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Lisandro E. Claudio

Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions

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cultural model, is produced through practices of maintaining the hinlo ethic. Borchgrevink acknowledges the limits of his distinct oppositional framing, noting how hybrids, anomalies, and ambiguities tend to be tolerated in Filipino society (193). STS works on coproduction allow us to argue that if morality is a kind of knowledge then it too could be understood as constituted by—and not just a determinant of—such practices. The linear causality between morality, emotions, and practices could then be recast accordingly.

The book's emphasis on change and dynamism serves as a good counterpoint to tendencies in "somewhat unfashionable" (xiv) village studies of treating a community as a closed system that is immune to change and isolated from multiscalar flows. We may debate claims about the current trendiness of village studies and the degree to which insularity in analysis holds true for many of these works. However, what should be less controversial is arguing that we need more of the ethnographically rich and analytically sharp village studies that Borchgrevink delivers in *Clean and Green*.

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LISANDRO E. CLAUDIO

Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013. 226 pages.

How do memories weave into the fabric of contemporary reality, and how does an interpretation of an event, as opposed to the event itself, become a site of political contestation? In *Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions*, Lisandro Claudio examines memories of the EDSA Revolution not to contribute to historical knowledge of what occurred on those fateful last days of February 1986, but to make sense of memories and memorials as competing national narratives and fraught mythologies that somehow cast their dark shadow on the acrimonious Philippine politics. He rethinks the connections between the Philippine leftist movement and national politics by situating this interaction in the plane of mythology, narrative, and discourse. Accordingly, the book is divided into two main

parts. The first part examines the People Power Monument and the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (Monument of Heroes) and argues that these monuments occlude the history of the leftist movement, specifically, their importance in the anti-Marcos struggle. The second part studies the more disturbing side of the traditional People Power narrative, in particular, its connection to patronage politics and nationalist discourse. The book concludes with the tragedy of People Power and how it has spawned the government of Benigno Simeon “Noy” Aquino III, which is not entirely different from “Marcosian politics,” and the communist movement, which fails to provide an alternative narrative and politics (23–25).

For Claudio, who has taught political science at the Ateneo de Manila University, this project of situating the leftist movement in nationalist politics is both personal and political: personal, as his family was hunted down by the Marcos dictatorial regime and continually persecuted by the rightwing elements of the Corazon “Cory” Aquino administration and then later by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). He wants to understand how the EDSA People Power narrative displaced the stories of his parents and their comrades, or how popular Philippine histories downplayed the role of leftist movements in the anti-Marcos struggle. This project is also political: transcending the narrowness of his attempt at rediscovering his roots, he immersed himself in Katarungan, an NGO affiliated with Akbayan, a leftwing movement and party-list group established by former CPP members and other non-CPP activists. He interviewed Akbayan-affiliated community leaders in Hacienda Luisita, owned by the Cojuangco families that include no less than former president Corazon “Cory” Aquino, and made sense of his family’s and Akbayan’s cynicism with the Cory government, the CPP, and the New People’s Army (NPA). For Claudio, Hacienda Luisita farmers were, like his family, not only suffering from landlord exploitation, particularly from the Aquino family, but also from the CPP’s centralization of power and instrumentalization of people’s tragedies and real stories.

There is no problem with this book’s main assertions and arguments if only this project were an autobiography. After all, integral to the discursive methodology of memory studies is an account of the author’s situatedness and partiality, and Claudio’s project is unabashedly personal and reflexive. Autobiography would have lent itself properly to this project and its methodology since the book deliberately avoids a positivist or objectivist’s historical critique and has no intention or illusion of being a grand narrative.

As Claudio would say, there is a need to account for our postmodern condition, or the inherent brokenness of reality, and the multiplicity of interpretations of events (18–22). To read *Taming People's Power* as an autobiography is to read it as a supplement, a dangerous supplement in the Derridian sense that jars our conventional reading of history. For deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida, a supplement is an inessential extra that adds to something complete in itself, and since ironically what is complete in itself does not need additions, then the supplement seemingly recreates what has been created and makes things contingent, fluid, and open-ended. Autobiography as a supplement and as a form of history is therefore radical, for it questions nationalist history, mythology, collective narratives, and monuments. Also, autobiography sits well with various interpretations of events because it thrives in the multiplicity of interpretations of events, based on a multivocal and multifaceted reality. Claudio affirms this multiplicity of interpretations by using Maria Serena Diokno's concept of mnemonic struggles, in which the past is conceived as competing histories, memories, or biographies, and where the perpetrators in history have their own memories even if these are bleak, painful parts of the victims' history (17–18). For Diokno, accordingly, insofar as no one can deny the perpetrators' memories, the victims must assert their own. This politics of memory then becomes a matter of strategic, selective recalling or mnemonic struggles, just as mnemonic devices are tools for remembering.

For Claudio, however, Diokno's mnemonic struggles easily dichotomize the struggle between perpetrators and victims. What if there are differences among the victims or the anti-Marcos groups, such as those that exist between bourgeois anti-Marcos politicians and mass movements associated with the organized left under the CPP? The concept of mnemonic struggles is not only limiting in this case but eventually colludes with the homogenizing and ascendant tendency of a grand history. Claudio reworks Diokno's framework by articulating various sides, positions, competing versions, and memories. He then complicates and reveals that the conventional People Power narrative is a bourgeois anti-Marcos sentiment that marginalizes the narratives of mass movements under the CPP-NPA, which in turn ironically marginalizes Hacienda Luisita farmers affiliated with Akbayan.

In identifying then the Akbayan-affiliated farmers as the ultimate victims in this scenario, Claudio then cannot avoid speaking for Akbayan

and speaking against other anti-Marcos groups and mass movements affiliated with the CPP-NPA, an act that goes against his intention of avoiding to be an Akbayan propagandist as he states in his preface (xii–xiii). As such, his intention of going beyond partisan politics becomes the main contradiction of his project. Had he been upfront in calling his project an autobiography, there would have been no problem for the simple reason that an autobiography is limited, partisan, and partial. The book apparently has the conceit of using an anthropological or ethnographic framework to present a more objective analysis. But his interviewees, unfortunately, are limited to a few farmers and leaders who have grudges against the CPP-NPA. What about other farmers and leaders who remain affiliated with the CPP-NPA? What are their stories or their sides of the story? Ultimately, why is the book quick to judge the CPP-NPA as oppressors similar to the Cojuangco-Aquino clan? With limited interviewees, the book can be accused of cherry-picking or ignoring a significant portion of possible interviewees that may have contradictory views.

In addition, Claudio could have also exercised more reflexivity by scrutinizing the middle class or the petty bourgeoisie that he identifies with in his preface: How fractured or disintegrated is this middle class? What are the various institutions that the middle class identify with or that work for them? What are other state apparatuses, both repressive and ideological, that are at work in the constitution or formation of the middle class in the Philippines? By identifying with the middle class and assuming that it is quite homogenous, he ends up disavowing everyone—the right-wing politics of the Marcoses, the cacique democracy of the Aquinos, and by condescension, the toiling masses. In understanding the nature, dynamics, and formation of the Philippine middle class, he could have presented a more nuanced understanding of the competitive nature of this multifaceted interpretation of EDSA People Power, including not only its rhetoric, but also its seduction, and possibly its hauntings. So even if Claudio has reworked Diokno's mnemonic struggles to complicate the various positions of anti-Marcos groups, in the end he commits the same simplification by reducing anti-Marcos struggles to perpetrators and victims, and curiously highlighting the CPP-NPA-affiliated mass movements as comparable perpetrators.

To understand EDSA People Power is not only to account for its competing interpretations or memories, but more importantly to sift

through false memories that were induced by our history of colonization and servitude. To read Claudio's work whether as autobiography or history necessitates, too, that we understand the US as an empire. Yet, the book is silent on the US quest for global dominance and formation of rogue states, that have supported or even have caused the downfall of the likes of Marcos, Suharto, Karimov, and Niyazov. People Power remains untamed and should be since this revolution is definitely part of our long history and unceasing struggle for freedom. To tame it by reducing it to simple perpetrators and victims is unfortunately to be politically naïve.

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AUGUSTO V. DE VIANA

Stories Rarely Told: The Hidden Stories and Essays on Philippine History

Quezon City: New Day, 2013. 255 pages.

Augusto V. de Viana joins a list of renowned historians, such as William Henry Scott, Luis Camara Dery, and James Francis Warren, who have earned the support of New Day Publishers and been instrumental in contributing to a “history from below.” “History from below” is a growing movement in Philippine historiography that utilizes a plurality of sources to dislodge hegemonic concepts on power, authority, and culture in favor of indigenous-based expressions anchored on localized experiences. *Stories Rarely Told: The Hidden Stories and Essays on Philippine History* is consistent in content and format with De Viana's earlier works—*Apples & Ampalaya: Bittersweet Glimpses of the American Period in the Philippines 1898–1946* (2001); *Kulaboretor! The Issue of Political Collaboration during World War II* (2003); *Halo-halo, Hardware and Others: The Story of the Japanese Commercial Community of Manila* (2008)—which provide pieces of a larger puzzle to enlighten our understanding of how people in the past made sense of the precarious situations they faced.

Stories Rarely Told provides De Viana an opportunity to tackle topics he has taken a keen interest in but which could not form part of his previous