Rizal's final act by turning towards the sun and their bullets just before death, Ninoy's enigmatic look may well be his final victory. (Paredes in *Mr. & Ms. SE*, Sept. 9, 1983)

Between interviews of Ninoy's mother, Doña Aurora, his widow Cory Aquino, and other family members, Salvador provided not only a glimpse of the people, but a generous coverage of their massive bodily formations from afar and some touching emotional moments taken in close-ups. To quote from Salvador's remarks about the film:

As director, I wanted a narrative from the actual people themselves who were involved... who can tell the story which people might want to hear from them directly. I guess I did not want an omnipresent voice narrating a story. Instinctively, I did not want a mediation. But of course, my editing itself was a mediation. Looking back, maybe there was too much of the "others" always telling the news story, the others—Marcos media—who could not be relied on to tell the facts or provide truths. (Salvador, personal communication 2019)

Covering a massive event at that time must have been very challenging, as compared to how filmmakers nowadays have the access to sophisticated communication and locative technologies. Salvador deployed her team in five (5) subgroups which were assigned in specific spots: the Sto. Domingo Church, the Welcome rotunda along España road, Quiapo underpass and bridge (the site where the yearly Black Nazarene procession is held); the Metropolitan Theater, Luneta Park, and Sucat, Parañaque where the cemetery is located. They have strategically identified high rise buildings from where they could get a wide shot of the hearse surrounded by the crowd, which estimated to have reached 100,000 to half a million. To shoot people up-close, they will have to weave themselves through the crowd and then drive to the next shooting spot.

Several interesting shots that inform viewers of the team's location while shooting and their point of view in relation to their subjects was when the camera follows a crippled man who quickens his steps to catch up with the pace of the marchers and a shot where a woman extends a glass of water to the cameraman showing the filmmakers' hand reaching out. Another shot reveals a truck full of media people and photographers, subtly implying Salvador's critical distance from the established media and a careful hesitation of becoming visible.

In Salvador's closer shots of the people, we see traces of the marchers' tired faces drenched in sweat or



Figure 2. (from left) Gutter-deep flood did not deter Ninoy's funeral marchers; a woman distributes water in plastic cups to the crowd and to the cameraman; a man in crutches joins the funeral march.

the sudden rain shower on exhausted but jubilant faces; the gutter-deep flood that marchers tread on, and the frantic crowd after a lightning struck a tree in Luneta park that killed one and injured several others. We also hear the marchers singing “Bayan Ko” [My Country] a popular patriotic song sung by people behind Ninoy’s hearse, and the hisses and jeers of the crowd whenever they see a Metrocom police along the funeral route or when a government-owned helicopter hovers over the marching crowd. From these observations and captured moments inscribed in the film, I would say that *11 Days in August* succeeded in *imaging back* the body of Ninoy and that of the people, to subvert, rather than simply record the repressive reality of the period.

### An orchestra of bodies and voices

If the existence of a film as a “viewing-view/ viewed-view implicates a body” (Sobchack 133), *11 Days of August* is a composite of multiple bodies and voices and as such, puts forward different angles and approaches from which the event can be seen. It was deliberately decided by the filmmaker that the film will simply put the facts and images straight with as little intervention as possible. This means no Griersonian voice-over narration or commentary, a striking contrast to another earlier documentary produced by the state, entitled *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* (1974, Dik Trofeo).

*Kasaysayan ng Lahi* covers the grand inaugural parade of the Folk Arts Theater utilizing thousands of warm bodies in a historical pageantry. The film opens up with the following voice-over narration:

Man builds a city, and the city gives him power, and the ultimate measure of glory. On these shores, the city rises, seat of culture and civilization, to serve the noblest of aspirations: Man’s quest for immortality...These times urge

the Filipino to know himself, to rediscover his past, and cultural beginnings, to give life today to an art and architecture which shall live in generations of Filipinos. (*Kasaysayan ng Lahi*, 1974)

The *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* film and the parade, as grand state-funded productions, were artistically crafted to encompass the symbolic orchestration of the arts, of reclaimed and gentrified spaces, of history and progress such that it becomes a spectacular choreography of willing bodies applauding Martial Law and affirming the Marcoses’ narrative of greatness. *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* is proof that the state is aware of the film medium’s potential, as it records performances and cultural rituals, taking control over the docility of bodies, of the rhythm of life itself. The point of difference, however, between the two films is that the other one is overtly “staged” and “performed” as in a theatrical production. Whereas Salvador’s *11 Days of August*, captures the spontaneity of uncommissioned bodies, co-performing the making of history rather than simply reenacting it.

Critics may bluntly disparage Salvador’s film as simply a montage of footage from several sources, incorporated with their own shots of the marches. Contrary to this, what I actually see is a careful orchestration of voices and intuitively choreographed bodies captured in film.

The footage of Ninoy in the airport, if viewed separately from the film, *11 Days in August*, would perhaps be just like any other trivial evidence. But Salvador’s handling of this clip in relation to the preceding and succeeding shots transformed an otherwise journalistic video into a compelling essayistic film. Salvador used the interview footage of Doña Aurora, with the old lady’s melancholic tone and crisp accent, as the thread that stitched together the narrative of Ninoy’s death. The rhythmic contrast

between the stoicism of the Aquino women and the frantic commotion inside the plane when Ninoy was killed became the pivotal point of the film's narrative, metaphorically disrupting the fragile equilibrium of the world that the film simultaneously depicts and mirrors back to the real world. The film's first act succinctly reveals the dilemma of a "leadership vacuum" in the opposition upon Ninoy's demise, the crumbling of a political "center," and emergence of the radical left. But here we are with Salvador's alternative filmmaking perspective visually steering us into a very different notion of what is "normal" at the same time foreshadowing the entry of the people as social actors, prefiguring a "certain rhythm of Philippine history... not necessarily a minor partner to the assigned "stable" order of things" (Ileto 166).

The second act of the film ushers us to images of people from different walks of life, lining up to get a glimpse of Ninoy, first when the body was in his residence in Times Street, then to Tarlac, his hometown, and back to Sto. Domingo Church in Manila. We were also provided with close-up shots of peoples' faces, showing their grief as they look onto Ninoy's face and interviews of ordinary people opening up their thoughts and feelings about his death. I would say that the act of looking at the dead body during the funeral ensued a complex process of identification, a mimetic potential in itself, promising more once projected on screen and circulated to a broader audience. As Taussig aptly puts it, "the wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original. To the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power" (xiv).

The long funeral march also reveals different political "bodies" involved in the event. Prominently positioned in the crowd was a huge banner of martyrs identified with the militant left where Ninoy was purposely aligned. This clearly shows that the people,

especially those who were victims of martial law, have identified with Ninoy, turning him into a symbol of their struggle.

In the real world, the outpouring of bodies shown in *11 Days of August* was mostly a spontaneous act by a combination of politically-organized and unaffiliated individuals who were drawn by the euphoria of the event. In the middle part of the film, Salvador overlays a popular Filipino protest theme song "Bayan Ko" that serves as background sound while people march alongside Ninoy's hearse. Whereas the music stimulates an emotional response in the viewer, what was most remarkable was when the music finally ended and then the real sound or the actual "throbbing" of the shot emerges.

One will not instantly notice the sound of people singing as the camera pans. At first, one hears it faintly, but as the camera moves much closer to the crowd, we then realize that it was the marchers who were actually singing the song "Bayan Ko" along with the surge of body movements of the crowd. At times the singing is replaced by chants of "Ninoy, Ninoy!", "Marcos, tuta!" [Marcos lapdog], a clapping of hands in unison as Ninoy's hearse arrives at a spot.

This rhythm in Salvador's film, achieved in part by editing and by keenly taking immersive observational shots, is a form of "musicality," as it exudes a kind of throbbing, a semblance of a collective heartbeat emanating from the shot itself and from the whole film, hand holding the viewer into a sensuous experience. Musicality here does not pertain to the literal sound or music which is either overlaid or embedded in the actual footage. Rather, musicality is that cinematic rhythmic pattern that creates movements and emotions even in the absence of sound.

In *11 Days of August*, musicality was orchestrated as a complex, multilayered track embodied by the documentary film's subjects, each one treading



Figure 3. (from left) A view of the crowd along Roxas boulevard in Manila; a banner carried by militant groups showing Ninoy along with other martyrs of the Marcos dictatorship; front shot of the truck carrying Ninoy's hearse shows a man waving a Philippine flag.



its own pace and trajectory through their bodily representations, visually and auditorily alternating or overlapping as the film unfolds. Activating this kind of musicality prompts the viewer to absorb cinematic rhythm via feelings and emotions, to let it linger in one's senses and imagination, subverting or bleeding through the margins of the frame. In the case of *11 Days of August*, the film signals a musicality of a collective body, the pulse of people power at its nascent state.

The film's musicality therefore is a blind spot, a felt presence that remains invisible yet constitutive of the whole filmic experience. As Sobchack asserts,

The visible is never the whole of vision...The content of our sight is never simply all there is for us...The content of our sight has special contours that suggest other possible views in excess of our present one, and the boundaries of our vision do not bring our existence and experience to a sensible end at the corners of our eyes. (293–294)

### People power and the “ghost in the machine”

In any film viewing, we are invited by the “film body” to dwell in and with it, to be *enworlded*, so to speak. This becomes evident in *11 Days in August* when our own bodies experience the rhythm and musicality of the film as a signifying presence. Without this symbiotic process, without the film body and the spectator being *enworlded* into the film, the flickering images on screen will simply remain a set of meaningless shadows.

In this sense, the *enworlding* of different bodies emanating from the film and that of the spectator who is inhabiting another space and time, can be considered a haunting of the “ghost in the machine.” It is a mode of cinematic conjuring, a co-mingling of the *imaged back* bodies with that of the spectator. By such an encounter, “sympathetic magic” is awakened thereby liberating discursive meanings from audiences with whom the “ghosts in the machine” have touched.

The film experience, however, is always incomplete. We are transposed by cinema without totally or completely transforming us. Yet it is in its incompleteness, in this heightened recognition of identification and non-identification, that a text or a film acquires subversive tendencies. This should be perceived with optimism because here lies the potential

act of *bodying back* and the viewer's initiative in actively filling the gap.

In experiencing and “re-reading” the film apart from the intentions of its creator, the spectator enters the act of production, of sense-making, and of *re-visioning*. What is potentially achieved is “a total visibility which is to be re-created and which liberates the phantoms captive in it” (Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind* as quoted by Sobchack 90). In the case of *11 Days of August*, the phantoms that were emancipated by viewers between 1983–1985 after watching the film were manifold and exuberant. People began to reclaim their voices and the sense of hope became the antidote to fear. The encounter with “the ghosts in machine” in *11 Days of August* kindled the spectator's mimetic faculty thereby ensuing political mimesis by prefiguring the early manifestations of “people power” depicted in the film, long before its realization in the 1986 uprising that toppled a dictator.

However, four decades later, wayward ghosts continue to haunt the Filipino people, disrupting our long slumber. After experiencing two Aquino presidents, and currently, the son and namesake of the dictator assuming the presidency, the country's history is poised for a makeover, if not a return, of the authoritarian ideals of Ferdinand Marcos senior. This could be the manifestation of Taussig's warning that the return of specters from the past will proliferate in the advent of new imaging technologies as it facilitates the activation of “sympathetic magic” in various forms.

A film of this kind viewed at a particular historical point through the lens of political mimesis, may serve as a productive exercise in spurring critical examination of the gaps and cracks of the ascribed democracy restored in 1986. It propels the contemporary spectator to survey other media artifacts that may have the same potential but wielded for contending purposes.

Revisiting this film can also be both reflexive and prescriptive. It draws contemporary audiences to reflect on where the Filipino people have gone complacent and loosened their grasp in the process of *imaging back* and *bodying back* of the Ninoy Aquino assassination culminating in the 1986 EDSA. Lessons drawn from this experience may then serve to prescribe action points that will bring us to recognize and confront the remaining ghosts that need to be expelled from our present-day machines and media technologies. A timely reminder that in banishing the specters of the dictator, rehearsing people power becomes a relentless necessity.

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