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## **The Pervert's Guide to Historical Revisionism: Traversing the Marcos Fantasy**

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# The Pervert's Guide to Historical Revisionism Traversing the Marcos Fantasy

This article argues that historical revisionism is constituted by the Marcos fantasy, which (1) generates jouissance and (2) shields Marcos apologists and supporters from the traumatic Real through narrativization, the concealment of lack, and displacement. This fantasy can be dialectically undermined by pushing Marcos apologists and supporters to fully identify with their desire. Although many critiques of such distortions validly tackle factual inconsistencies, they ultimately miss the fantasy by which these perversions are framed. Hence, the article attempts a way out of this impasse by employing Žižekian philosophy and psychoanalysis, a mapping of this perversion's historical origins, and gesturing toward the necessity of a new political alternative.

**KEYWORDS: MARCOS DICTATORSHIP · HISTORICAL REVISIONISM · FANTASY · PERVERSION · ŽIŽEKIAN THEORY**

**B**enigno Simeon “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr. was Ferdinand Marcos’s “number one successor,” alleges a video with elaborate animations. A YouTube vlogger claims that the late dictator was an instrument of God. A document written by a “Royal Priesthood” declares that “the Maharlika” (their name for the Philippines) once possessed 720,000 metric tons of gold, with Marcos earning 192,000 tons for the supposed welfare of the country. The very outrageous character of these statements raises the question of whether Marcosian historical revisionism is worth subjecting to theoretical analysis. An analytical method that combines Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxist critique of ideology through the theoretical interventions of Slavoj Žižek suggests that the narratives articulated by Marcos apologists and supporters (hereafter, MAS) are more complex than they initially appear and are actually overdetermined by a perverse psychic structure. Hence, the thesis of this article: Historical revisionism is constituted by the Marcos fantasy, which (1) generates jouissance<sup>1</sup> and (2) shields MAS from the traumatic Real<sup>2</sup> through narrativization, the concealment of lack, and displacement. This fantasy can be dialectically undermined by pushing Marcos apologists and supporters to fully identify with their desire.

The article is arranged in three parts. The introduction offers descriptions of the objects of study and elucidates the conceptual framework of the Žižekian critique of ideology and fantasy. The article then explicates the primary thesis as ordered through the three stages of the Marcos fantasy narrative. It concludes by gesturing toward the means of traversing the fantasy and the further task of historical critique that must be undertaken after a psychoanalytic intervention.

### **Representative Texts of Historical Revisionist Ideology**

This article focuses on three representative productions<sup>3</sup> of historical revisionist ideology: “NINOY + PEOPLE POWER: Hidden Truths The MEDIA is NOT Telling Us!” (hereafter, “Hidden Truths,” made by a creator named only as “Baron Buchokoy” in the video and “Pinoy Monkey Pride” in his official YouTube handle); “Real Talk about MARCOS” from the Duterte and “pro-Marcos” supporter Mr. Riyoh; and the historical account of the now defunct (or dormant) Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL), titled “Royal Kingdom of Maharlikan.” These three social media productions are some of the most disseminated ones online. “Hidden Truths” has views on YouTube

numbering close to 1.6 million.<sup>4</sup> Riyoh, who has also denied the Holocaust (*Meme Buster* 2016), has collected roughly 360,000 views for his pro-Marcos video, “Real Talk,” which has been uploaded to both Facebook and YouTube. “Royal Kingdom,” the only written object of study, has reached a smaller audience, with about 7,000 shares on Facebook,<sup>5</sup> although it is notably a source cited by Riyoh and is actually hosted on the website of the KBL (n.d.).<sup>6</sup>

“Hidden Truths,” a video “directed by a conservative Filipino citizen,”<sup>7</sup> opens by suggesting that the Philippine economy was in a better condition under Marcos and that the country continues to benefit from institutions and architecture built under the late dictator’s rule. The subsequent part on the EDSA Revolution narrates how, after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, a multitude of forces conspired together to overthrow Marcos while Corazon Aquino was “safely tucked [away] in Cebu” during the EDSA Revolution. It also alleges that the movement remained nonviolent only “because of one completely ignored and silenced FACT”: that Marcos allegedly ordered the marines to stand down. “Hidden Truths” concludes that, in the aftermath of EDSA, there came the impoverishment of the nation, the rise to power of oligarchs, and the “hegemony of the media.”

Riyoh, responding to Lour de Veyra and other critics who oppose martial law, claims that Marcos was a “good president.” He cites the Maharlikan priesthood to argue that the dictator did not amass ill-gotten wealth because he had no need to, given the hundreds of thousands of tons of gold he owned. Marcos, the vlogger continues, kept this sum a secret because it would be “ostentatious” (“sobrang yabang”) if he divulged it. With regard to brutalities committed under martial law, Riyoh suggests that “stubborn” lawbreakers deserved to be jailed and tortured (“Kung matitigas ang ulo niyo, siyempre, makukulong at matotorture talaga kayo”), while the “pro-Marcos” who were “law-abiding citizens” would naturally be spared from state violence. The video concludes with Riyoh anticipating criticism against his research by invoking God the Father as the source of the references of those chosen by God to speak the truth (“ang reference ng taong pinili ng Diyos para sa sabihin sa inyong lahat ang katotohanan ay nanggaling sa Diyos Ama na mas nakakaalam sa katotohanang mas totoo pa sa katotohanang nalalaman nyo”). Similarly, the vlogger hails Marcos as an instrument of God to rule the country.

Titled “The Untold Story of the Kingdom of Maharlikans” in its file name and “Royal Kingdom of Maharlikan” in the document itself, the account by

the “royal priesthood” begins with the precolonial period and ends with the “manna” of the Tallano gold one day transforming the country into “a First World country” (RMP n.d., 43). Marcos supposedly attained such exorbitant wealth as payment from “the Tallano clan” for legal services (ibid., 33). This gold, according to the authors, remains in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Security Plant Complex along East Avenue, Quezon City. Like the “conservative” director of “Hidden Truths,” the authors of this narrative contend that the Philippine economy was in a better state under Marcos. The national debt before his rule, they claim, was at US\$13.5 billion and ballooned to US\$24 billion after his rule. Marcos reportedly “only incurred a measly US\$1 billion,” with seven billion worth of debt coming from the private sector (ibid.). Similar to the previous texts, they portray the EDSA Revolution as a conspiracy between Cory Aquino and the United States government as well as other shadowy powers such as the Catholic Church (ibid., 37). The history ends by envisioning how the Maharlika would have been the richest nation in the world had Marcos remained in power.

The crassness of argumentation and the sheer far-fetched quality of the claims from all three samples can have it seem that one need only to pinpoint the logical and factual inconsistencies in these historical revisionist texts. Buchokoy supports the flimsy conclusion that Marcos hailed Ninoy Aquino as his successor merely through their affiliation as “Upsilonian brethren.”<sup>8</sup> Riyoh’s video is rife with the use of fallacies, from *ad hominem* attacks against Marcos critics (at one point, Riyoh insults De Veyra for being uncircumcised or *supot*) to non-sequitur arguments that propose that Marcos rightly declared martial law due to the spread of “black propaganda.” The KBL history cites dubious publications such as “Asia Pacific Periscope” (nonexistent), *New York City Tribune* (now defunct, once owned by Messiah claimant Sun Myung Moon), and *Weekly World News* (one 2017 headline reads “WOMAN FINDS GIANT KFC BUCKET!”). An outrageous claim from both Riyoh and KBL is the impossible amount of gold, owned by the bogus Tallano clan and Marcos himself, which grossly exceeds the estimate of 171,300 tons of gold currently in global circulation (Prior 2013). Despite such implausible claims, this critique will not employ a method that unpacks such problematics but will instead adopt Lacanian theory (particularly as developed by Žižek) in order to unpack the perversion of the Marcos fantasy at the root of historical revisionism. We thus proceed to the elucidation of the conceptual framework of this article.

## Žižekian Critique of Ideology and Fantasy

Because a straightforward critique of historical revisionism often operates within, to borrow a Hegelian term, “mere factuality” (i.e., focusing on mere facts while disregarding a wider totality), it ultimately misses the psychic underpinning of the ideology. Yannis Stavrakakis (2003, 274) argues that political reality is “constituted at the symbolic level” and “supported by fantasy.” Furthermore, the condition of possibility for the emergence of a political reality is the “repression of the constitutivity of the political” or “the political ontology of the social” (ibid., 276). The primary objective of this critique, therefore, is to dissect the repressed fantasy that constitutes Marcosian historical revisionism.

The importance of reading these texts from a psychoanalytic framework lies in how they are symptomatic formations of the overarching condition of authoritarian perversion. While all of the texts use bafflingly false claims, one can argue that all authoritarianism must pass through the logic of perversion, which attempts to twist reality itself. Moreover, most historical revisionism is largely diffused, rather than congealed or concentrated in coherent texts, especially when disseminated online. At a more fundamental level, the three objects of study allow for a sustained analysis of emergent forms of authoritarian ideology.

The recent emergence of labels such as “alternative facts” and “fake news” confronts scholars with the problem of how ideological subjects can continue to cling to their suppositions despite being confronted with inconsistencies and factual lapses. Through Žižekian theory, one can grasp how an ideology can withstand criticism because of how the underlying fantasy ultimately remains untouched. Adam Cottrel (2014, 89) clarifies one aspect of Žižek’s elaboration of fantasy: any perception of reality “is already stained by the human subject’s desire.” A forgetting of the phantasmatic and ontological origins of political reality “only leads to bewilderment in the face of its manifestations and to impotence in dealing with them” (Mouffe 1993, 140). Psychoanalytic theory therefore opens a way to break out of the impotence or impasse of critique before the zombie-like persistence of ideology.

The veiling of gaps is simultaneously the originating gesture of a fantasy and the maneuver that allows for its persistence. Žižek “reveals how fantasy can fill in ideological gaps and provide access to obscene *jouissance*, and he contends that a failure to explicate the essence of political beliefs does

not imply any failure in the hold these beliefs have over us” (Cottrel 2014, 90). When confronted with incongruities and inconsistencies, the Marcos fantasy, in its plasticity, can therefore cover these up, for example, through the staging of a conspiracy of the (m)Other or Corazon Aquino and her supposed allies.

The further distribution of this authoritarian sensibility (to borrow a term from Jacques Ranciere) has become more of a foreboding danger. Consider how Riyoh was at least right to point out how Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. came very close to winning the vice presidency. If we constellate the ideological hold of the Marcos fantasy to Duterte’s hegemony over the state and civil society, the rise of authoritarian populism<sup>9</sup> yields a bleaker situation. The Lacanian critique of ideology begins with how “sometimes the key thing to do is to locate its [the ideological interpellation’s] true addressee” (Žižek 2009, xxi). As nationalist populists, they aim to interpellate all Filipinos as Marcosian subjects.

### The Marcosian Revisionist Narrative

Consider then how historical revisionisms all refer to mainstream accounts of history. Riyoh (2016) tells his audience that “your professors probably didn’t teach you this” (“Malamang hindi ito tinuro sa’yo ng mga professor niyo”). Buchokoy (2011b) bemoans the “silencing” of “facts.” The Maharlikan Priesthood laments “character assassination and defamation of Marcos and the Filipino people” (RMP n.d., 39). They address the whole of the Philippines to convince them to cease believing what they have been taught and to believe that historical revisionism presents the “truth.” Even when a text like “Hidden Truths” does not express explicit support for Marcos, it nonetheless mobilizes MAS as seen in comments on the video. One user stated: “sabi pa ng mga parents ko. MARCOS is the best leader. they thanked experiencing the MARTIAL LAW.” Another exclaimed, “viva marcos!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” (Buchokoy 2011b). Presently, it is difficult to ascertain whether MAS are paid trolls or genuine supporters, largely due to their anonymity. Nonetheless, they evidently aim to stoke authentic belief among citizens and have worryingly succeeded in doing so. Hence, in such a period of symbolic crisis, it is critical that we not underestimate historical revisionism and instead subject it, to invoke Marx, to “ruthless criticism,” beginning with an overview of its ideological narrative.

The ideological narrative of Marcosian historical revisionism can be chronologically summarized in three parts: (1) the “glorious past” of the Marcos era, (2) the coup against Marcos or “the Fall” supposedly orchestrated by Cory Aquino, and lastly (3) the “fallen dark” present. With regard to the first moment, “Hidden Truths” ends by suggesting that the Philippines is worse off after martial law, generating the implication that it was better during it.<sup>10</sup> The Maharlikan Priesthood, in a statement that eerily parallels the current Trump presidency, exclaims that “THIS NATION WILL BE GREAT AGAIN” (RMP n.d., 42). This imagined greatness stretches back to precolonial times: “In his grand plan, Marcos wanted to re-establish the *former grandeur* of the Maharlika and the whole region of Southeast Asia, the former Malayan Empire” (ibid., 35, italics added). With the second moment of the coup, the three revisionists commonly portray Marcos as a benevolent president who was the victim of a conspiracy between various (but actually politically disparate) groups that coalesced around Corazon Aquino. As for the third moment, which is the present: since he responds to recent criticism against Marcos, Riyoh suggests that Marcos today is a victim of “black propagandists” who allegedly use fake Facebook accounts to “poison the minds of new generations.”

To translate this narrative into Lacanian terms, the first moment occurs when the ideological subject (mis)perceives that they possessed the Nation-Thing or *objet a*/object of desire; the second, when Cory qua (m)Other castrates the Father Marcos; and the current stage, when there emerges the perverse fantasy of MAS to reinstall the Law. However, it is critical to analyze this narrative in reverse rather than to follow the chronology presented by historical revisionism. As a form of ideology, narrative “emerges . . . to resolve some fundamental antagonism by rearranging its terms into a temporal succession” (Žižek 2009, 11). Historical revisionism obfuscates the lack at the core of the Marcos era by presenting a narrative of the possession, loss, and reclamation of the “great nation” qua Thing. Moreover, the similarity of the structure of historical revisionist narrative to the standard linear chronology of nationalist history underscores its attempt to present itself as an accurate historical depiction. By interpreting backwards, this project reveals, to draw from Žižek, that the “lost quality emerged only at this very moment of its alleged loss” (ibid., 14). A chronological form affirms that the lost Thing actually existed at the very beginning, while a critique that moves in the opposite direction uncovers its emergence *only after* the very moment of its perceived disappearance.

Before we proceed to our analyses of the three phases of the narrative summarized above, one must fully define the notion of fantasy, the term which frames its totality and binds together the constellation of Lacanian terminologies deployed below. Fantasy, in Kantian terms, is a transcendental schematism which “constitutes our desire,” “provides its coordinates,” and “teaches us how to desire” (ibid., 7). The Marcos fantasy thus orients the subject toward desiring the return of the Law, which would restore the glory of the Nation-Thing.

Moreover, while the “standard notion” of fantasy purports that it “obfuscates the true horror of a situation” (ibid., 5), fantasy also “creates what it purports to conceal” (ibid., 6), reinforcing our thesis about fabrication in the Marcos fantasy. A necessary component of the historical revisionist scenario of a lost golden age is the “horror” of conspiracy against the benevolent father-leader. In this manufacturing of horror, the Marcos fantasy performs displacement: the true “horror” is not that of torture and brutality enforced by the regime, but that of a mass conspiracy. A close parallel can be seen in the ideological common sense of Duterte supporters who often refer to the victims of drug users when faced with the violence of the war on drugs: the horror of the massive violations of human rights only rectifies the more horrific assaults on human life by “drug personalities.” In a homologous fashion, this constructed victimhood displaces the actual victimization of those actually salvaged.

Furthermore, one can locate a connection between displacement and fantasy as the concealment of a fundamental lack. In the KBL’s (n.d.) broad history of “the Maharlika,” Marcos appears only on page 29. While MAS maintain that Marcos’s rule was the pinnacle of Philippine history, the reader cannot locate any part in “Royal Kingdom of Maharlikan” that details what made the regime “great.” To tweak Žižek’s notion of the absent center: Marcos is at the center of this narrative and is yet strangely absent. On the one hand, the Marcos era was “great,” but on the other hand the realization of this greatness was aborted by the horror of the “Dilawan (or yellow) conspiracy” in which the Aquinos and their multitude of supporters supposedly orchestrated the collapse of the regime. Historical revisionism is thus contradictory Freudian kettle logic at its purest. This ideology, which obfuscates its immanent antagonisms, is a foretaste of the contradictions that mar the rest of the Marcos fantasy.

## **“Marcos, You are my Father”: The Marcos Fantasy as Père-Version**

While fantasy is the transcendental schematism of desire, desire, for Lacan, is fundamentally desire *of, for, or through* the Other, which demonstrates what Žižek (2009, 8) calls “the radically intersubjective character of fantasy.” Because, to cite the Lacanian theorist, “the desire ‘realized’ (staged) in fantasy is not the subject’s own, but the other’s desire” (ibid., 9), MAS desire the desire of Marcos. However, Marcos qua other is merely the instrument of God qua big Other. As both Riyoh and the Maharlikan priesthood proclaim, the late dictator was the instrument of divine will. However, since this other is merely virtual, what begins as a desire of the Other circles back to being the desire of the ideological subject. There is no real intersubjective interaction between MAS and Marcos qua other, no matter how much they fixate over him. Historical revisionism is therefore *père-version* at its purest. It is a “[concretization of] a very precise ideologic-libidinal fantasy, an extreme version of father-domination-pleasure nexus” (ibid., viii), although this is not a concretization of something with substance but rather of an underlying fantasy. The third phase of the historical revisionist narrative to be tackled in this section can thusly be summarized: in their perverse fantasy, Marcosian historical revisionists identify with Marcos qua castrated father and desire the reimposition of the Law to retrieve the object cause of desire (*objet petit a*) in order to restore the Nation-Thing to its perceived former glory. Thus, we expound on Marcos’s ideological position as father.

Žižek (ibid., x) establishes a connection between paternity and authoritarian rule by describing the relationship between the ruler and his subjects as “one of unconditional love.” As father, the leader not only seizes “the right to exercise total power over his children” (ibid., ix), but also consolidates his rule by showing acts of mercy. Buchokoy’s (2011b) portrayal of Marcos as “saving” his “successor,” Ninoy Aquino, from execution is homologous to a patriarch saving his son from punishment, if only to consolidate his authority. The shadow of paternal love for his children is implicit in Riyoh’s (2016) declaration that Marcos’s love for the country and the people was real and that is why the people also loved him (“Tunay ang pagmamahal niya sa bayan at sa taong-bayan kaya minahal din siya ng tao”). This love is given a specific form as a benefactor in the Maharlikans’ depiction of him. In response to accusations against Marcos’s illicit wealth,



they credit the dictator for having said, “My earthly goods have been placed in the custody and for the disposition of the Marcos Foundation dedicated to the welfare of the Filipino people” (cited in RMP n.d., 34), therefore portraying the dictator like a dying father bequeathing the inheritance of his children. Moreover, by calling the Philippines “a kingdom,” casting “Luisong Taguean” as “the Filipinos’ Benevolent Forefather” and having Marcos inherit and bequeath the “Maharlikan gold,” the KBL draws a line of paternal succession.

For Lacan, the father “is the representative of the social order as such” (Evans 2006, 62). Žižek extends this claim by highlighting how this order is always already embroiled in antagonism and supplemented by an obscene underside. Because the father’s “children owe him everything” (Žižek 2009, ix), the Marcos fantasy locks the underclass into a relation of paternalistic debt of gratitude or *utang na loob*. As seen in “Hidden Truths,” a common tactic among MAS to invalidate dissent is to point to the continued utility (*pakinabang*) of martial law-era architecture. A Žižekian intervention asserts that this claim is not a mere matter of utility<sup>11</sup> but is strongly linked to debt or *utang na loob*. Hence, the very meaning of debt undergoes revision: from how martial law-era debt remains unpaid to how the debt cannot be paid back because it had never existed and, lastly, to how Filipinos can never be free from their indebtedness to Marcos, with the still standing buildings serving as indelible proof.

Against the attempts of MAS to gentrify Marcos into becoming a benevolent patriarch, following Žižek (ibid., vii), a psychoanalytic reading insists on how a “normal father” is simultaneously the primordial father “of unlimited access to incestuous enjoyment.” Rather than being two different sides, they mutually reinforce each other: the granting of the paternal boon entitles Marcos qua father to the obscene enjoyment of brutality and extravagant wealth. Since there is a dialectical relation, however, normal and primordial paternity not only supplement each other, but are also in a state of antagonism. Since the primordial aspect threatens to overshadow the image of normal fatherhood, historical revisionists must insistently cast Marcos as a “moderate” father of the pact, which can be observed in Riyoh (2016), implying that only “troublemakers” (*pasaway*) are punished while “law-abiding citizens” reap the full benefits of the dictatorship. Critics of Marcos know, of course, that Marcos did not practice such a treatment toward the citizenry.

This critique proceeds to the question of what is specifically enjoyed in the perversion of historical revisionism: instrumentalization, power, and the law. “The pervert,” according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, “assumes the position of the object-instrument of the ‘will-to-enjoy,’ which is not his own but that of the big Other. The pervert does not pursue his activity for his own pleasure, but for the enjoyment of the big Other” (Evans 2006, 142). Hence, MAS identify themselves and Marcos as *instruments* of the big Other. As we have seen earlier, Marcos is rendered as an instrument of God, while Riyoh (2016) takes this one step further by suggesting that he himself is an instrument of “God’s truth.” The Maharlikan priesthood goes as far as to conclude in their history that God “will gaze down at the ruins” of the Vatican and the CIA, which had “crushed [the] dream of Marcos” (RMP n.d., 42).

Constellating Marcosian historical revisionism to the Duterte regime allows us to assemble the relation between perversion and paternal authority. In addition to details cited from the objects of study earlier, consider how one of the many pro-Duterte Facebook groups currently in existence is named “Tatay Digong.” It is therefore not difficult to imagine Marcos being similarly hailed as a father figure. Lacan and Žižek’s wordplays with the terms Name-of-the-Father and perversion result in the derivation of three aspects of Marcosian perversion: prohibition (*no* of the father), the conferring of identity (*nom* or name of the father), and *père-version* (or version of the father). To unpack: The Marcos fantasy castigates any form of dissent as lack of discipline, installs a matrix of identity between disciplined followers and “pasaway” lawbreakers, and propagates a distorted version of reality.

The first can be clarified through what Dylan Evans (2006, 122) calls “the legislative and prohibitive function of the symbolic father” and how “the lawgiver . . . is not included in his own law because he is the Law” (ibid., 101). One observes in Riyoh’s identification of himself as “pro-Marcos” that he would be exempt from the brutalities of dictatorship. This identification also illustrates that one function of the Name-of-the-Father is how it “confers identity on the subject” (ibid., 122). Because identity is differential, Riyoh’s identification as a pro-Marcos “law-abiding citizen” designates others as anti-Marcos lawbreakers.

If pervers obtain pleasure from being instruments of the big Other, they also “gain satisfaction from the very obscenity of the gesture of the installing of the rule of Law” (Žižek 2009, 47). For Riyoh (2016), Marcos

declared martial law due to the “threat” posed by “lawbreakers” and “black propagandists,” while “Hidden Truths” adopts the original rhetoric of the regime by stating that a communist insurgency threatened to destabilize the Philippines.<sup>12</sup> In both cases, transgressions imperiled order, thereby leading to the imposition of (martial) law. For Žižek (2009, 77), in contrast, “far from undermining the rule of the Law, its ‘transgression’ in fact serves as its ultimate support.” Firstly, the continued transgressions of martial law allowed the state of crisis to be propagated indefinitely. More pertinently, without the very conspirators and lawbreakers that MAS despise, Marcos would not be able to show the strength of the Law, the imposition of which is supposedly what stirred admiration among his supporters. Transgression, therefore, enabled both the Law and the continued generation of jouissance for its perverse followers.

While the “‘eroticization’ of power” is a fantasy’s “founding gesture,” it “has to remain invisible if power is to function normally” (ibid., 35). As has already been introduced earlier on, historical revisionists will attempt to repress or disavow the erotics in their ideology. What can now be added is that MAS can admit the atrocities of martial law but never acknowledge their enjoyment of it. The Maharlikan priesthood, in one instance, uses the phrase “Marcos dictatorship” (RMP n.d., 42), while Riyoh unflinchingly justifies the regime’s use of torture and incarceration. It is reasonable to speculate that MAS reason that such brutalities are regrettable and that Marcos only resorted to such “extremes” as a last resort. Psychoanalysis would retort that the “inherent excess . . . grounds [fantasy]” (Žižek 2009, 35). Therefore, these brutal excesses are the condition of possibility for the paternal libidinal economy to emerge and function rather than the extreme means utilized to neutralize grave threats.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, rather than there being a clear separation between benevolent and brutal law (best evinced by the depiction of Marcos in “Hidden Truths” as a merciful leader who spared Ninoy Aquino and the EDSA Revolution protesters), the two are inextricably linked. “Power thus relies on an obscene supplement—that is to say, the obscene ‘nightly’ law (superego) necessarily accompanies, as its shadowy double, the ‘public’ Law” (ibid., 93). There is therefore no “public” martial law without the “shadowy double” of atrocity.<sup>14</sup> The moment one supposes that Marcos only resorted to “normal” policing, the illusion of his greatness collapses. This contradiction is best illustrated by the respective portrayals of Riyoh and “Hidden Truths.” While Buchokoy

regarded Marcos as “secretly great” due to his mercy, Riyoh attributed the greatness of leaders such as Marcos and Duterte to their ability to commit excesses to enforce the law. Moreover, while historical revisionism might portray martial law as a “normal” public law that had to descend into “the obscene ‘nightly’ law” in order to protect a great society, there is, in truth, no illusion of a great society without martial law. The opposite also applies: one cannot declare martial law without the illusion of a great society that needs to be defended.

The Marcos fantasy, in its obsession with defending or reclaiming a glorious past, ultimately conceals the lack that such a utopia never existed. As is the case with any fantasy, “this constitutive lack that the privileged object promises to fulfill acts as a screen that orients each fantasy, which in turn supports desire in order to shield the subject from the trauma of lack itself” (Cottrel 2014, 90). As shall be seen in the following section, another way that historical revisionism attempts to give substance to this lack is by ascribing it to the castration by the (m)Other.

### **The Origins of the “Dilawan Plot”: Cory as (M)Other Stealing Jouissance**

While Buchokoy, Riyoh, and the KBL might slightly differ in their respective accounts, Marcosian historical revisionists all narrate how Marcos lost power or, in psychoanalytic terms, was “castrated,” especially because castration plays a significant role in perversion. “[The] perverse ritual stages the act of castration, of the primordial loss which allows the subject to [enter the symbolic order]” (Žižek 2009, 17), which in Lacanian theory is the sphere of language and ideology. The primordially of this loss becomes most evident in how the Maharlikan priesthood placed the loss of the impossible amount of gold to the centuries-old coveting of this wealth by the Catholic Church. The castration/conspiracy succeeded at last when Marcos’s enemies gathered around Cory Aquino, who, incidentally, has been called at times the “mother of democracy.” Among the last words in Baron Buchokoy’s (2011b) video are “Cory Magic?” and “DEMOCRACY?,” which at the very least cast doubt on her being called “mother of democracy.”

Cory is Other, first, because of her alterity or how she and her supporters are outside the field of identification of the Marcos fantasy.<sup>15</sup> In the visuals of “Hidden Truths,” Ninoy and Marcos are depicted in somber colors: black silhouettes against red or yellow backgrounds (ibid.). In contrast, Cory is the



only personality depicted in a cartoony style with large eyes and an “I [Heart] Cebu” logo on her yellow shirt. “Other,” Lacan theorizes, is also “the Other sex” (cited in Evans 2006, 136). Paternal authoritarianisms therefore tend to direct antagonism against women, whether it be Cory for the Marcos fantasy or female rape victims for the Duterte regime. In short, the paternal Marcos fantasy defines itself in difference to the maternal alterity that Cory is made to represent.

Despite this conflict, Cory qua (m)Other is a necessary element for the Marcos fantasy. Evans (2006, 136) writes that the Other “[mediates] the relationship with the other subject.” While for historical revisionists, disparate groups of various political affiliations gathered around Cory, it is also the case that MAS attempt to interpellate subjects toward rallying against the late president. One can extend this argument by pointing out that historical revisionism exists only relative to the history that it revises. From their perspective, they would, of course, see themselves as the ones presenting the “correct” history against what “Hidden Truths” suggests are the fabrications of those who control the past, present, and future. Nonetheless, it still is the case that they have no independent existence without reference to the mediating Other.

The (m)Other takes on specific qualities once we constellate her with the Marcosian pervert’s anxiety of her castrating their jouissance. Evans (ibid., 120) describes “the cannibalistic fantasies of devouring, and being devoured by, the mother.” The sheer magnitude of the “conspirators” that joined the EDSA Revolution evoke fear among MAS of being engulfed from all sides. Worth enumerating are the groups cited by historical revisionists in order to illustrate this fear. For “Hidden Truths,” there were in EDSA “*hakot* crowds” (those paid to join rallies), “communists,” “curious civilians,” nuns, foreigners that allegedly induced an economic crisis, radicalized students, farmers, workers, Juan Ponce Enrile, Gringo Honasan, and Fidel Ramos. For the Maharlikan priesthood, there were also liberation theologians, Masons, the US Marines who “abducted” Marcos, corrupt officials wanting to steal “the Marcos gold,” the CIA, and the Vatican. It becomes obvious that historical revisionist paranoia takes the specific form of a conspiracy theory in this passage: “The invisible and long arm of the foreign powers are now exposed and brought to light so that everyone will see the real, greater and hidden MANIPULATORS and authors of the miseries of this country today” (RMP n.d., 41). In the Marcos fantasy, therefore, MAS imagine Marcos and his faithful supporters being

devoured by a horde. Its reverse also applies: Bongbong Marcos’s near victory in the vice-presidential election conjures the perverse and vengeful enjoyment of turning the same horde against the (m)Other.

For Lacan, woman is identified with lack. For the pervert, “the mother lacks the phallus, and at the same time refuses to accept the reality of this traumatic perception” (Evans 2006, 142). In the Marcos fantasy, consider how Cory paradoxically lacks qualifications to be president and yet is still capable of usurping power from Marcos qua the father. If, earlier, we covered how MAS desire the desire of Marcos qua identifiable other, historical revisionists portray Cory ambivalently as devouring (m)Other to narrate how she has stolen the jouissance of Marcos and his followers.

In one of his earlier essays Žižek (1990, 54) produced a critique of nationalist ideology: “Every nationality has built its own mythology narrating how other nations deprive it of the vital part of enjoyment the possession of which would allow it to live fully.” The hatred for the enjoyment of the Other is therefore the fulcrum of the ideological narrative outlined above (perverse fantasy, theft of jouissance, perfect Thing). The “mythology” produced by historical revisionism is therefore hinged on hatred against Marcos’s enemies. For the Maharlikan priesthood, the theft of enjoyment is exemplified in the literal theft of the Marcos gold. “Black propaganda,” for Riyoh (2016), has deprived the citizenry of the “truth” of Marcos’s “greatness.” “Hidden Truths” purports that, in the wake of EDSA, the poor and the middle class have languished while “oligarchs” and the “media” have attained power (Buchokoy 2011b).<sup>16</sup>

One commonality, hence, of these historical revisionisms is that the Philippine nation, deprived of the “greatness” of Marcos, has been degraded into a kind of husk. In psychoanalytic terms, emptied of objet petit a or the object-cause that makes something desirable; the country qua Thing has become undesirable: the people made ignorant and poor, as historical revisionists would present the situation. Žižek (1990, 52) illustrates this ideological feature as such: “This relationship toward the Thing, structured by means of fantasies, is what is at stake when we speak of the menace to our ‘way of life’ presented by the Other.” The MAS therefore believe that the very relationship of Filipinos toward the nation and Marcos has been ruined by the “Dilawan” (m)Other.

The Marcos fantasy, however, envisions the possibility of retrieving the stolen objet petit a through violent means. The object-cause can be extracted

through the destruction of the very object (Žižek 2009, xviii) or, in this case, the thieving (m)Other and her followers. If the brutalities perpetrated are not actual retrievals of the objet petit a, then it is, alternatively, a form of ressentiment in which one obliterates the Other so they can no longer enjoy this object of desire. Hence, such assertions explain how authoritarian supporters clamor for atrocities such as torture and killing because they are libidinally invested as retrievals of enjoyment. Simply put: if the Other stole the Thing of enjoyment, one can at least retrieve some of it through the sadistic pleasures of brutalizing the enemy. The illusoriness of the Thing allows us to critique the final stage of the historical revisionist narrative.

### **Bagong Lipunan Redux: The Thing of Marcosian Desire**

The ultimate object of desire in the Marcos fantasy of historical revisionists is the nation itself. Buchokoy laments the sordid state of the country after Marcos's removal from power, Riyoh proclaims that the dictator's love for the Philippines was true, and the KBL exclaims that Marcos will make the country "great again." These views evince the place of the nation in the Marcos fantasy as Thing. In "the context of [jouissance]," Evans (2006, 207) writes, the Thing is "the object of desire," but also the "lost object which must be continually refound [sic]." Several meanings unfold from the authoritarian declaration that "THIS NATION WILL BE GREAT AGAIN" (RMP n.d., 42). Firstly, this nation was *once* great during Marcos's time, according to "Hidden Truths" and Riyoh. Secondly, hitherto "Untold Story" (terms used by both Buchokoy and the Maharlikan priesthood) "re-finds" this lost greatness. Lastly, there is the unspoken perverse fantasy of the MAS: that the nation will be great *again* through the reimposition of the Law. Since the Thing is "the impossible-real ultimate reference point of desire" (Žižek 2009, xv), the Nation-Thing binds the whole Marcos fantasy together: it is what Marcos obtained, what Cory and her mob stole, and what will be retrieved. Moreover, qualifying this object as *Nation-Thing* allows us to identify historical revisionism as a nationalist ideology. "National identification," claims Žižek (1990, 52), "is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing."

What bridges the previous section to this one is how castration makes the object of desire emerge. Castration is not only "the loss of something which the subject never possessed in the first place," but also "adds . . . a purely potential, nonexistent X, with respect to which the actually accessible

experiences appear all of a sudden as lacking, not wholly satisfying" (Žižek 2009, 19). The current state of the Philippines, therefore, pales in comparison to this actually nonexistent Thing made sublime by that "nonexistent X,"<sup>17</sup> and this lack sets the subject's desire into motion. As we shall see, however, the Thing is vitiated with contradictions. Before we proceed to locating these antagonisms, it is necessary to map the topology of the Thing: (1) the Thing/the shining New Society or *Bagong Lipunan* is made desirable by (2) the objet petit a of Marcos's greatness, although since this supposed quality remains virtual, the MAS must fixate on (3) fetishes such as gold and architecture to produce the effect that this greatness is real.

The Thing, as previously established, is the lost object of desire, but one can also posit that it is lost jouissance, which is simultaneously *heimliche* and *unheimliche*: "always-already here [but] always-already lost" (ibid., 61). Consider how in the Marcos fantasy the fruits of Marcos's rule are found supposedly all around the nation (Buchokoy [2011b] enumerates the Philippine Heart Center, Philippine Kidney Institute, the Philippine International Convention Center, and the San Juanico interisland bridge, to name a few), and yet historical revisionism still has to rely on some lost greater thing (from the Marcos gold to oft-touted "discipline" during the time). For Žižek (1990, 52), "the Nation-Thing is determined by a series of contradictory properties," and hence "the only way we can determine it is by resorting to different versions of an empty tautology: all we can say about it is, ultimately, that the Thing is 'itself', 'the real Thing.'" Consider one of the most common canards among MAS that the populace was more "disciplined,"<sup>18</sup> which from a Žižekian interpretation is essentially tautological. Martial law is "discipline" in the sense that ordinary law is suspended, allowing the state the unbridled power to discipline. In this tautological loop there is ideological obfuscation. There is, first, no explanation as to what discipline/martial law generates. Moreover, even if MAS equate discipline with security, there is an evasion of how, dialectically, an excess of security generates its opposite: the "security" afforded by totalitarian law causes fear of being apprehended, tortured, or killed. The very security forces become the threat to the people they claim to protect.

The Thing is nothing without the object-cause of desire. Analogously, historical revisionists assert that the Philippines has declined without Marcos's greatness, which cannot be reduced to any contingent entity.

Lacan borrows from Platonic philosophy to define objet petit a as *agalma*, “which refers to what makes an object valuable beyond its obvious, tangible qualities” (Hoens 2016, 105). The Maharlikan priesthood, for example, narrates that Marcos became one of the “two richest men in the world” for tending legal services as a “highly recommended *brilliant* young lawyer” (RMP n.d., 33, italics added). The “192,000 metric tons of gold” therefore is a mere signifier of Marcos’s objet petit a. Simply put, he supposedly obtained the gold because of his greatness.

The immateriality of the object-cause is also the means by which its contradictions can be critiqued. It is “a ‘negative magnitude’, as a mere ‘positivization of a void’” (Žižek 2009, 97) or, in other words, an actualization of what was never really there. Another contradiction, then, with the *doxa* that martial law was “good” because of “discipline” is that it does not exactly answer the question of what makes Marcos a great leader. At the most formal level, “discipline” is a quality ascribed to the regime, not the leader itself. We also observe that the externalization or displacement that constitutes the Marcos fantasy backfires. It is the populace that is considered to be “disciplined,” not the dictator himself.

Not only does historical revisionism rely on the positivization of the nonexistent, but it also resorts to external objects to cover up Marcos’s lack. The first canard among MAS that the legacy of the dictator is still evident in architecture can also be the last defense. Faced with this absence of objet petit a, the ideological subject points to fetishes, which Paul Taylor (2014, 93) describes as having the structure of a synecdoche or things substituting for the whole. Hence, one clings to tiny parts in an attempt to substantiate the supposed existence of the bigger whole: martial law–era architecture ought to be indicative of Marcos’s greatness. One can very well imagine confronting MAS by asking whether these buildings are all there is to the dictatorship. Moreover, the contradiction that opens up is how, dialectically, the sublime object can become excremental (Žižek 2003, 150). The moment, therefore, that pro-Marcos or MAS depend on fetishes, Marcos is desublimated and becomes like any other politician who creates infrastructure for self-promotion.

If the Marcos gold is also interpreted as a fetish, we are also able to locate in the Marcos fantasy what Žižek calls fetishist *disavowal*, “an excessive adherence to certain beliefs and practices and a simultaneous denial of any

genuine belief” (Taylor 2014, 93). To borrow Žižek’s (1989, 18) formulation of fetishist disavowal (“I know very well, but nonetheless”), the disposition of historical revisionism is: *I know very well that the gold does not exist, but nonetheless I believe in Marcos*. Therefore, rather than directly confronting MAS with the Marcos gold being a hoax, one only needs to ask them to go to the BSP in East Avenue (where the Maharlikan priesthood proposes it is found) to hunt for it.<sup>19</sup> Their hesitation would belie their fetishist disavowal. This contradiction, then, undermines the utilitarian capitalist ideology that overdetermines the Marcos fantasy. Belief in Marcos is sustained by the supposed wealth and prosperity of the era. However, the moment the gold (a vital detail for both Riyoh and the KBL) is removed historical revisionists would either have to rely on statistics (which would illustrate how the economy declined in the waning years of the regime) or desperately try to maintain the illusion by referring again to the thieving (m)Other.

The formula for fetishist disavowal can also yield another critique of the Marcos fantasy: *MAS do not believe that much at all in Marcos, therefore they must know about the gold*. Another strategy for unpacking Marcosian ideology is to partly admit to their claims (“Yes, but . . .”) rather than refuting their claims outright (“No!”). Marcos was able to recover gold, but only worth US\$14 billion and from the Japanese (Johnson 2003), not the mythical “Tallano gold.” This amount is only a fraction of the GDP and would therefore be insufficient to create the “Asian dollar” that Marcos allegedly planned to create (RMP n.d., 35). When an object from a fantasy is included in reality, it becomes “simply another positive object” (Žižek 2009, 105). Hence, when historical revisionists are faced with how the gold already *is* part of reality, it pales in comparison to what is recounted in the “Hidden Truths” of the Maharlikan priesthood.

Alternatively, if an object of desire is “included in reality, it causes a catastrophe” (ibid., xvi). If we allow historical revisionists to indulge in their fantasy of the (re)discovery of the Marcos gold, its “inclusion in reality” would cause a massive devaluation of the metal. As is the case with Marcos-era architecture, the sublime becomes excremental. Hence, it is by locating this underlying fetishist disavowal that the certainty of the pervert is not impervious. The fetish is the object that the ideological subject can “cling [to] in order to cancel the full impact of reality” (Žižek 2008, x). Without these fetishes, the Marcos fantasy and historical revisionist narrative collapse.

## Traversing the Marcos Fantasy? Psychoanalytical and Historical Trajectories

The Lacanian critique we have developed throughout this article, to invoke Marx, has not only interpreted historical revisionism, but also illuminated the way to overthrow the Marcos fantasy, which is to traverse it. “[Traversing] the fantasy,” according to Žižek, “does not mean getting rid of the fantasy but being even more taken up by it” (Cottrel 2014, 90). What this view implies is that the Marcos fantasy, while it appears to be moving toward the Nation-Thing, actually functions by maintaining a distance toward it, therefore allowing its perpetuation. As Žižek (2009, 27) argues, distance is the “condition of possibility,” not the limitation, of ideology and that therefore ideology is most efficient when we maintain distance from it.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the historical revisionists’ refusal of history as “fake” is, as Žižek would call it, an inversion of its true form: history, in contrast to revisionism, is *too real*. The MAS therefore rely on the imaginary to shield themselves from the traumatic Real. As Paul Verhaeghe (1994, 60) states, “The unmitigated real provokes anxiety, and this in turn gives rise to never-ending, defensive, imaginary constructs.” In the context of politics we find “the imaginary screen of satisfactions, myths . . . which enable the subjects to maintain a distance towards . . . horrors they are involved in” (Žižek 2009, 69). Žižek offers the example of how Nazis justified their brutality by presenting themselves as decent men made to do atrocious things.<sup>20</sup> The Marcos fantasy draws primarily on identification in the realm of the imaginary: in “Hidden Truths,” it is the alleged succession between Marcos and Ninoy; and in all three texts, how both the nation itself and Marcos are the victims of perceived injustice. The imaginary obfuscates “the real of the perverse (sadistic) *jouissance* in what they were doing” (ibid.), as this sadism is best exemplified by Riyoh’s self-satisfaction in declaring that anti-Marcos dissidents deserved to have been brutalized.<sup>21</sup>

In the imaginary functioning of the Marcos fantasy, identification and the concealment of the Real combine in order to obfuscate antagonism. Žižek (1990, 51) proposes that “the bond linking [a community’s] members always implies a shared relationship toward a Thing, toward Enjoyment incarnated.” Historical revisionism, therefore, attempts to forge a new social bond built on an authoritarian desire toward regaining the lost Nation-Thing. In the closing credits of his video, Riyoh (2016) writes: “Good or Bad? Let’s move on and unite once again brothers and sisters!” Despite his

far-right politics, the vlogger performs the liberal commonplace of trying to look at “both sides of the story” and proposing unity between hitherto divided groups. Given the pro-Marcos slant of his “real talk,” however, it is evident that he implies that disparate groups “move on and unite” under Marcos (or even another authoritarian like Duterte, who Riyoh also valorizes). Following Žižek (2006, 38), one way to traverse this imaginary fantasy is by insisting on how “*there is no sexual relationship*”: specifically, in the political realm, there is a class antagonism, which “refers to the impossibility of achieving a harmonious social organization of class relations” (Madra and Özselçuk 2014, 32). For all their conspiracies of the Filipino people being divided, these conservatives have the innermost fantasy of a harmonious society. However, the utmost obscenity in Riyoh’s (2016) video is acknowledging those who were “brave” (*matatapang*) during martial law, arguing how their torture is commonsensical and expecting them to “unite once more” (*magkaisa tayong muli*) under the very despot that oppressed them.

Since distance is the condition for the Marcos fantasy, one must dare historical revisionists to close this gap between them and their object of desire. The MAS gain *jouissance* from a circling around the Nation-Thing, rather than from the desired object itself. *Jouissance* is in the “vicious cycle circulating around the void of the (missing) object” (Žižek 2009, 43). Dialectically, therefore, perhaps the best way to undermine the Marcos fantasy is to demand that the MAS fulfill their desires to the very end: that the Maharlikan priesthood demand that the Marcos family look for the Marcos gold and denounce the CIA and Vatican in a public statement, that Riyoh now write the book he said he would create if he lived during the Marcos era, and that Baron Buchokoy speak to their “fellow countrymen . . . robbed . . . of dignity,” particularly those whose lives were destroyed by the regime. In Lacanian terms, they would be revealed to possess the ultimate guilt: of having given ground relative to one’s desire. Thus, with the collapse of the ideological subject’s relation to the Nation-Thing, their relation to Marcos qua other would also disintegrate. To invoke Lacan, Marcos is no big Other. Traversing the fantasy requires accepting how “there is no secret treasure” in the Other (ibid., 10). The “golden age” of the Philippines never existed. There was never anything created by Marcos’s greatness. Marcos cannot make the nation “great again” because he was never great.

Despite this possibility of forcing the ideological subject to traverse their fantasy, the specter of authoritarian fantasies will continue to haunt the

national psyche so long as capitalism and its inherent excesses exist. From this historical context comes a desire for a Master whose “role is precisely to introduce balance, to regulate the excess,” and thus “the fascist dream is simply to have capitalism without its ‘excess’, without the antagonism that causes its structural imbalance” (Žižek 1990, 60). The fixation of MAS on the Marcos economy illustrates the fantasy of a prosperous capitalist economy only threatened by conspirators that must be purged and not compromised by its immanent contradictions. While the Lacanian critique developed here points to ways of making authoritarian fantasies collapse under the weight of their own contradictions, it is entirely likely that ideological subjects would search for another Master. If not Marcos, Duterte. If not Duterte, someone else. Either way, we witness “a demand for a new Master” (ibid.).

## Conclusion

The Marcos fantasy that comprises historical revisionism has functions of position and negation. Position refers to the generation of jouissance both of Marcos qua Father (that is: his nation owes him everything and he is therefore entitled to unlimited enjoyment) and of MAS as “children” (i.e., the sadistic enjoyment of being exempt from the Law in exerting the Law, of brutally retrieving jouissance from the conspiratorial Other, and of restoring the lost “Golden Age”). Negation shields MAS from the contradictions of their fantasy and of Marcos, the central figure in their desire. These antagonisms include the processes by which Marcos’s symbolic status only emerged after the fall, lack is displaced onto Cory as (m)Other, and Marcos’s lack is also occluded through fetishes such as gold.

A Lacanian critique, therefore, comes to the conclusion that the way to traverse and overcome the Marcos fantasy is for MAS to fully identify with their desire: to embrace their disavowed enjoyment and to desire Marcos despite his lack and contradictions. Dialectically, the moment of full identification coincides with the disintegration of the fantasy, as the position and negation functions short-circuit each other. This psychoanalytic intervention, however, is only part of the task that lies ahead in overturning and overcoming authoritarian fantasies. As Žižek (1994, 15–16) argues, reality “disintegrates” for a subject once its ideological component is “subtracted” from it.

Hence, there is no total liberation from the authoritarian fantasies that oppress us without a radical political alternative. Without an egalitarian and

emancipatory alternative to replace such fantasies, we will continue to be subject to such ideologies and regimes. Once ideology has been exposed to negativity allowing for a clearing, the subject must be reconstituted. Without a viable alternative to replace either neoliberalism or authoritarianism, we might very well find ourselves merely alternating between the two or perpetually caught in the conflict between two equally bankrupt options. Critique is insufficient on its own to effectively defeat authoritarianism whether Marcosian or Dutertean. Any form of activism must not only define itself as a negation of the existing order but openly and unabashedly present itself as a way out of the quagmire of oppression toward the hope of emancipation.

## Abbreviations Used

<b>BSP</b>	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
<b>KBL</b>	Kilusang Bagong Lipunan
<b>MAS</b>	Marcos apologists and supporters
<b>RMP</b>	Royal Maharlikans Priesthood

## Notes

*This article is a revised version of a paper originally presented at “The Remains of a Dictatorship: An International Conference on the Philippines under Marcos,” held on 3–4 August 2017 at Novotel Manila, Quezon City, organized by this journal.*

- 1 Jouissance is often translated into English as “enjoyment,” although for the purposes of this article, its most pertinent aspect is “painful pleasure” (Evans 2006, 93), considering that much of the Marcos fantasy is built on the obscene pleasure in the pain of others.
- 2 The Real, in contrast to the imaginary and symbolic, is the part of the Lacanian tripartition that refers to trauma. Since it exists outside signification, the Real intrudes into either the imaginary or the symbolic (Evans 2006, 162–63). It is a core that is intrinsic to any ideology. As shall be shown later, Marcos apologists and supporters avoid the Real of their fantasy even though it is a part of it in order to maintain it. As Žižek (2003, 62) puts it, these subjects “swerve” away from the traumatic Real.
- 3 A common feature of all three texts is the anonymity of their creators. Baron Buchokoy, Mr. Riyoh, and the Maharlikan Priesthood have never revealed their real names. The authors of *Get Real Philippines*, the inspiration for Buchokoy’s productions, likewise often show user handles rather than actual names.
- 4 Buchokoy’s other video titled “AQUINO COJUANGCO: FACTS THEY DONT WANT YOU TO KNOW HD” has more views, numbering close to 1.75 million. It concludes by alleging that the Aquino clan has used subliminal messages in campaign jingles and logos to subjugate the masses (Buchokoy 2011a).



- 5 A YouTube video titled "Marcos Gold: Philippines is the Wealthiest Nation on Earth" uses a computer program to read parts of the document (grcmhy 2016). It begins with a clip of Karen Hudes, allegedly a former World Bank lawyer, who tells the interviewer from ultraconservative Next News Network that "400,000 metric tonnes [of gold] are in the Central Bank of the Philippines." Uploaded by a user who most recently uploaded pro-Duterte clips, the video currently has 800,233 views.
- 6 The whole paginated document titled "Royal Kingdom of Maharlikan" (RMP n.d.), which is contained in a pdf file named "The Untold Story of the Kingdom of Maharlikans." is cited to *Rumor Mill News*, a site which regularly releases right-wing conspiracy theories and bogus science. A partial web version is uploaded to the homepage of Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (New Society Movement). The name "Royal Maharlikans Priesthood" has been abbreviated to RMP.
- 7 It is pertinent to constellate Buchokoy's productions with one of the websites they mention in the written description of the video: Get Real Philippines (GRP). In a feature by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, a GRP supporter claims that "Buchokoy merely translated into video some of the ideas that he had seen in the websites," but goes on to "deny any insinuation that the sites' active members are pro-Marcos and anti-Aquino" (Lingao 2012). While there are articles on the site which openly condemn Marcos and a majority of them do not openly express support for the dictator, they nonetheless condone his actions and brutalities committed under his regime. One Celestino Manrique II (2016) praises "the heroes of the martial law era [who] stand up and fight for our liberties" and says that he "can hardly blame Marcos for the human rights violations." A user named ChinoF reduces historical revisionism to an abstraction of choice. He defends a statement from Bongbong Marcos that was accused of being historically revisionist by interpreting it as the younger Marcos "letting people decide for themselves what they want to believe" (ChinoF 2016b). Overall, Buchokoy, GRP, and the other selected texts are all conservative in orientation. Given the clear link between "Hidden Truth" and the GRP, passages from the website's blog articles will be cited at times to illustrate the ideological nuances of historical revisionism.
- 8 Mon Casiple of the Institute for Political and Economic Reform rightly points out that Buchokoy uses many quotations "out of context." For example, the director alleges that the communists were a significant constituent of the EDSA protestors, when actually they took a "boycott stance" (Lingao 2012).
- 9 Many online MAS are often pro-Duterte as well. One commenter to Mr. Riyoh's video states that they are "proud to say that I am PRO MARCOS . . . and PRO DU30." Parallel to this, it appears that several GRP bloggers are also Trump supporters. Webmaster "benign0" (2017) expresses sympathy for Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric: "Flawed as his campaign platform and, now, the executive orders he is issuing may be, they all make perfect sense to ordinary Americans."
- 10 This sentiment is, to use terms from cultural studies theory, the connotation decoded by Buchokoy's viewers, despite the disavowal of any firm stance. One commenter writes, "you dont have to be a marcos loyalist' to realize that the philppines [sic] is better off before edsa revolution. since 1986 only the rich enjoyed cory's democracy" (Buchokoy 2011b). Another one says, "my father would always tell me that their life with marcos as a president was way better than cory's reign. Food is cheap etc." (ibid.).
- 11 Žižek comments on architecture as the external manifestation of ideology. No structure can be seen solely in terms of utility since its meaning as utility must be asserted. The notion of utility therefore "occludes" ideology (Žižek 2009, 2). Any invocation by MAS of Marcos-era architecture is therefore undoubtedly ideological.
- 12 Mon Casiple comments that Buchokoy's claims are "not very new [since] these came out immediately after the assassination of Ninoy and right after EDSA 1" (Lingao 2012).
- 13 Another example of the disavowal of jouissance is the attempt of Marcos apologists to delineate between the legality of martial law and illegality of atrocities. GRP blogger Ilda expresses doubt as to whether "atrocities were committed with the knowledge of the late President Marcos himself." What such claims ultimately miss is how power is in the very gesture of turning a blind eye to such violence. "While prohibiting his son's escapades, the father not only discreetly ignores and tolerates them, but even solicits them" (Žižek 2014, 127). The jouissance of the repressive state does not originate from direct orders from the dictator, but from transgressions they are allowed to perform outside his gaze.
- 14 This assertion is corroborated by recent events in Mindanao under martial law. Samira Gutoc-Tomawis testified in the Senate on human rights violation. An autistic child was physically and psychologically tortured, Muslim women were made to strip, and a group of men were ordered by uniformed men to dig their own graves (Tan 2017).
- 15 In addition, Žižek (2012) suggests that every ideological inclusion is supported by its opposite, exclusion. The all-inclusive paternal love of Marcos is hence contingent on the exclusion of "Dilawan."
- 16 For many GRP bloggers, the enjoyment of anti-martial law activists lacks substance and stunts the growth of the Philippines. Bluntly, Kate Natividad (2015) calls online dissenters against the crimes of the dictatorship "bleeding-heart emos." ChinoF (2016b) accuses the "fixation" of Filipinos on martial law as "dragging our country down."
- 17 An example of this "specter of comparisons" is this statement from a GRP blogger about the difference between the Marcos and Aquino presidencies: "If there are 'millenials' who seem to think Martial Law was a golden era, remember that there are older people who tell them that. But there are a few things to think about. One, the achievements of Marcos look more attractive today than those of both Aquino administrations" (ChinoF 2016a).
- 18 As one commenter on the Riyoh (2016) video exclaims, "MARCOS IS THE BEST GOOD PRESIDENT MAY DESIPLINA."
- 19 Clear examples of the inefficacy of confronting MAS with facts are the examples in Mr. Riyoh's video. A user comments that a BBC article shows that there are only 171,300 metric tons of gold in existence. To this comment, pro-Marcos commenters show three common responses: (1) dismissing such information as fake ("marami ng fake info na nagkalat sa mga website, feeling magaling porket nakabasa lng sa googLe,??"), (2) repeating the very claims of historical revisionism ("lahat nasa pilipinas. nakatago pa lang"), or (3) pointing to statements from fake experts ("sa IMF report according to Wolfgang struckt at Karen hudes at etc. meron tayong (southeast Asia lalo na ang pilipinas) ganyang karaming gold na higit pa sa mundo").
- 20 This parallel between Marcosian and Nazi ideologies calls to mind the article from the GRP cited above, which speculates that Marcos never knew about the violations committed during martial law. The author attempts to excuse the Marcos children from their complicity: "We can name all the victims of abuse and torture during the Martial Law years and ask the same question. We may



find that it would have been too far-fetched for the young Marcoses at least to be involved or aware that such gruesome crimes were happening under their father's watch" (Ilda 2015). Bongbong, however, was already thirty years old toward the end of the regime, certainly an age when one can be aware of atrocities.

- 21 A GRP blogger makes a similar claim when he avers apropos human rights violations that "the rebel forces along with the communist-influenced activists brought it upon themselves" (Manrique 2016).

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