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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

That interpretations of the past can vary is an accepted dictum among historians. But despite the constant debate and interlocation, historians aim at truth—in light of which they seek the most plausible explanation of the past based on the available evidence. The “historical revisionism” of the period of Ferdinand Marcos’s authoritarian rule, however, is not a mere case of advancing a different interpretation. Based on an analysis of three social media productions, including two widely shared videos, Victor Felipe Bautista argues that “Marcos apologists and supporters” adhere to a fantasy, which frames the “factual inconsistencies” they choose to believe. Bautista employs Žižekian philosophy and psychoanalysis to decipher this fantasy. Revisionists understand the past in terms of (a) the “glorious past” under a benevolent 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 Great Nation, also known as New Society (*Bagong Lipunan*)—is uncannily similar to the standard linear emplotment of nationalist history, a parallelism that gives it a ring of truth.

Bautista argues that Marcosian revisionists identify with Marcos as father (thus a *père-version*), who truly loved the country and built the New Society. However, Cory is deemed as the maternal Other—the m(Other)—who lacked everything that Marcos had, yet conspired to usurp the father’s power, enabling her to steal the jouissance of Marcos and his devotees and depriving the nation of Marcos’s greatness, resulting in the people’s ignorance and poverty and in societal decline. Revisionists thus seek the reimposition of martial law to retrieve the object of their desire, the utopian Great Nation/New Society that never existed but was conjured in the very process of fantasy creation.

If critics of Marcos point to human rights violations, this fantasy would say that as father Marcos was justified to punish the “troublemakers” (*pasaway*) and that great leaders break the law to enforce the law. If critics point to Marcos’s ill-gotten wealth, the riposte is that Marcos’s greatness made him amass his gold, now sequestered in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Security Complex on East Avenue. Thus, to argue against revisionists on the basis of “facts” will fail to unsettle this worldview. Bautista contends that the best way

to undermine this revisionism is to challenge Marcos followers to fulfill their desire to the very end to reveal its emptiness.

To revisit the past and come to terms with it is not easy for those who were imprisoned or lost a loved one during the long years of Marcos's martial rule, even among those who had strained to record their lives secretly under the severe conditions of their prison cell in order to preserve the self in a setting that aimed to obliterate the self. Mary Grace R. Concepcion studied some of these "survivors," who eventually published their autobiographies, not as primary sources of history but as narratives of the self that finally experienced emotional catharsis and empowerment. Other survivors need assistance to reach this closure, if not through the written word then through techniques of oral history that, in the process, can preserve memories of martial law.

As a people, we need to come to terms with the lessons from the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP), a megaproject that from the outset was beset by basic questions about its soundness. Ronald U. Mendoza, Donald Jay Bertulfo, and Jerome Patrick D. Cruz demonstrate that the BNPP's descent into a white elephant (a large-scale, socially unprofitable investment project that imposes heavy burdens on society—in the BNPP's case, a debt of roughly US\$2 billion) can be explained by (a) strategic rent-seeking behavior as seen in a flawed contract with Westinghouse; (b) misaligned and underdeveloped governance due to Westinghouse's close ties with Marcos crony Herminio Disini; and (c) competing project cultures and rationalities, evinced by disagreement among experts concerning its safety and security. The authors caution that similar risks of white elephants attend the Duterte administration's "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program.

Going further back to the American colonial period, Gideon Lasco revisits the encounter between Filipinos and Americans as not just cultural but also corporeal, with American bodies becoming the norm against which Filipino bodies were measured. Among several bodily dimensions, height was the first to be described in American colonial texts; height became a marker of difference, and it resonated with various aspects of US rule, such as public health, pediatrics, physical education, team sports, civil service, and the military. This paradigm's dominance could be gauged from Filipino writers' acceptance of the US colonial standard of physical stature—a sort of reverse fantasy. This diminution in psyche must needs be overcome.

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