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## **Political Conjuncture and Scholarly Disjunctures: Reflections on Studies of the Philippine State under Marcos**

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# Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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## Professorial Address

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Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.

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# Professorial Address

FILOMENO V. AGUILAR JR.

# Political Conjuncture and Scholarly Disjunctures

## Reflections on Studies of the Philippine State under Marcos

This professorial address contends that a scholarly, systematic, and impartial study of Marcos's authoritarian rule is necessary, given the highly politicized interpretations of the past bequeathed to younger generations through textbooks and social media as well as the Philippine academic community's general inability to analyze the defunct regime and to influence public discourse and shape public history. Social scientists must tap new sources of information, such as the Marcos Papers, to produce truthful and nuanced narratives of the past, even as they must endeavor to understand the Marcosian social fantasy and the sources of Filipino authoritarianism, which can illumine both the past and the present.

**KEYWORDS: MARTIAL LAW · PUBLIC HISTORY · SOCIAL FANTASY · HISTORIOGRAPHY · REVISIONISM**

I thank the conference organizers, Drs. Koki Seki and Itaru Nagasaka of Hiroshima University, for inviting me to give this keynote address. Offhand I must admit that I have nothing new to say, nothing you don't already know. The list of papers and paper presenters that address the conference theme, "Three Decades of the Post-EDSA Philippines: Continuity, Discontinuity, and Emergence," is impressive, and I have learned much from listening to the panels. What I hope to do is to share some reflections on scholarship on the Philippine state under the rule of Ferdinand Marcos. However, please allow me to begin by saying a few words about this historic city where this conference is being held.

### Three Perspectives on the Atomic Bomb

No one ought to depart from here without having visited the Peace Memorial Museum and Park. As elements of public history, the surviving artifacts, photographs, and new multimedia technologies help us vividly imagine the horrors caused by the US decision to drop the atomic bomb here at 8:15 in the morning of 6 August 1945. A compact settlement, Hiroshima had military installations that made it a target for a weapon of mass destruction, which at that time had just been invented. The team of the Manhattan Project made the bomb within twenty-seven months at the cost of US\$2.2 billion. The untold human suffering that the atomic bomb caused, especially on ordinary civilians, on noncombatants, can be seen in the museum, and no one can visit it without feeling horrified. The bomb instantly killed an estimated 80,000 civilians and military personnel and obliterated over half of Hiroshima. Many more would die later from the effects of the radiation fall out.

Notwithstanding the many heartrending stories, Hiroshima's narrativization has not been simple and straightforward. Understandably, the Japanese side emphasizes "atomic victimization" and the pacifist movement that has arisen in response to the horrors of nuclear war. It is the narrative of the vanquished. Some argue that it occludes the bigger context of the war and Japan's role in it, what Benedict Giamo (2003, 704) refers to as the "forbidden territory" in the Japanese nationalist discourse.

Expectedly, the view from the victor's side has been very different. Across the Pacific, a dominant interpretation justifies the dropping of the bomb as a necessary evil in order to compel the Japanese to surrender. In other words, this view maintains that, had the bomb not been dropped,

the Second World War would have dragged on and more atrocities would have been committed on the ground. Incidentally, the Boeing plane that carried a camera to photograph the atomic bomb's explosion and its effects was later called Necessary Evil. In the West, this interpretation was virtually unquestioned during the first twenty years after the war. That the atomic bomb was a "necessary evil" was undisputed. Firm was the belief in its decisive role in bringing the Second World War to a close. In Ward Wilson's (2007) schema, this represents the first of three periods of Western scholarship on Japan's surrender.

"In 1965, however, a revisionist school began examining the decision to use the bomb more closely, raising moral questions about the use of nuclear weapons and asking probing questions about the motives of U.S. leaders. They continued to believe, however, that the bomb was instrumental in ending the war" (ibid., 162). In this perspective, the bombing was "evil," but it was still deemed "necessary."

Since 1990, a third perspective has emerged from scholarship that has been aided by access to "recently declassified documents and extensive research into Japanese, Soviet, and U.S. archives" (ibid., 163). As a result, "New questions have been raised about the centrality of nuclear weapons in coercing Japan to end the war. In particular, analysis of the strategic situation from a Japanese perspective has led some scholars to assert that the Soviet Union's entry into the Pacific war may have been as important or even more important in coercing Japan's leaders" to surrender (ibid.). It is argued that there is no evidence for the conventional assertion that "the atomic bombing so shocked Japanese leaders that they agreed to unconditional surrender" (ibid., 173). Evidence suggests that the Japanese leaders did not consider the bombing decisive; neither did US leaders expect it to be so. "The bomb project staff [in the US] had set a schedule that called for ten bombs to be ready by the end of November [1945]" (ibid., 174). The position the third perspective asserts is simple: the bomb was evil *and* unnecessary.

For us specialists on the Philippines, specifically in connection with the Marcos state, a number of lessons from Hiroshima's past can be gleaned. Rather obviously, discrepant historical interpretations arise depending on one's positionality as either victor or vanquished. There are always two sides to a story. Moreover, interpretations of the past—although all seemingly guided by a moral standpoint—differ, and these interpretations change over time, making possible qualitatively different moral assertions. More

importantly, scholarly research and access to untapped sources are strategic in advancing new historical perspectives, as evinced in the third and latest approach to understanding the end of the war. Truth matters. Amid the contentiousness of the past, scholars have a distinct role to play in finding evidence and weaving them into a convincing narrative. In fact, what is striking is the simplicity and directness of the message that comes across from the painstaking research by the scholarly community that, over the years, have questioned the proposition about the necessity of bombing this city as a means to end the war.

Be that as it may, we note that the third perspective on what happened here in Hiroshima in 1945 (or seventy-three years ago) is hardly audible in public discourse. In fact, the first perspective—on the atomic bombing as a necessary evil—remains the dominant view because it remains preponderant in academia as well as in public history, particularly in the United States. Indeed, public history is the arena through which historical knowledge can reach the public. Because understandably scholars write for an academic audience, public history has emerged to communicate the findings of scholarly research and to share them meaningfully, that is, in a way that makes sense to the public at large. However, public history is far from monolithic: some views are dominant, while others are marginalized. Public history is a site of discursive struggle.

### **The Marcos Papers**

When it comes to the Marcos dictatorship, we have to admit that few of us in the Philippine social science community (myself included) have been concerned about its historiography. Few of us have bothered to unravel the regime's inner workings, despite the lifting of the repressive atmosphere under Marcos's reign and the availability of sources since the strongman's downfall.

Into the hands of the Philippine Commission for Good Government (PCGG) fell for safekeeping the volumes of papers that were left behind in Malacañang after the Marcoses fled the country in 1986. Initially the Marcos Papers were used to try to recover the dictator's ill-gotten wealth and thus were indexed by the PCGG for legal purposes. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), which has joint custodianship of these papers, is responsible for cataloging them as historical materials. However, nearly twenty-eight years passed before a definite move was taken

to organize the Marcos Papers and make them accessible to researchers. In late 2014 until mid-2015, historian Meynardo Mendoza undertook the task of selecting approximately 600,000 documents from the mass of papers for digitization, as researchers can only access the digitized copies rather than the original documents that are kept in a high-security vault. At the moment, the NHCP has catalogued only about 30 percent of these Marcos Papers.

Given the relative recency of researchers' access to the Marcos Papers, I know of only one journal article, published in the June 2018 issue of *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, that has utilized them to unearth some aspects of Marcos's rule. The article by Miguel Paolo Reyes, research associate at the University of the Philippines's (UP) Third World Studies Center, titled "Producing Ferdinand E. Marcos, the Scholarly Author," was originally presented at the conference, "The Remains of a Dictatorship," which this journal organized in August 2017 precisely to generate papers on the Marcos dictatorship.

It is widely known that *Tadhana: The History of the Filipino People*, the hefty two-volume series on Philippine history published under the name of Ferdinand Marcos as author, was actually written by a group of professional historians led by Serafin Quiason Jr. and Samuel K. Tan (Churchill 2018). But no one had inquired about the authorship of other Marcos books that came out during his reign until Reyes (2018) utilized the methods of book history to demonstrate that thirteen books supposedly authored by Marcos were in fact written by minions, particularly Adrian Cristobal, who played key roles in constructing the fiction of a scholar-president. The first and most crucial among these books published in 1971, *Today's Revolution: Democracy*, according to Reyes (ibid., 184–85), was beset by plagiarism and factual errors. In 1973 *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines* came out. In his memo to the president dated 27 February 1973, Cristobal emphasized that *Notes on the New Society* would show "that the President considered every possible alternative before taking the momentous decision of 22 September 1972" (ibid., 187) to declare martial law—note: 22, not 21 September, which would explain the announcement of martial law in the early evening of 23 September. More Marcos books came out from 1974 to 1985, largely based on materials recycled from books previously published under Marcos's name. According to Reyes (ibid., 203), "Cristobal gave Marcos a recyclable text that justified Marcos's continued rule."

Significantly, Reyes reveals Marcos's diary entry of 8 October 1970: "I often wonder what I will be remembered in history for." Beside it he scribbled his own answer, providing a list of possibilities: "Scholar? Military hero? Builder? . . . Strong rallying point, or a weak tyrant?" (ibid., 209; Rempel 1993, xiii). Interestingly, his first thought was the halo of a scholar. That Marcos breached norms of intellectual honesty is not surprising; the bigger question is why he desired the reputation of a scholar—yes, the reputation that you and I are working hard to establish. Although it is easy to speculate about it, Marcos's scholarly dream remains an enigma in relation to his dictatorship.

The only other study by an academic that I am aware of that used the Marcos Papers is the important monograph of political scientist Belinda Aquino (1987) titled *Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos* published by the UP College of Public Administration. The study reveals the extent to which the Marcoses "plundered" the country, providing details on its "dynamics" such as the creation of state monopolies for cronies, offshore business operations, diversion and misappropriation of foreign aid and loans, the direct raiding of state financial operations, as well as corruption within the military. The size of the plunder was estimated to be between US\$5 and \$10 billion. As then Dean of the College of Public Administration Gabriel U. Iglesias put it, the extent of this greed "is a world record, and mind-boggling, to say the least" (ibid., iii).

Beyond the gargantuan thievery, there are many more questions about the Marcos state that await answers, such as: Why did Marcos declare martial law? In what ways did personal factors on Marcos's part interact with structural factors, including the armed communist and Moro secessionist movements, eventuating in authoritarian rule? How did Marcos prepare, structure, and coordinate a state system—with a multiplicity of offices and institutions—that enabled him to deploy the power of one-man rule across a variegated archipelago? How did Marcos share power with what in effect was a ruling coalition or an authoritarian elite in a manner that consolidated his rule? What were the different elements and levels of engagement in his ruling coalition, and how did these different elements relate to each other and to him? Think of the military, the technocrats, the regional warlords, the sectoral cronies, the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) politicians, the high-ranking bureaucrats, and sundry consultants in the academe who in different degrees were part of the ruling elite. Did they regard Marcos as a "rallying

point"? How did Marcos create the impression of a unified state despite the absence of homogeneity and uniformity within governmental organizations and in the society at large? How did Marcos transition from the use of crude coercive mechanisms to something less coercive and more hegemonic? Why was there a need for a semblance of elections for a rubber-stamp parliament in 1984? How did Marcos manufacture consent from different sectors of society? To what extent did he intentionally deploy nationalist rhetoric as a legitimization strategy for his regime? What authoritarian "toolkits" did Marcos utilize to preempt and deal with domestic as well as international threats? What were the sources of weakness—including but going beyond his personal health—that unraveled Marcos's authoritarian regime? What roles did the US play in the establishment, maintenance, and dissolution of the Marcos dictatorship? These and many more questions can be raised about Marcos's rule—not to mention its comparative aspects with, say, Suharto's rule in New Order Indonesia. Given the monumental nature of this project, we need not work alone; in fact, there is great room for collaboration with colleagues within and across disciplines. It can be our common project.

In any event, Reyes and Aquino have demonstrated the possibilities of utilizing the Marcos Papers for research purposes. Undoubtedly, so much valuable information is waiting to be uncovered in this collection of state and personal papers, which we hope can provide answers to questions about the Marcos dictatorship. Even if some of the most sensitive and incriminating documents might have been personally brought by the Marcoses with them as they fled the country and are therefore no longer part of the Marcos Papers, it would still be possible to see through the "cracks in the parchment curtain," as William Henry Scott (1982) asserted in relation to Spanish colonial documents. In fact, we may already suspect or know intuitively many aspects of Marcos's martial law regime; and although we are fully cognizant of its effects and consequences, it is another thing to enter the secret chamber, so to speak, and find the evidence, especially evidence of the incontrovertible kind. We should not underestimate what new historiography can arise from the painstaking work of sifting through those papers.

### **The Surprise of "Revisionism"**

The task of uncovering the Marcos state, of writing its ethnography, has stalled since the works that came out soon after the strongman's fall. It has

taken thirty-two years since Marcos was booted out of power for a study to see print that proved, for instance, that the Marcos state engaged in the deliberate manufacture of the ruler's image. In fact, since 1986 collectively we as a people decided to move on, with the country never having had something like South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established in 1996.

After Marcos died in Hawaii in 1989, we became even more complacent. Two years later members of his family began to return to the Philippines. In 1992 Imelda Marcos ran for the presidency and lost; however, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. was elected representative of the second district of Ilocos Norte. In 1995 Marcos Jr. ran for the senate and lost, while Imelda was elected representative of her home province of Leyte. It seemed that the Marcoses were a spent force, certainly at the national level. Support for the Marcoses in their home provinces was dismissed as understandable and largely confined to those places. In 1993 Pres. Fidel Ramos lifted the ban on the return to the Philippines of the dictator's remains; while objecting to a state burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, Ramos allowed the remains to be flown to Ilocos Norte.

Fifteen years after the failure of his initial attempt to become senator, Bongbong Marcos was elected senator, having campaigned on a platform as a progressive politician with a track record as governor of Ilocos Norte since 1998, while denying his parents ever committed crimes during the dictatorship. Indeed, by 2010—or twenty-four years after his downfall—the dictator's survivors were again well placed in the country's political system. In that year, Imee replaced Bongbong as Ilocos Norte governor, while Imelda was elected congresswoman of her husband's province. When we look back, we discern a pattern of an apparently well-crafted long-range plan of the Marcoses (after their national-level failures in 1992–1995) to retake Malacañang through the traditional route of reentering politics at the local level in a stepwise progression to national politics.

While they planned, we looked the other way. We barely noticed that textbooks used in elementary schools had continued to glorify Marcos and his protracted presidency, extolling the merits of martial law and the New Society. Our peripheral vision did not perceive that there were many schoolteachers and even some of our university colleagues who genuinely looked back with nostalgia to the Marcos regime. We were caught unawares that Marcos had created and recreated a followership, until finally we

were jolted about the very real possibility that a Marcos would return to Malacañang when the 2016 elections brought Bongbong within a stone's throw of vice presidential power.

In 2013 UP's Third World Studies Center held a series of public forums, publishing the thick proceedings in *Kasarinlan* under the title "Marcos Pa Rin! Ang Mga Pamana at Sumpa ng Rehimeng Marcos" (Marcos Ever More! The Legacies and Curse of the Marcos Regime). This concerted effort to revisit the Marcos dictatorship was precipitated by the jolt that came not from the electoral victory of a Marcos but from the renaming of the College of Business Administration to the Cesar E. A. Virata School of Business (Virata, among other designations, was Marcos's finance minister from 1970 to 1986)," which brought home the realization that "the years of the Marcos dictatorship were either being forgotten or deliberately sanitized" (Reyes and Jose 2012–2013, 7). Despite some academic publications on Marcos and martial law before 2016, it was only with the son's foreseeable electoral victory and Pres. Rodrigo Duterte's decision to bury Marcos's remains at the Libingan ng mga Bayani that it really dawned upon us as an epistemic community that the past was coming back with a vengeance. Surprised, only then did we in academia exclaim, almost (but definitely not) in unison, "Historical revisionism!"

And yet, in one of those fora organized by the Third World Studies Center in 2013, political scientist Amado Mendoza (2012–2013, 128) explained: "The reason why the Marcoses do not need rehabilitation is because we failed. We failed to precisely revise history. Those of us who went through the struggle against the dictatorship, we failed. We did not reach out far enough so that this image of history could be changed." Historian Ferdinand Llanes (2012–2013) also spoke in the same forum, stating that revisionism per se is legitimate if it is the product of new evidence or new techniques of understanding what happened in the past. Llanes (*ibid.*, 130) observed that the Marcos camp was involved in propagating a "narrative of denial," and yet he also observed, like Mendoza, that the "prevailing or dominant view of martial law" had no need of revising because from textbooks to social media martial law was spoken of in positive terms.

In 1986, everything seemed very clear to us. In our euphoria, we forgot that some cried when Marcos fell from power. We never imagined that the vanquished would reassert their own narrative. Thus, the historical

revisionism we now decry owes to our collective failure to revise and rewrite history after Marcos's downfall.

### **Academic Studies of the Marcos State**

I am not saying that there had been no scholarly studies of Marcos's rule and the Marcos family's excesses—not to mention the nonacademic writings and personal testimonies, such as Primitivo Mijares's (1976) *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos*. We should also recall Ricardo Manapat's (1991) *Some are Smarter than Others: The History of Marcos' Crony Capitalism*, which first circulated as a forty-page pamphlet in 1979.

For obvious reasons, there was hardly any study on Marcos's rule published in the Philippines for the greater part of the Marcos dictatorship. Undoubtedly exceptional is lawyer-sociologist Perla Makil's "Mobility by Decree: The Rise and Fall of Philippine Influentials since Martial Law," a research report put out by the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC), Ateneo de Manila University, in 1975, the height of Marcosian hegemony. With limited circulation and simply mimeographed, this research report that compares 1969 and 1975 data is strictly not about the Marcos state; it provides social science data showing that, expectedly, influence became concentrated in a few people after the declaration of martial law; however, it offers the interesting information that a strong military presence was not discernible in 1975, seemingly lending "support to the government's claim that there is no military rule, in spite of the imposition of martial law" (Makil 1975, 57–58). This finding is important for regime legitimation and needs to be revisited to understand the early phase of the dictatorship, to a time before retired military officers were recycled into civilian government officials.

In 1976, under the leadership of Francisco Nemenzo Jr., the UP College of Arts and Sciences established Third World Studies, which, according to political scientist Patricio Abinales's (2010, xiii) cogent history of the center, "was designed to gradually reinsert radical thinking into a severely traumatized university." To escape the regime's surveillance, the Third World Studies avoided words like "Marxism" and "revolution" and instead utilized dependency and world-systems theories to critique the regime. In the late 1970s it put out papers critical of transnational corporations, export agriculture, and the Philippine "mode of production." These Third World Studies papers tried to critique the Marcos state but did not directly challenge it by seeking cover in theoretical language. In the late

1970s other entities, such as the IPC, also produced studies on rural poverty and landlessness, but, if anything, they were mute critiques of the Marcos regime—and often overwhelmed by studies in the modernization school.

One of the earliest edited collections on the Philippines under Marcos was published by Cornell University Press in 1979 titled, *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines*, edited by David Rosenberg. Several years passed without any major scholarly publication on the regime, except the 1982 Occasional Paper No. 5 of the Philippine Studies Program of the University of Hawai'i titled "Cronies and Enemies: The Current Philippine Scene" (Aquino 1982), with a contribution by Fr. John F. Doherty, SJ, on interlocking directorates that showed the Marcoses at the pinnacle (cf. Doherty [1979]).

Only after the evident weakness of the Marcos state after the assassination of former senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. in 1983 did several studies emerge and get published in the Philippines. In 1984 the UP Press published the multidisciplinary collection of papers presented at a UP colloquium under the title *Nation in Crisis: The University Inquires into the Present*, edited by Alexander R. Magno (1984). In the same year, the Psychological Association of the Philippines compiled the papers presented in its annual convention under the title "Our Nation in Crisis: A Psychological Perspective" (Bernas and Lolarga 1984). The Filipino scholarly community was beginning to offer various levels and types of analysis to understand the palpable crisis.

In 1985, R. J. May and Nemenzo edited a collection of papers expectantly titled *The Philippines after Marcos*, printed in Britain by Croom Helm but with seven out of the thirteen chapters contributed by Australia-based academics. Five chapters were written by Filipinos, but Nemenzo at that time was on leave from UP and was affiliated with the Australian National University. Soon after Marcos's downfall, the Asia Society assembled nine papers, four of them written by Filipinos; these papers were published in 1986 by Princeton University Press under the title *Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond*, edited by John Bresnan. Published overseas, these edited volumes were motivated by the need to understand and explain events in the Philippines to Western audiences. In 1987 came Gary Hawes's full-length study, *The Philippine State and the Marcos Regime: The Politics of Export*, published by Cornell University Press.

Once Marcos had fallen from power, the academic community in the Philippines would appear not to have felt much of a need to analyze



the defunct regime and explain it to Filipinos. In 1987, one full-length study on the declaration of martial law, which was largely conceptual rather than historiographic, appeared: Alex Brillantes's *Dictatorship and Martial Law: Philippine Authoritarianism in 1972*, based on his PhD dissertation at the University of Hawai'i. In 1988 *Dictatorship and Revolution: Roots of People's Power* was published, edited by Aurora Javier-De Dios, Petronilo Bn. Daroy, and Lorna Kalaw-Tirol. The six contributors to *Dictatorship and Revolution* analyzed the rise and fall of the Marcos dictatorship, with more than half of this thick volume devoted to the reproduction of documents as primary sources. Beyond these works that appeared in the late 1980s, nothing much was published in the Philippines on the Marcos state and the martial law regime.

In the 1990s there were initiatives to understand the events in retrospect. The effects of Marcos's rule and his downfall were studied at the local level by twelve contributors to the volume *From Marcos to Aquino: Local Perspectives on Political Transition in the Philippines*, edited by Benedict Kerkvliet and Resil Mojares and copublished by the University of Hawai'i Press and the Ateneo de Manila University Press in 1991. Of the twelve contributors, only four were Filipinos. In 1993 James Boyce's *The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era* was published by the University of Hawai'i Press.

This discussion is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of academic works that seek to understand the Marcos dictatorship and the intricacies of his complex rule. Among the studies that directly deal with the nature and dynamics of the regime, what stands out is the preponderance of Western scholarship, along with a few works by scholars from the Philippines, some of them while they were based overseas. Filipino academics seemed exhausted by the struggle to survive the dictatorship, with most of us not having had the energy and even the interest to study Marcos's rule systematically. It was as though we as an epistemic community shared in the collective trauma of all those who fought and resisted the dictatorship, and it was best not to reopen the wounds because, deep down, the scars were still fresh. For some of us, anger at the dictator, his family, and associates had made it difficult to take an academic stance of inquiry toward the dictatorship. Even after his downfall many of us continued to "demonize" the regime in a way that made it tough for us to assume a position of scholarly engagement. For many reasons then, we did not study the dictatorship whose collapse we celebrated and, in our minds, consigned to the past, buried and never to be awakened.

Many of us poured our energies in confronting the challenges of the new administration and the new administration after that and the one after that—in a word, so preoccupied were we with the present in which we lived that we did not investigate and study the Marcos state that had collapsed. Perhaps we were just like the ancients of the region that today we call Southeast Asia who were distinguished for their presentmindedness, largely fueled by the "structural amnesia" built into the cognatic kinship system that also affected leadership and the dynamics of ancient polities, *mandalas* as Oliver Wolters (1982) called them. It is a good reason for structured forgetting.

Lately, for the work of remembering, we have been supplied with the memoirs of both those who served in the regime (e.g., Enrile 2012) and those who fought and opposed it (e.g., Quimpo and Quimpo 2012). Although these recollections are important for "authenticating the self," as Mary Grace Concepcion (2018) has recently argued in reference to the autobiographies of survivors of martial law, they cannot replace the hard work of research.

The corollary of our collective shying away from studying the Marcos state was the inability of whatever scholarly knowledge there was to seep into public discourse and to shape public history. In June 2016, soon after the national elections, historian Lisandro Claudio wrote a piece in *Rappler* titled "What you didn't know: Pro-Marcos propaganda too hip for its own good." Claudio (2016) was engaged in a debate with a Marcos supporter:

I first asked him if he could name a single university-published, peer-reviewed book that endorses the Marcos regime, and got a non sequitur for a reply. I prodded further, asking, "So, no book?" to which he simply replied, "Nope."

Failing to spur dialogue, I asked him for his sources on Philippine politics during the Marcos period. He remained dismissive: "What I read in my own time is my business. What I publish via GetRealPhilippines.com is all u got." As for bothering with academic sources, Benigno believes that "Ph history academe is a tiny community of inbred minds."

In the end Claudio recommended a short list of published works by foreign authors in order that he would not be "accused of forwarding the biases of local professors . . ." (though I will insist that local academics are

just as qualified).” But, really, one would have to search high and low to find a peer-reviewed journal article by a local academic on the Marcos regime.

The attempt to provide this Marcos loyalist and the rest of the reading public a short reading list is indicative of our epistemic community’s inability to influence public discourse on the Marcos regime and the public history of the Marcos period. When *Nation in Crisis* appeared in 1984, a review by Abinales (1985, 41) optimistically stated that “the University’s role as an institution of ideas relating itself to society has been effectively fulfilled.” I do not wish to be unjust to Abinales and Claudio. It is because I am confident that they will not misunderstand me that I can cite them to make the argument that the scholarly analyses contained in the few studies on the Marcos dictatorship published by our colleagues have remained ensconced within academia, largely inaccessible to those who do not rely on us for passing grades.

### **Social Scientists and Public Discourse**

To understand our lack of influence on public discourse, we need to examine the institutional and personal contexts in which we pursue social science research and publication and the wider societal context that affects the receptivity to what we have to say.

A first and major factor for our lack of influence on public discourse is our general inability or lack of interest in writing textbooks. In the Western context, it is easy to point to the prestige and reward structure in universities that generally do not encourage textbook writing. But this is not the case in the Philippines where textbook authors acquire popularity and reap huge financial rewards. Still, many of us who conduct research and publish our studies are generally averse to writing textbooks for the tertiary but especially for the secondary level. Our collective hesitation to engage in textbook writing—a generalization from which Abinales and Claudio are in fact exempt for they have written college-level textbooks—is rather universal and applies across various subject and topical areas. Moreover, even when university-based academics are requested to review secondary-level textbook manuscripts prior to publication, the impact on the quality of high school textbooks is evidently negligible (cf. Aguilar 2017).

At the same time, textbook production is the outcome of a host of intersecting and even competing factors: the education department’s

guidelines, the publisher’s considerations, the author’s preferences and limitations, and even members of textbook boards as well as the teachers who use these textbooks. Rommel Curaming (2017) has shown the resulting political incoherence in his study of fifteen secondary history textbooks published in the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, even after the collapse of the Marcos state, high school textbook authors have had their way and have persisted in presenting a favorable and approving image of Marcos’s presidency and martial law regime.

When it comes to college-level history textbooks, the silence on martial law is revealing if we take the case of what is probably the most widely used textbook, Teodoro A. Agoncillo’s *History of the Filipino People*. Originally produced in mimeographed form in 1960, this textbook has continued to be reissued even after the author’s death in 1985. As Vernon Totanes (2010, 319) explains in an article published in *Philippine Studies*, “no other comparable work has sold as many copies.” Totanes explains the fate of one chapter titled “The Continuing Crisis,” which Agoncillo added in 1967. “Although the new chapter began with the presidential election of 1961, most of it . . . was devoted to a series of crises involving Marcos’s contentious path to the presidency, the rise of student activism, the deterioration of peace and order, and a ‘witch-hunt’ that occurred toward the end of 1966” (ibid., 331). After Marcos declared martial law in 1972, the Mass Media Council instructed Agoncillo to “delete or rewrite objectionable portions.” As Totanes (ibid., 332) reveals, however, the “reviewers were more concerned about passages involving the military, intelligence agencies, Congress, and anticommunists, not Marcos himself.” In fact, Agoncillo was on friendly terms with the autocrat. But Agoncillo did not make the required revisions because this chapter had been appended to the textbook version of which Oscar M. Alfonso had been his coauthor. Because of a personal quarrel with Alfonso whom he regarded as a “slimy traitor and skunk” (ibid., 334), Agoncillo gladly allowed this version to be disallowed publication because he had an alternative: a textbook coauthored with Milagros C. Guerrero, without the chapter on “The Continuing Crisis.” As Totanes (ibid., 336) concludes, “Agoncillo’s voluntary deletion of an entire chapter illustrates how the content and publication of history books can be shaped by political realities, as well as personal relationships, and that the authors involved do not necessarily view censorship negatively.” Alas, for base reasons, a popular textbook has remained silent about Marcos’s contentious rise to power.

Secondly, the import of academic research on Marcos's ill-gotten wealth, especially Aquino's pioneering study in 1987, has been vitiated by the lack of "validation" by the Philippine justice system. The PCGG is still pursuing about 280 pending cases that seek to recover what Marcos, his family, and their cronies plundered from the Philippine state. The Supreme Court is still supposed to be hearing cases to recover this wealth. In only three cases has the high court issued a ruling that forfeits funds and assets in favor of the Philippine government.

In the first decision, dated 15 July 2003, the Supreme Court en banc forfeited in favor of the Philippine government Swiss deposits amounting to a total of US\$658,175,373.60 as of 31 January 2002, plus interest. The second ruling, issued by the Second Division on 25 April 2012, forfeited in favor of the government US\$3,369,975 as of 1983, plus all interests and other accrued income, from all assets, properties, and funds belonging to Arelma, S.A., a Panamanian entity maintaining an account in Merrill Lynch, New York. The third ruling is a resolution of the Supreme Court First Division issued on 18 January 2017 forfeiting in favor of the government pieces of jewelry known as the Malacañang Collection that were seized soon after the Marcoses fled to Hawaii. As can be observed, only the first ruling involves the comparatively large amount of US\$658 million. The overall status of the Marcos family's wealth has not been adjudicated. Imelda is said to have quipped, "*Wala pa naman akong kaso talaga na natalo*" (I have not really lost a single case) (Llanes 2012–2013, 134). The justice system by default has provided the Marcoses and their supporters with a plausible argument that the charges of corruption against them have little factual and legal bases.

On 9 November 2018, after I had written this portion of the paper, came the news that the Sandiganbayan had convicted Imelda Marcos, now 89 years old, of seven counts of graft amounting to US\$200 million based on their Swiss accounts. These cases had been pending with the anti-graft court for twenty-seven years. Because of the highly polarized situation at present, this decision was cheered and held up as the "evidence" that Marcos loyalists were saying did not exist—earlier convictions did not receive this warm reception—yet, it is too early to tell what its impact will be.

A third reason for the lack of traction of academic perspectives on the Marcos regime is the perceived absence of any major impact of the downfall of Marcos and the restoration of "elite democracy" on ordinary people's lives since 1986. In other words, nothing has changed or, as they

say, *walang pagbabago*. One can argue that getting rid of a dictator was no mean feat—even if many from our ranks have emphasized that the end of the Marcos dictatorship merely reintroduced the ancien régime prior to martial law (Nemenzo 1988; Anderson 1988). People Power in 1986 understandably raised expectations about the clean-up of the government. But for today's ordinary citizens there has been a seamless continuity of corruption from the past to the present. In other words, if the Marcos state was corrupt, as the anti-Marcos narrative asserts, the period that followed his fall from power did not experience a diminution in corruption. More than anything else—such as Walden Bello's (2018, 79–80) stress on elite democracy, the concentration of wealth, neoliberal economic policies, and foreign debt repayments—for ordinary people the persistence of corruption seals the failure of what Nicole Curato (2017, 11–12) has called the "EDSA system," an important factor in the rise of Duterte to power.

The delegitimizing effect of the persistence of corruption is supported by a study made by psychologists James Liu of Victoria University of Wellington and Cecilia Conaco of UP Diliman. Liu and Conaco (2011) present three studies on the impact of social representations of EDSA People Power that were conducted in three different time periods. Executed in 1998, the first study asked 302 students from four different state universities located in Metro Manila, Nueva Ecija, Cebu, and Lanao del Sur about what they considered the "most important events in Philippine history"; the overwhelming response was the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution, which the authors underscored had acquired "charter status" (ibid., 176). The second and third studies investigated the impact of this watershed event on participation in the ouster of Joseph Estrada and in the willingness to participate in the ouster of Gloria Arroyo. The second study was conducted in Metro Manila in 2001 and the third study in 2004. Liu and Conaco (ibid., 187) found that, contrary to expectation, "a measure of belief in the 'People Power' of EDSA I was not an independent predictor of either participation or participation intentions in social protest movements. Rather, it was a measure of historical fatalism, or belief that EDSA and similar social movements are an ineffective means of reducing corruption in government." The youth had developed "passivity in the face of the frequent abuses of power by elites in the Filipino political system," an attitude that was "anchored in historical fatalism about the ability of the people to produce genuine change" (ibid.). Given the persistence of corruption, amid the apparent circulation of elites, EDSA People Power has lost its "charter status."

Faced with these historical realities, younger Marcos loyalists can ask: if the present is bad, can the past be any worse? Any criticism of the Marcos regime as corrupt would get the retort: So, how different was the past from what is going on now? In fact, the retort of Marcos loyalists asserts that the present is bad, but the past under Marcos was good and great.

### **History According to Social Media**

Indeed, a major reason for why scholarship on the Marcos regime has failed to influence public discourse is the absence of an overall narrative structure from the time Marcos was in power until his downfall and the present period, one that is convincing especially to those inclined or who actually support and look back with nostalgia to the Marcos years. We have not produced a perspective on the Marcos state and its dynamics of power that, from an emic standpoint, makes sense to the people who support or are inclined to support Marcos's rule. In other words, we need a "history from below"—but one not defined by class, as in the late nineteenth century, if we are to follow historian Reynaldo Ileto's (1979) argument in *Pasyon and Revolution*, because today support for Marcos transcends class and even Ilocano ethnicity. In exact contrast, the Marcos camp has produced a narrative emplotment that, as far as those who adhere to it are concerned, seems impervious to criticisms. Against this metanarrative, our arguments sound like petty quibbling over insignificant details.

Marcos loyalists have disseminated their narrative through social media and, before the advent of social media, they used whatever technologies were available, in their effort to reach members of the younger generation who have no personal experience or memory of the Marcos regime. In 2013 Llanes (2012–2013, 131–34) called attention to the content of three videos on YouTube that extolled Marcos's supposedly incomparable leadership; the achievements of martial law; the illogicality of Marcos ordering Ninoy Aquino's assassination because they were said to be friends (it is true that Aquino, instead of being killed, was allowed to seek medical treatment in the US in 1980, where he lived until he decided to return to the Philippines in 1983); Imelda's explanation of the family's wealth as due to Marcos's acumen in trading gold; and Bongbong's dismissal of accusations against him and his father as mere political propaganda.

Recently a systematic study of Marcosian social media has been published by literary and cultural studies expert Victor Felipe Bautista

(2018) in the September 2018 issue of *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*. Bautista looks at three sources: Blogger Mr. Riyoh's "Real Talk about MARCOS," Baron Buchokoy or PinoyMonkeyPride's "NINOY + PEOPLE POWER: Hidden Truths The MEDIA Is NOT Telling Us," and an article posted on the KBL website titled "The Untold Story of the Kingdom of Maharlikans, now called The Philippines," written by a so-called "Royal Maharlikans Priesthood." (Marcos's guerilla organization during the Second World War was supposedly called "Ang Mga Maharlika.")

Bautista unravels the narrative structure of the Marcos loyalist's version of history, which they understand in terms of (a) the "glorious past" under a benevolent President Marcos, (b) "the Fall" supposedly orchestrated by Corazon "Cory" Aquino in a Dilawan (Yellow) conspiracy, and (c) the "dark" present, when Marcos is said to be a "victim of black propaganda." This narrative structure—of the possession, loss, and reclamation of the once Great Nation, also known as New Society or *Bagong Lipunan*—is uncannily similar to the standard linear emplotment of nationalist history, a parallelism that gives it a ring of truth. This perspective views Marcos as the father who truly loved the country and built the New Society. However, Cory is deemed as the evil Other—the m(Other)—who was the exact opposite of Marcos in terms of gender, intelligence, acumen, and heart, supposedly lacking everything that Marcos possessed and stood for. This other Mother, says Bautista, conspired to usurp the Father's power, robbing Marcos devotees of joy and excitement and depriving the nation of Marcos's greatness, resulting in the people's ignorance and poverty and in societal decline. Marcos loyalists thus seek the reimposition of martial law to retrieve what they believed was once the Great Nation/New Society.

This fantasy is culturally credible because presidents are imagined in terms of kinship relationships. It is not surprising to conceive of Marcos as father, just as at present Duterte is called Tatay Digong by his supporters—even though the former was a more "intellectual" father compared with the "kanto-boy" (gadabout) fatherhood of the latter (which, to be fair, is the more familiar experience in many families). Moreover, although it is fantastical in its overall vision and interpretation, the Marcosian version of history has a powerful narrative structure because it parallels nationalist history—suggestive of how easily nationalist history can be misappropriated to serve other ends. Moreover, there are pieces of evidence that can be

*made to fit* the overall story of the Marcosian fantasy; in other words, it can marshal its own empirical evidence in the mold of standard historiography. This social fantasy subsumes empirically proven historical facts to give it credibility. A favorite proof of a lost greatness are the edifices that Marcos built, which continue to be used until today. After all, who will deny the continuing social usefulness of, say, the Heart Center, the Lung Center, and the Cultural Center of the Philippines? Moreover, at least during the early years of martial law until the oil shock of the late 1970s and until the rapacity of crony capitalism became apparent, the Marcos state had a developmental angle and the Philippines had highly unequal but respectable growth, as some economists have argued (Jayasuriya and Hill 1985; Villegas 1986). If anything, we need to arrive at a proper periodization of Marcos's rule as well as a deeper analysis of the tensions between plunder and cronyism, on one hand, and technocracy and developmentalism, on the other (Hau 2016).

Indeed, if we are to be truthful, the Marcos dictatorship was not solidly black and dismal, because as in any historical period it had some grey areas. We should note that a simplistic history may attract converts, but it also generates its own backlash. A more impartial assessment would remind us, for instance, that in 1975, following the move of the US under Nixon and Kissinger, the Philippines opened diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China. As a preparatory gesture, Marcos granted Philippine citizenship to resident Chinese through mass naturalization: instead of the usually expensive and slow judicial procedure, Chinese as well as other legally classified aliens were naturalized through an expeditious administrative procedure by presidential decree (Aguilar 2012). We cannot begrudge the Chinese, South Asians, and other nationals for feeling grateful to Marcos for this dictator's largesse. Since the 1960s, Philippine Chinese leaders we now call Tsinoys had campaigned for acceptance and inclusion in the body politic, but to no avail. In 1975, however, an authoritarian ruler ironically provided ethnic minorities a democratic right through access to Philippine citizenship. A recognition of the dictator's legacy has come in the form of Republic Act 9139, known as the Administrative Naturalization Law of 2000 and approved on 8 June 2001, which codifies and updates the administrative procedure for naturalization made possible by Marcos's edict in the mid-1970s. Thus, administrative naturalization is now an established procedure, serving as the means by which aliens and stateless persons born on Philippine territory can obtain Philippine citizenship.

## Human Rights of the *Pasaway*?

At present, most criticisms of the Marcos regime emphasize human rights violations—a fact recognized by Republic Act 10368, the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act of 2013 (interestingly passed when Juan Ponce Enrile was president of the Senate). However, the fact that there were human rights violations during Marcos's reign can be dismissed rather easily in the Marcosian version of history: the social fantasy of Marcos loyalists asserts that, as father of the nation, Marcos had the right to scold and discipline errant children; he was justified in punishing the “troublemakers” (*pasaway*), whose condition the loyalists contrast with the “obedient children,” the “law-abiding citizens” who in their view reaped “the full benefits of the dictatorship” (Bautista 2018, 282). State-as-family discipline is completely justified in this way of thinking.

The intransigence of this mentality is evinced in the recently passed psychology Master's thesis of Ryan Angelo P. Camacho (2018), who studied Duterte's speeches and his supporters' statements posted on Facebook concerning the administration's so-called war on drugs. Camacho (*ibid.*, 13) deployed corpus analysis of 347 paragraphs consisting of 18,968 words from the president and 302 comments containing 21,763 words posted by Duterte supporters on Facebook. Camacho (*ibid.*, 23) observes that through his utterances the president “assigns to himself the duty to protect the youth from the drug entity” who are “harming the youth and are stripped of their right to live.” In other words, the evil that overcomes another evil becomes a good and even a duty to be performed. Besides, the president had declared that the supposed “four million” drug addicts are “slaves of drug lords” and “effectively stripped of any rights enjoyed by a free individual”; drug addicts have been depicted by the president as “lower than the actual victims of modern [African] slavery” and therefore “useless” without any “semblance of worth,” “further compounded by the drug user's being positioned as biologically and irreversibly insane” and “no longer viable for rehabilitation” (*ibid.*, 25). This othering does not make drug addicts into enemies of the state, but rather as generalized enemies of society-qua-family under a Tatay President.

Although Duterte has depicted drug users as having been killing their victims, Camacho (*ibid.*, 26) emphasizes that Duterte “does not directly claim that killing the drug users is the best course of action.” Nonetheless, the othering of the drug user is so extreme that “the aggressive methods of the anti-drug operations becomes positioned as the only remaining option”

(ibid.). This conclusion is complemented by the supporters' point of view that "It is best to just kill them on the spot" (ibid., 32), especially in the case of so-called drug lords who get away because the justice system has been so thoroughly corrupted by "narco-politicians" such that killings become "a source of true justice and blessed by a higher power" (ibid., 34).

As a result of this way of thinking, the casualties of the so-called war on drugs—the victims of extrajudicial killings (EJKs)—are not to be lamented because killing them has acquired a moral justification as a necessary evil. This narrative can be directly linked to the Marcos fantasy insofar as the supporters of the drug war believe that "LP is the biggest druglord of all" because Duterte's supporters—believing in the charges against Sen. Leila de Lima—"position the political opponents of the government as cooperating with drug syndicates in the Philippines" (ibid., 28). If the Liberal Party is associated with the Aquinos and the Aquinos are associated with EDSA People Power, then in the Marcosian social fantasy the conspiracy that dethroned the father, Ferdinand Marcos, has further deepened the crisis in the country through its alleged alliance with drug syndicates, a conspiracy that has supposedly brought forth a narco-state. Hence, all the more there is need for a father, Tatay Digong, to rule the Philippines and restore the New Society through the declaration of martial law or a revolutionary government. In any event, the connectivity of these narrative strands results in the facile brushing aside the fate of the pasaway in the past and at present as in fact their just deserts.

### **Our Brand of Authoritarianism**

Evidently the interwoven narrative strands of Marcos and Duterte supporters exhibit strong elements of authoritarianism. This proposition is supported by empirical evidence gathered by psychologist Allan Bernardo (2017) in an unpublished study the results of which were presented at a public forum held on 29 March 2017. Bernardo and two PhD students at that time, Jose Antonio Clemente and Mary Angeline Daganzo, set out to "understand the psychological characteristics associated with voters' choices in the 2016 Philippine presidential elections." Soon after the May 2016 elections, they posted an online survey targeted at young urban voters (18 to 35 years), a group the study describes as a fairly educated sample with high levels of information access. There were over 1,160 attempts to answer the online survey, but the complete responses of only 545 voters were considered valid;

hence, this small sample is far from representative. The main voter choices were: Miriam Santiago: 230 votes (42.2 percent); Rodrigo Duterte: 156 votes (28.62 percent); and Manuel "Mar" Roxas: 123 votes (22.57 percent).

Bernardo and his team found that there are significant differences in how Duterte voters (compared with voters of other candidates) perceive developments and important issues in Philippines society. They found that the "top issues" for Duterte voters were: graft and corruption, 71.2 percent; crime, 51.3 percent; and transportation, 51.3 percent. The least important issues for Duterte voters were: local insurgency, 3.2 percent; political dynasties, 5.1 percent; and human rights, 7.1 percent. As a group, they think the country worsened in the six years prior to the 2016 elections. Their social beliefs and political values indicate a comparatively stronger belief in the justness of the economic system, in the importance of religious practices/institutions, and in how fate shapes social phenomena. They exhibit a stronger endorsement of more conservative political values (traditional morality, law and order, blind patriotism, and so on) and weaker endorsement of civil liberties. Not surprisingly, the personality characteristics of Duterte voters (compared with voters of other candidates) are stronger in social dominance orientation and group-based dominance; strong right-wing authoritarianism (threat-driven motivation for collective security and social cohesion); and lower agreeableness (kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm, considerate) and lower openness to experience (preference for variety, intellectual curiosity). Consequently, they are willing to submit to authorities who are perceived to be legitimate; they have strong adherence to societal norms and are hostile and punitive to those who do not value uniformity; they have lower complexity beliefs in how social outcomes are determined; they have lower intellectual curiosity, put lower value on civil liberties, and higher value on group-based dominance.

The respondents in this online survey, we should note, were born or grew up after Marcos's downfall. What are the sources of the authoritarian personality of these young Filipino voters? This is a big question for which we have no answer because no study has been undertaken on this subject. But we need to understand why we are breeding authoritarian personalities right in our midst. We need to look into our families and parenting styles, our schools, our religious institutions, our business practices, our mass media and information technologies, our formal political processes, the huge social inequalities that are often associated with authoritarianism,

how we treat our workers, including our *kasambahay* or household staff, how people cope with fear and live with everyday violence, and a host of other possible factors that are generative of authoritarianism. How we breed our own authoritarian personalities represents a major lacuna in our understanding of Philippine society, even as we need to differentiate this authoritarianism from what exists in other parts of the world. In fact, we should not dismiss it as merely a part of a current worldwide trend, for there is evidence of a long-term trend in our country's brand of authoritarianism. We need to understand its specificities in the Philippine context. At the same time, we need to understand what nurtures democratic personalities and sustains democratic dreams and ideals.

### **Our Role as Social Scientists**

In any event, our role as scholars and social scientists in different spheres within and beyond the academe is to accurately and truthfully describe social processes and dynamics of power as well as to understand the reasons for their existence. To the extent possible, we need to arrive at emic perspectives in what can be called "social sciences beyond the divide," without lapsing into either romanticizing or demonizing emic perspectives and concomitantly without privileging our own largely etic perspective. In other words, we are to deploy the techniques of the social sciences to understand members of Philippine society who we may otherwise cast as different from ourselves, whose thinking may be diametrically opposed to ours.

One goal that we may claim for ourselves is to bridge the divergent sets of understanding of social realities, if only because we as scholars and social scientists need to connect with those we seek to understand yet from whom our very thinking alienates us. For instance, how do we communicate concern for human rights so that it is not brushed aside by association with the *pasaway*? How do we show convincingly that the Marcos loyalists' version of history is contrary to the truth? What language, what genre, and what digital technologies should we use? Establishing these connections in a way that makes sense to the public is, I think, a political stance in itself, but it transcends any partisanship. If there is any lesson to be learned from the unhindered spread of the Marcosian social fantasy, it is that we in the academe cannot shirk from the social responsibility of influencing social discourse, of presenting public history in a way that is meaningful to our de facto interlocutors. To the extent that we are able to transcend this chasm,

this type of engagement, if we can pull it off, will be radically transformative of society.

At the same time, as in the dominant narrative of the atomic bomb as a necessary evil, the historiography of the Marcos dictatorship and our own present time can be altered through the assiduous and painstaking search for evidence. Slow and demanding research is unavoidable. Out of our individual and collective work, a new narrative will arise. I do not know what this alternative storyline will be like, but it will have to be truthful and nuanced. There is power in the techniques of our respective academic disciplines that can be harnessed to speak truth to power and to sow understanding amid the anarchy of interpretations and fantasies.

In understanding those we deem as others, we understand the Philippines and, ultimately, we understand ourselves.

### **Note**

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