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## **Narrating the Dictator(ship): Social Memory, Marcos, and Ilokano Literature after the 1986 Revolution**

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# Narrating the Dictator(ship) Social Memory, Marcos, and Ilokano Literature after the 1986 Revolution

This article inquires into the social memory of Ferdinand Marcos and of his dictatorship in the literature written in the language of his home region, the Ilocos, in the period since his downfall in the 1986 People Power Revolution. The novels *Saksi ti Kaunggan* (1986–1987) by Juan S. P. Hidalgo Jr. and *Dagiti Bin-i ti Kimat* (1995) by Clesencio B. Rambaud are used as indicators of changing narrative social memories of Marcos in Ilokano literature. Hidalgo's novel exemplifies the Ilokano writers' "loyalist" memory of Marcos, whereas Rambaud's novel indexes attempts to reassess Marcos and the legacies of his dictatorship. This article seeks to contribute to the literature on the social memory of Marcos's military regime; looks into the braiding of literature, memory, and the nation; and examines the constitution of memory in gender.

**KEYWORDS: MARCOS DICTATORSHIP • SOCIAL MEMORY • ILOKANO LITERATURE • GENDER • HISTORY • NATION**

*Dictatorship and authentic literature are incompatible.  
The writer is the natural enemy of dictatorship.  
—Ismail Kadare (2003)*

After Ferdinand Marcos was finally overthrown in the February 1986 People Power Revolution, a significant section of Filipino society remained loyal to him. Despite revelations about his excesses he could still count on the love, affection, and support of his fellow Ilokano, especially those coming from his home province, Ilocos Norte, a place where Corazon (Cory) Aquino, his successor, never set foot in the six years that she was president. A number of Ilokano writers and artists expressed their personal loyalty to and support for Marcos through poems, essays, novels, and paintings celebrating the ousted dictator and what he supposedly did for the Filipino nation. In time, however, a few writers began to articulate subtle revisions of such an unstinting admiration for Marcos and his accomplishments. Their works began to engage, if not incorporate, other versions of Marcos and of what he did, versions that radically differed from those held sacrosanct by many older Ilokano loyalist writers. Not unexpectedly, their reevaluation of Marcos was coded, expressed in ways that evaded direct confrontation but also gave enough indication of rumblings of dissent. These coded expressions of disagreement with elders and of skepticism toward the legacy of Marcos are significant in that they represent the beginnings of the overcoming of a “psychology” or mentality of unquestioned and unquestioning loyalty to the dictator among many Ilokano writers during and beyond the Marcos period.

This article inquires into the narrative social memory of Marcos and of the Marcos dictatorship in the post-1986 Ilokano literature and explores the gradual changes in Ilokano writers’ support for Marcos.<sup>1</sup> It focuses on the novels *Saksi ti Kaunggan* (Innermost Witness; henceforth *Saksi*) by Juan S. P. Hidalgo Jr. and *Dagiti Bin-i ti Kimat* (The Seeds of Lightning; henceforth *Bin-i*) by Clesencio B. Rambaud.<sup>2</sup> Both were serialized in the Makati-based Ilokano weekly magazine *Bannawag*, which has been published since 1934 as part of the Liwayway group of regional publications (*Liwayway*, *Bannawag*, *Bisaya*, and *Hiligaynon*) but which is now owned and published by the Manila Bulletin group of publications. Hidalgo’s *Saksi*, serialized from 21 April 1986 to 11 May 1987, is an exemplar of Ilokano writers’ absolute identification with Marcos and espousal of the discourses he disseminated

in order to consolidate and justify his dictatorship (Ileto 1998a; Rafael 2000; Lico 2003). Rambaud’s *Bin-i*, serialized from 4 September to 5 December 1995, in contrast, indexes not only attempts in Ilokano literature to reassess Marcos but also, perhaps more crucially, the degree to which Ilokano writers are prepared to confront the legacies of Marcos and his dictatorship. By analyzing these two novels this article seeks to contribute to the literature on the social memory of Marcos’s military regime.<sup>3</sup> Instead of looking into how Filipinos resisted and fought Marcos’s totalitarian rule, it examines collaboration and complicity as well as ambivalent articulations of attempts to alter Marcos’s image in Ilokano literature.<sup>4</sup> It also looks into the braiding of literature, memory, and the nation, and the appropriation of history in the construction of social memory. Finally, this essay examines the constitution of memory in gender.

### ***Saksi ti Kaunggan*: “A Song of the Full-Blooded Loyalist”<sup>5</sup>**

*Saksi*, which began to be serialized less than two months after Marcos’s downfall, arguably provides one of the most immediate novelistic reflections on the event. So temporally close it was to the event that its lengthy quotations of newspaper accounts of, for example, activities by Marcos loyalists after the revolution could indicate that the novel was still being written while it was already being serialized. It was thus not only a work whose writing was impelled by the ouster of Marcos but also at that time a work in progress constitutively drawing from and being shaped by its immediate present. Hence *Saksi* could be read both as a contemporaneous record of and running commentary on the overthrow of Marcos.<sup>6</sup>

The novel, however, is more than just an account of the present that it reflects on. The ouster of Marcos—desired by many Filipinos and seen as inaugurating a new beginning for the nation—was a shock to his loyalists, a reality difficult to accept and face. *Saksi* rechannels this shock to meditate on the nation’s future, an exercise shaped by a reflection on the nation’s history (past) and state (present). It uses the People Power Revolution, which Hidalgo considers as yet another manifestation of how the United States controls the Philippines, as cause for a soul-searching examination of the disease that afflicts the nation, an examination that is vitally dependent on a reexamination of Philippine history from its beginnings to the present. It seizes and exploits the moment to issue a nationalist call to shake off US imperialism and for the country to set off on a project of self-determination. Thus it not

only meditates on the ouster of Marcos but also mediates in determining the historic import to the nation of the revolution. It refunctions the revolution as the historic time and process of realizing freedom, a freedom the novel equates with the nation and which in turn it imagines as Marcos. *Saksi*, therefore, is a hagiography of Marcos, one that rewrites the 1986 revolution as the time and means not of the expulsion of Marcos but of his redemption, resurrection, and return as Filipino nation-freedom.

### Incorporation, History, and the People Power Revolution

How does *Saksi* realize the identification of the nation's redemption from U.S. imperialism with the redemption of Marcos? To answer this question, we must examine the diverse but interrelated ways and media by which the novel lays claim to the nation and to history. The diversity of the strategies employed to do this, however, does not express a polyphonic narrative of the People Power Revolution but rather different ways of (re)telling the same version in order to consolidate this narrative's dominance. The diverse strategies become the foundation of *Saksi*'s use of history in the service of Marcos and of the novel's transformation of the nation as Marcos. I classify these strategies as the *incorporation* and the *appropriation* of Philippine history and the People Power Revolution in the service of Marcos.

Incorporation, according to Scandura and Thurston (2001, 20), makes embodiment and materiality central to how we deal with and make sense of our implication in, and experience of, the making of history. In *Saksi* incorporation takes the form of the embodying of the nation by the novel's protagonist, Felipe Lazaro Saleng. (Similarly, embodiment is the mechanism that *Bin-i* employs in its apologia for the military.) As the embodiment of the nation, Felipe is used to register corporeally the crisis and upheaval that the Filipino nation was going through in 1986.<sup>7</sup> Felipe's construction as embodiment of the nation is informed by *Saksi*'s "philosophy of history," and by its reconstruction of the nation's history as informed by its understanding of how the 1986 revolution came to be. Felipe is the body and mind through which the novel's experiencing and interpretation of the revolution are processed and sifted through.

### Felipe Lazaro Saleng as Nation

Felipe's description of his experiences of the events leading to and during the revolution clearly establishes him as the Filipino nation. On 28 Febru-

ary 1986 he gives an account of what he has been going through in the last three months. From the last week of November 1985 to 7 February 1986, he says, "di agsarday ti panagtibtibbayok, panagpangato ti presion ti dara ken temperaturak, ken panagbutbutengko iti diak mainaganan a banag a kasla adda paspasungadak a dakkal a didigra a diak ammo no kasano ken kaano ti idadatengna" [unceasing were my nervousness, the rise in my blood pressure and temperature, and my fear of something which I cannot name as though I was expecting a great destruction how and when it is going to come I do not know] (Hidalgo 1986a, 3, 19). From 8 to 15 February, he says

dimmegdeg a dimmegdeg ti panagtibtibbayok ket kasla bumtak ti pusok no kakarona, ket timmayok ti presion ti darak agingga iti uray la bumsog dagiti akinruar nga uratko ket kasla beggangngen ti kangato ti temperaturak; ket panagriknak, kasla kanayon nga agginggined, a kas man adda napipigsa a garadugod nga aggapu iti kaunggan ti daga; a kasla saanen a paset ti bagik ti ulok ket kasla naipatugaw laeng kadagiti abagak nga aglikiglikig no magunggon, mapuligos . . . ket nangrugi a makangngegak, uray siriringak, kadagiti nakaad-adu a timek ken ikkis nga aggapu iti amin a direksion . . . ket naminsan, nangngegko ti napigsa nga ikkis ti maysa a babai iti daya, iti laud, iti amianan, iti abagatan: "Nangabakak! Nangabakak!" a sinaruno dagiti riniwriw a sipsipat ken pukkaw; ket gapu kadagitoy a sinagabak, kapilitan nga inyiddak; inamirisnak ti uppat nga espesialista ket maymaysa ti nakitada: adda kano diperensia ti ulok; mabalin a maoperaak; adda kano diperensia ti pusok; mabalin a maoperaak; ngem kunak met nga awan ti kuarta a pagpaoperak ken agingga kadagitoy, pagat-alipusposko pay laeng ti utangko. (ibid., 22–23)

my nervousness became worse and at its worst, my heart felt like it was going to explode, and my blood pressure shot up until my outer nerves bulged and my temperature was as hot as a fiery coal; I felt that there was always an earthquake, as though strong rumblings issued from the depths; that my head was no longer a part of my body and it felt like it just sat on my shoulders that leaned on both sides alternately when shaken, turned . . . and I began to hear, even when I was awake, of a multitude of voices and cries that came from all directions . . . and once, I heard the loud scream of a woman in the

east, in the west, in the north, in the south. "I won! I won!" followed by thunderous claps and shouts; and because of these that I suffered, I was forced to lie down; four specialists examined me and they said the same thing. I had a defect in the head; I may have to be operated on; there is something wrong with my heart; I may have to be operated on; but I said that I do not have any money for an operation and that up to now, my debts are up to my head.

From 22 to 25 February 1986, he says, "my body seemed cut into two from the head down to my feet, and I had two heads, two brains, two hearts; and my two brains, they turned deals, negotiations and suggestions into a battlefield, and because of the heat of their battle, I felt that my brain cells were being stirred . . ." (ibid., 24).

From the last week of November 1985 to 25 February 1986, Felipe also dreams of what he/the nation was physically experiencing: the downfall of Marcos, the People Power Revolution, U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, the ideological and armed conflicts that are tearing the country apart, social oppression where the perpetrators and victims are Felipe himself, and political and armed struggles where the actors (or contending forces) are Felipe himself and where the victims all look like Felipe.

Felipe also declares that, from 15 to 22 February 1986, he dreamed of events alluding to those that led to the revolution: the electoral battle between Aquino and the dictator, the military mutiny led by Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel V. Ramos and, finally, the start of the revolution in the military camps along the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA). Felipe also declares that from 22 to 25 February 1986, he dreamed of Marcos's attempts to remain in power, the belated decision of the U.S. to dump Marcos in favor of Aquino, and Aquino's assumption of power. In these dreams and in the earlier ones, Felipe offers the view that the February 1986 event was masterminded by the U.S., that the events were under the direction (in the cinematic sense) of the U.S., and that Felipe's body refused to accept the new head to replace that which had been his head for a long time.

Felipe, however, is not simply the male nation. His experiences on 25 February 1986 establish him as the nation who/which embodies Marcos. Felipe says that at dawn of that day he had two dreams: (1) that something/someone cut his head off and replaced it with another, and (2) that he went to see his dentist to have one badly damaged tooth extracted and replaced

immediately. He describes a fiesta being held in a nearby residential subdivision, a fiesta happening at about nine in the evening of that same day, while he was still bleeding from the tooth operation. He says that this big fiesta, accompanied by firecrackers and the joyous noise of bells and vehicles, is being held to celebrate the coronation of the community's fiesta queen.

Clearly these events allude to the euphoria that greeted the announcement of the departure of the dictator and his family. Yet, the question is, if Felipe embodies the nation, then why is he not the queen (Aquino) being crowned? Why is the fiesta being held in a different place and not where Felipe lives, he being the physical and symbolic embodiment of the nation's "timespace" (Boyarin 1995)? The answer lies ultimately in the fact that Felipe embodies Marcos.

On the same night, at around 9 p.m. of 25 February 1986, Felipe dreamed of being forcibly put on a stretcher by several men; of being taken to an airport and escorted to an airplane where his family, relatives, and friends were already waiting; of his mouth being examined and told he needed treatment because his gums were infected; and of being told he must be flown to "Ik-kam Hospital."<sup>8</sup> Clearly, as well as being used by the novel to materialize the nation's condition, Felipe is also used to delineate the ideological position of the novel toward Aquino and the role which it believes was played by the U.S. in the overthrow of Marcos. Such delineation of the novel's alignment with Marcos and of Felipe as embodiment of the dictator is defined further by the novel's reconstruction and appropriation of history through dreams, paintings, and films.

### Scripted History

Hidalgo argues that the 1986 revolution was plotted and directed by the United States, and that the ouster of Marcos was merely obeying the script written by the United States. Hidalgo's view of history being a script is developed in his depiction of the refusal of the town mayor of Bautista to yield his post to the new government's designated officer-in-charge (OIC)—an allusion to then San Juan city mayor Joseph Estrada who defied the order of then Interior and Local Government secretary Aquilino Pimentel to vacate the town hall. Hidalgo represents the struggle for power in Bautista as something already determined, plotted at will, written like a film script, hence substituting the will and voice of the people who elected him with the will of the outsider. Hidalgo turns this tragic turn of events into a farce by depicting

the struggle for power in Bautista as a series of documentary films hopelessly adhering to, because determined by, a script.<sup>9</sup>

Hidalgo's view that Marcos's downfall was plotted by the U.S. constitutes his nationalist retelling of events in Bautista and the Bautista people's resistance to Imperial, the town's designated OIC, who the novel discredits because he is a foreign or alien body who must not be allowed to govern the town. Imperial (note the name) must be rejected because he represents, and is an instrument of, American imperialism. The desire to prevent the town from falling into the hands of a "foreign" leader allegorizes the novel's narrative of Philippine decolonization from the United States. It echoes *Saksi's* call for freedom from American interference, an interference personified in Cory Aquino. *Saksi* rejects Aquino because it believes she was put in power by the United States. The novel calls on the nation to completely sever its ties with the U.S. because of its betrayal of Marcos. Its rejection of Imperial echoes its rejection of Aquino, an American-installed replacement of Marcos who, to the U.S., had become too nationalistic and too independent to be manipulated.

That Marcos was too nationalistic to serve the interests of the United States is echoed and propounded by historical and mythical personages (Soliman, Malong, Silang, and Urduja) who are resurrected by the novel as Marcos loyalists, two of whom, through dreams, reembody Felipe. They argue that the country was moving toward industrialization, propelled by government policies and projects that were benefiting all sectors of society; that the U.S. did not want this growth to happen because it wanted the Philippines to remain dependent on and subservient to it; and that the U.S. could not keep the country in such a dominated position because Marcos was becoming an independent (disobedient and uncooperative) leader. The U.S. must topple him and to do that it must redirect the course of Philippine history, an interference Hidalgo sees as rewriting the nation's history, as (re) scripting it.

For Hidalgo history in this context is written even before it happens and the only task left is to record it, to film it from the point of view (the script) of the people waiting to be installed in power. History, therefore, is something that a higher power is able to determine and manipulate and something that we enact, something that happens only because we act to fulfill what had been predetermined. To free us is to control this history. Hidalgo argues that foreign powers and spirits have controlled our history, and to redeem our

nation is to take hold of and possess this history. History, a form of script over which we have the power and agency to write and fulfill, should be ours to write; it is our script we must follow if we want to be free. To write, that is, determine our history is to determine our future.

*Saksi's* discourse and project of national self-determination is underpinned by its project of redeeming Marcos, an undertaking that transforms him as the nation's savior. Therefore it simultaneously makes Marcos the redeemer and the redeemed, an undertaking it accomplishes by reconstructing Philippine history according to how Marcos "scripted" it, a reconstruction and retelling of Marcos's version of Philippine history that *Saksi* achieves and performs through paintings.

### Painting History

There are two sets of paintings of history in *Saksi*. The first are those by Felipe and the second by Eugene del Mar, a Marcos loyalist. Both defend the necessity of the imposition of martial law, of it being the cure for the nation's ills. Equally important, the paintings are visual representations of Marcos being the nation's savior.

Felipe's paintings deal with the precolonial and colonial history of the nation and with contemporary events, such as the assassination of Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino. They interpret the origin of the nation: the conflicts, struggles, and betrayals that attended its formation from its barangay origins to its emergence as a nation. They focus on events that highlight the sources of the nation's divisions. More importantly, they propound a theory of how the Filipino people fell into the hands of foreign masters. They argue that the willingness of Filipinos to collaborate with colonizers is but an evolution of our ancestors' practice of drinking the blood of the animals they had hunted, believing that by drinking the blood they would acquire and possess these animals' qualities. Present-day Filipinos no longer drink animal blood; they drink "power-as-blood" because their collaboration with foreign colonizers is driven by their desire to acquire and possess the power of these foreigners. Finally, Felipe claims that he is the protagonist and victim in all of the historical events depicted in the paintings, events that attended and shaped the emergence and development of the Filipino nation.

Del Mar, in contrast, focuses only on the contemporary period and picks up where Felipe's chronicle leaves off. His eleven miniature paintings, which have to be viewed with a magnifying lens or under a microscope,



depict post-1986 events. They may be grouped into three, according to what they implicitly perform. Paintings 1 to 3 criticize the Aquino government and the people supporting her. They are meant to discredit the post-Marcos regime and set the stage for justifying his return and the people's continued faith in him. Paintings 4 to 8 depict the threats faced by the nation, which serve to justify the return of the deposed dictator. Paintings 9 to 11 deal with the suffering of loyalists and the nation and with the nation's deliverance from communism and Muslim separatism.

In the context of the paintings' argument that Marcos remains the only one who can solve the twin problems of communism and Muslim separatism, the paintings rely ideologically on Marcos/martial law discourse, particularly Marcos's justification for imposing military rule. The paintings (and *Saksi*) mime Marcos's dubious claim that, in imposing martial law, he rescued the entire nation from the evils of communism and territorial disintegration. Because the nation continues to face these problems, he will come back to rescue the nation again. Thus the paintings seek to legitimize martial law and the dictator by making history resemble Marcos's version of it.

The paintings reproduce Marcos's appropriation of Philippine history and nationalist historiography. The history visually depicted in and by the paintings is a replica of the nation's history as reconstructed in Marcos's *Tadhana* (1977): the preoccupation of the paintings with the barangay roots of the Filipino nation; the conflicts that have wedged and postponed the formation of this nation; the emergence of Filipino heroes who helped to form this nation; and these heroes, beginning from Lapu-Lapu, reborn either as Marcos (through embodiment by Felipe) or as Marcos loyalists. Ileto (1997, 101–2) has argued that Marcos commissioned *Tadhana* (Destiny), a multivolume history of the Filipino people, where “fully a quarter of the series is allocated to the pre-Hispanic ‘roots of Filipino heritage.’ Marcos identifies the origins of the future Filipino nation in the idealized, pre-Spanish barangay—a community bound together by kinship ties and loyalty to the paternal leader—whose natural evolution into a state was frustrated by the Spaniards.” Equally importantly, *Tadhana* was written so Marcos could “install himself as the successor to the series of fighters for freedom from the sixteenth-century Lapu-Lapu onwards” (Ileto 1998b, 167). The paintings (and the novel) amplify how Marcos inserted himself into the nation's history as the hero responsible for the construction and attainment of the Filipino “New Society.”

The paintings also echo Marcos's defense of his regime against mounting resistance, especially from the radical student movement. In trying to wrest the discourse of the unfinished revolution (Ileto 1998b) away from the militant students of the 1970s, Marcos cast doubt on these students' nationalism by asserting that although “[i]t is certainly wise to learn from the experience of others, . . . it is also unwise, if not traitorous, to fashion ourselves after—or submit ourselves to—foreign models” (quoted in *ibid.*, 194). Ileto (*ibid.*) explains that “[b]y identifying the sources of the students' inspiration as alien and external to Philippine society and history, Marcos [sought] to diminish the authenticity and significance of their revolution. He can then position himself to lay claim to the heritage of history.” Moreover, as Ileto (1998a, 187) has written, Marcos claimed that one of the aims of his “democratic revolution” was “to eradicate [the people's] inherited ‘colonial vices.’” This view is restated in the novel by Felipe in his paintings through which he argues that Filipinos have been drinking the blood of foreigners, of communism as driven by a foreign ideology. The paintings therefore argue that the communist movement, with which the militant student movement was identified, was inspired by a different kind of “colonial” mentality.

### The 1986 Revolution as the Rise of Marcos

*Saksi* realizes, in the sense of knowing and achieving, Marcos's redemption through Felipe's attainment of his autochthonous past. His project of achieving self-determination, of recovering the power and agency to author, write, and direct the course of his own history and destiny is equated with the expulsion of the foreign spirits that possessed him when he drank from foreign ideologies. He must pursue self-renewal through drinking his own blood.

In an affidavit executed on 28 January 1987, Felipe tells of how he came to realize that no one but himself will deliver him from his sorry state. In three visions (corresponding to his past, present, and future) that come to him while under hypnosis-therapy, he discovers the roots of his physical, mental/psychic, and spiritual (soul) disease. He is also shown the cure, the source of his healing. His future recovery is his recovery of his future, which *Saksi* equates with his autochthonous past.

In his first vision Felipe witnesses how others gained control of him. He is guided by an old man who looks like Fr. Gregorio Aglipay whose mission is to show him why he is what he is today. Felipe journeys into his past and present, and sees with his own eyes the story of his life. It begins with the

coming of Western imperialism, which, the old man claims, is the root cause of Felipe's present condition. Felipe sees his physical body peacefully floating on a calm sea. Suddenly, three men from out of nowhere appear. The man in black, described as the tallest and biggest of the three, utters something incomprehensible to Felipe. The old man explains that the word is actually Felipe's ancient name, and the man, possessing the key ("naalana ti tulbekmo") to unlock him, can now do anything to him. Upon the utterance of this name, something comes out of Felipe's body, a likeness that, however, is not simply his soul but his soul-body. Felipe's likeness is captured, taken to another place, and tied down to eight big rocks jutting out of the sea, where an eagle would visit him everyday to eat his liver until he is freed. The old man tells Felipe that his likeness is being punished for disobeying the will of the man in black, for giving his countrymen and women the power of fire and light, for showing them their future.

Felipe and the old man return to his likeness's body left floating on the sea. They witness how a legion of spirits is competing to possess it. The first group of spirits is predominantly yellow in color, and because they are not the rightful owners of Felipe's body they do not fit as they are too small, too big, too wide, too long, and so on, to enter it, hence failing to revive it. The spirits, predominantly red in color, also fail to revive it. Some red spirits, however, do not attempt to occupy the body but only stay close by and continue surrounding it, observing closely how they can take over the body when the time is right. Another group, described as divided into factions and predominantly white but also red and blue, goes near the body. These spirits attempt to remove those already in the body and drive away those closing in. They, however, fail because of internal discord. Seeing this, Felipe remembers his captured likeness and asks the old man when he is going to be freed and who is going to "unbind" him. The old man tells him: "Inton maurnos ni Lakay Akkos dagiti tulang daydi lalaki nga inalun-on ti berkakan, inton makapagtaraken ti manok ken makapagtaulen ti aso, ket agbukel manen a naan-anay a lalaki. Ti naganna: Lam-ang" [When Lakay Akkos has put together the bones of the man swallowed by the berkakan fish, when the rooster can already crow and the dog bark, and when he has been fully restored as a man. His name: Lam-ang] (Hidalgo 1987a, 12).

Who is this Lam-ang? The following dialogue between Felipe and Dr. Naquem in an earlier session, and spoken in the context of Felipe's vision of a demonstration of Marcos loyalists at the Rizal Park, Quezon City Memo-

rial Circle, and the Asian Institute of Tourism, reveals the identity of this liberator Lam-ang:

Maysa a lalaki a nagbarabad iti nalabaga, puraw ken asul ti timmakder iti abay ti agbitbitla a lalaki ket intayagna ti dakkel a ladawan ti malalaki tapno makita ti amin a naitallaong.

DR. NAQUEM: Asino ti nailadawan?

SALENG: Ti Lakan, kunada. Wen, Lam-ang, kunada pay. (Hidalgo 1986b, 37)

A man wearing a red, white, and blue headband stood beside the man speaking and he raised a big picture of the hero [Marcos] for everyone to see.

DR. NAQUEM: Who is in the picture?

SALENG: The Lakan, they say. Yes, Lam-ang, they also say.

The vision presents Marcos as the savior and liberator of the nation from colonial perdition, from the lingering consequences of colonialism, and from the Coryists and communists—those controlled by foreign powers and ideologies. It is only the dictator Marcos, the nation itself, who can awaken the sleeping nation-body of Felipe and bring back the precolonial Filipino soul-body captured by the colonizers.

The second vision presents Felipe in the company of an old woman who helps him discover the source of his present problems. They journey inside Felipe's body and there witness how the white corpuscles of Felipe's blood are eating away the red corpuscles. The old woman tells Felipe that he has leukemia. Felipe is shocked by what the white and red corpuscles resemble: NPAs attacking government military camps and ambushing government soldiers; police and marines violently dispersing civilian demonstrators at the Ayala Bridge and Mendiola; demonstrators beating an infiltrator at Rizal Park; a cadaver in a pushcart. The old woman tells Felipe that his cure is in him; it is in his mind. If Felipe wills in his mind, all his body's cells will follow, his body will change, and he will become healthy and strong again.

In his third vision Felipe finds himself naked in a desert. Weak and thirsty, he crawls toward an oasis only to discover that it is a mirage. At other times, the water disappears just when he attempts to drink. Each time, he



sees, reflected in the water, the Quezon City Memorial Circle, the Batasang Pambansa, the Manila Hotel, GMA Channel 7—structures and places associated with the attempts of Marcos loyalists or the military to wrest power from Aquino.

Wounded and bleeding, Felipe gives up and falls asleep. He awakens, sees his arm bleeding, and realizes that he could drink his own blood to quench his thirst. And so he sucks his own blood, is revived, regains strength, and is able to stand up. Then he begins to walk. He says that it was only then that he realized that his salvation lies in his own body. He will not lose blood because the blood he drinks goes back to his own body. Hence Felipe's palingenetic act of self-renewal and self-determination.

These three visions provide a synoptic and truncated narrative of the country's past, present, and future. They reveal the etiology of the country's disease and provide the direction, that is, the course of its cure. The nation's decolonization and redemption rely on Felipe's drinking his own blood. Recall that in his paintings Felipe argued that the nation has "drunk the blood" of other nations. In drinking his own blood, he signifies his break from these nations, particularly the U.S., which have enslaved and held him captive. This discourse of the nation's future, which is primarily its decolonization, is reiterated in Felipe's letter to his brother Primo. In the letter Felipe tells of what he goes through in another session with Dr. Naquem, a parapsychologist and director of the Philippine Center for Advanced Paranormal Studies, an allusion to the Philippine Center for Advanced Study, which virtually functioned as Marcos's think tank.

In this session four spirits possess Felipe. The first is Joven Obien Baquiran, a storyteller/author/novelist deceived by the other three spirits (Misters Nero, Caldeo, and Sabeo) who have stolen and profited from his work. Felipe provides the body enabling these spirits (perhaps an allusion to the three colonizers) to confront each other. After "enacting" Joven Obien Baquiran's "Job-ian" story (note the initials of the name), he next becomes the body through which Joven Obien Baquiran tells the story of Johnny Orata Balliguin (again, note the initials).

Balliguin's story transforms the story of Job's persecution by the devil, which God had expressly allowed, into the story of Marcos's persecution by one of the Pangulo's ministers. Pangulo, whose voice the novel describes as like that of Ronald Reagan's, allows one of his ministers, Luz del Fierro, to test Balliguin's loyalty to him. Like Job and Baquiran, Balliguin is visited by

terrible misfortune. On his birthday his two rice granaries, bank, supermarket, and other properties located in different parts of the area are looted. Also, all his ten leaders are kidnapped. Balliguin's advisers tell him that only a very powerful person could have done these. They correctly theorize that it could be the work of one of the Pangulo's ministers and that it was meant not only to test his loyalty to the Pangulo but, even more importantly, to bring him down because he is beginning to pose a threat to the Pangulo. Balliguin, however, remains confident that the Pangulo would not do such a thing, convinced that the chain binding them together remains strong and because he has always been good to the Pangulo.

Balliguin, finally awakening to the deception and exploitation to which he has been subjected, resolves to sever his ties with the Pangulo. The Pangulo and Luz del Fierro, however, orchestrate to bring him down. Del Fierro hires the most powerful "baglan," a native shaman, who makes him incapable of distinguishing reality from hallucination. Instantly Balliguin sees four men (a Muslim, a Cordilleran, a member of the Communist New People's Army (NPA), and a state soldier) who are after different parts of his body. Extremely powerful, the four men cut off his legs and arms and remove his brain and heart. Clearly these four men represent the most pressing problems (that of communism and national disintegration) faced by the nation in the present.

Treated by a powerful baglan, Balliguin recovers. He learns that everything had been the work of the Pangulo. Just when Balliguin decides to sever his ties with the Pangulo, Minister del Fierro arrives at his house. "Aware" of what happened to Balliguin, she declares that she has been sent by the Pangulo to offer Balliguin free hospitalization and treatment in the best hospital. Del Fierro's declaration recalls and recites Felipe's visions on 25 February 1986 in which he was forcibly brought to Ikkam Hospital. The minister's offer confirms that Felipe and Balliguin, who both already embody the nation, further embody Marcos.

It may be said that the story of Johnny Orata Balliguin is the story of Felipe Lazaro Saleng. The rise of Balliguin from his deep slumber, from his years of victimization by the Pangulo, is a retelling of Felipe's story. More importantly, the rise of Balliguin reembodies the rise of Felipe. At exactly the same time that Balliguin finally awakens, Felipe is being commanded to wake up, recalling Lazarus being commanded by Jesus Christ to rise up from the dead:

"Agriingkan, Felipe Lazaro Saleng. Agriingkan, Felipe Lazaro Saleng ..."  
Ket in-inut met a nagmulagat ti bagik, ket nagkutikuti dagiti kikit ti ima  
ken sakak, sa dagiti takiag ken sakak, ket idi nakariingakon a kas man  
agmurmuray, naginatak iti nakaat-atiddog ken nakaim-imas. . . . (Hi-  
dalgo 1987b, 55–56)

"Wake up, Felipe Lazaro Saleng. Wake up, Felipe Lazaro Saleng . . ."  
And my body slowly opened its eyes, and the little fingers of my hands  
and feet moved, then my arms and feet, and when I have awakened, I  
stretched a long, long time and that felt so good. . . .

At the same time that Balliguin is being healed, Felipe is also being healed by Dr. Naquem. After being freed of the spirits that have victimized him, Balliguin frees himself of the foreign that has corrupted him. He expels out all foreigners who have exploited his natural resources, and calls on all his people, including those scattered in far away places, to come home and share in the wealth that were denied them when these foreigners ruled the nation. But the novel's representation of Balliguin's attainment of his freedom is haunted by his appropriation as a reembodyment or a retelling of Felipe's narrative, that is, his own quest for freedom. Balliguin and Felipe, as embodiments of the nation who further embody Marcos, hence conjure up Marcos as Filipino nation and Fatherland.

### ***Dagiti Bin-i ti Kimat: Toward a Benevolent Military Regime***

Serialized eight years after *Saksi*, *Dagiti Bin-i ti Kimat* may be read as a subtle response to and critique of Hidalgo's novel. *Bin-i*, lacking *Saksi*'s confidence and certainty in the goodness of Marcos and in the rightness of still holding on to such a position, casts serious doubt on what Marcos actually achieved with his military regime. *Bin-i* questions the construction of Marcos as the nation's savior, a construction that underpins *Saksi*'s discourse of the nation as freedom (Cheah 2003a). Whereas *Saksi* rewrites Marcos's totalitarianism into a form of "benevolent paternalism" (Schroeder 1998), registered as Marcos becoming the male nation/Fatherland, *Bin-i* rejects such a positive view of the achievements of Marcos's military rule and questions the benevolent construction of the dictator. It may even be suggesting that Marcos was the exact opposite. However, *Bin-i* does not make any of these statements explicitly.

*Bin-i*, which deals with the insurgency problem during the administration of Cory Aquino, a problem that it theorizes to be ultimately linked to the proper role and place of the military in nation building, does not mention Marcos or his military regime. Despite the Marcos dictatorship marking a high point in the militarization of Philippine society and causing the communist insurgency to worsen (Nemenzo 1988),<sup>10</sup> *Bin-i* elides any references to Marcos's military regime. This should alert us to the strategic silences of the novel with respect to Marcos.

*Bin-i* argues that only militarization will solve once and for all the threat to the nation-state posed by communist rebellion. It offers a "benevolent militarization" that is presented as the alternative to the militarization that had caused untold suffering to civilians and rural people and that never succeeded in ending the insurgency problem. Admittedly this "benevolent militarization" is a critique of the counterinsurgency undertaken during Aquino's presidency, a brainchild of then Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Fidel Ramos, who would succeed Aquino as president. It may be read, however, as a veiled critique of Marcos's military regime and his failure to properly use the military "to bring peace to the nation." It may be a revisioning of Marcos's strategy to entrench his dictatorship by using the military as its instrument of terror, repression, and coercion, which consequently politicized and deprofessionalized the military. *Bin-i*'s "benevolent militarization" may be a mediation in how the military and its role in public life from the Marcos period to the post-Marcos administrations of Aquino and Ramos were conceived. It represents a contribution to the consolidation of the military's position regarding its role in the nation-state. In fact, "benevolent militarization" embodies the attainment of a nation-state in which the nation is subordinated to a state embodied by the military. *Bin-i* uses the war against the communist insurgents as the platform to launch it. It constitutes *Bin-i*'s memory of Marcos and the dictatorship because ultimately it is the ghost of Marcos that it summons.

To appreciate more fully *Bin-i*'s "benevolent militarization," it is useful to set it against Aquino's failed attempt to reform the military at the beginning of her presidency.

### **Reforming the Military after Marcos**

When Aquino became president in February 1986, she inherited not only a plundered economy but also "a corrupt, inept, and factionalized military

which took a cynical attitude towards democratic values” and “whose loyalty she could not trust” (Nemenzo 1988, 231). Aquino was saddled with the enormous task of reforming the military. However, because Aquino also inherited an insurgency problem, reforming the military, as Nemenzo (1988) has commented, would never have a chance if she also employed the military to wage a civil war against the communist rebels whose ranks swelled during the dictatorship, a costly war she could not afford given the ravaged economy.

Against this backdrop must be seen two of the five initial projects undertaken by the Aquino presidency: first, a quest for justice for victims of human rights violations under Marcos’s rule and punishment of the guilty ones; and, second, a negotiated settlement of the insurgency problem. The first program Aquino did not or could not fulfill because, with a deeply divided military, she “depended on loyal officers to support her presidency and the newly restored democracy” (Abueva 1997, 13), officers who were themselves involved in human rights abuses. Moreover, the transformation of the military mutiny “into a popular uprising torpedoed the Aquino government’s retributive justice in favor of a reconciliatory, benevolent posture towards Marcos’s AFP” (de Dios 1988, 293). The reform of the Armed Forces under which this project was subsumed could neither be pursued with earnestness. The second program—a negotiated settlement of the insurgency problem—meant an end to the search for a military solution to it and would therefore diminish the government’s dependence on the military. The peace program, the centerpiece of the Aquino government, was anchored on negotiations with the enemies of the military. Moreover, it involved dealing with the economic roots of the communist struggle (Abinales 1987). This approach to the insurgency problem was strongly opposed by the military, which demanded “a total counterinsurgency effort under a joint civilian military leadership or under a powerful national security council overseeing its planning and operation” (de Dios 1988, 291).

The military’s participation in the popular uprising that ousted Marcos in February 1986 provided the military with the opportunity to reinvent its public persona: no longer was it the force that oppressed the people (Abinales 1987); the military “appointed themselves as the true liberators of the people” (de Dios 1988, 290). Because the military had perceived itself as a legitimate political player, the prospect of its return to its pre-Marcos status as subservient to civilian rule was inconceivable (de Dios 1988). Military of-

ficials perceived Aquino’s initial projects—the pursuit of justice for victims of human rights violations, the reform of the military, and the peace negotiations with communist insurgents—as directed against and emasculating them. Enrile, at the time Secretary of National Defense and leader of the faction agitating for more power in government, felt this marginalization most acutely. Unable to get a share of power they believed was commensurate to the role they played in the February 1986 revolution, Enrile and the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), which according to Thompson (1996, 168), was loyal to Enrile, plotted coups to force Aquino to share power, reduce her to a mere figurehead, or even oust her to finally fulfill the military-civilian junta that the 1986 People Power Revolution aborted.<sup>11</sup>

Undermined and threatened by the military (represented by Enrile and RAM), Aquino increasingly came to depend on the loyal faction led by Fidel Ramos and Rafael Ileto to protect her presidency. Nemenzo (1988) has noted that, although Ramos and Ileto represented the military she could trust, they were just as paranoid as Enrile about communism and no less rabid in their pro-Americanism. Their ascendancy marked the beginning of Aquino’s drift to the Right. Beholden to the military that had stood behind her, she yielded to their demands, which included the resignation of Left-leaning cabinet officials and, more importantly, the adoption of an overall counterinsurgency program (de Dios 1988). The Ramos-led military proposals also included “the total coordination of economic programs with military operatives; the involvement of local government officials in counterinsurgency; a unified and intensified intelligence network and strict enforcement of ant subversion laws; a committed united front policy against the Left, including those in government and open organizations, and a corresponding increase in its budget” (ibid., 308). Above all, Aquino was strongly advised to organize the National Security Council to assume overall responsibility for civilian-military counterinsurgency policies and operations (de Dios 1988).

On 11 February 1987 Aquino declared total war on the communists. Subsequently, in the 23 March 1987 graduation rites of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), she commanded the military to “unsheathe the sword of war” and, in a complete reversal of her earlier position that reforms were the way to solve the insurgency problem, she declared that the “answer to the terrorism of the left and the right is not social and economic reform but police and military action” (de Guzman and Craige 1990, 7). Not only did

Aquino move toward the Right but she also identified with the military ideology. In the ceremony turning over the AFP command to Gen. Renato de Villa, the new chief-of-staff, Aquino said: "Fight with every assurance that I will stand by you, share the blame, defend your actions, mourn your losses and enjoy the final victory that I am certain will be ours. You and I will see this through together" (quoted in *ibid.*). The military, which for a brief moment Aquino had threatened to diminish in power by talking peace with the rebels, succeeded in reorienting her. As political observers have commented, although Aquino survived the successive coup attempts early in her term, her government was aligned increasingly with the Right (Nemenzo 1988; Miranda 1995; Rocamora 1994).

### *Bin-i's* "Benevolent Militarization"

*Bin-i's* "benevolent militarization" is both a condemnation of militarization (that is, how it actually has been implemented) and a defense of the military and of militarization as the only solution to communist insurgency. The novel in fact underscores the military's centrality in the existence not just of the state but also in subordinating the nation to the state. Haunted by how Marcos used the military as his main instrument of repression and coercion and as the enforcer of his military regime, yet concomitantly agreeing with Marcos (and the Right) that the nation must not fall into the hands of the communists, *Bin-i* wisely and dexterously salvages militarization. It makes it benevolent and vital to the survival of the state. This survival is not merely analogous to the defeat of the communists but, even more crucially, to containing the nation and its impulses that run against the state (McVey 1996).<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, *Bin-i's* project may be seen also as an intervention in the military's struggle for power that plagued the Aquino administration. The dynamics that shaped the military's mentality toward the insurgency problem involved a masculinist conception of their military role and identity. The RAM officers who aspired to professionalize but never depoliticize (Nemenzo 1988) the military "enlisted an ideology of masculinity that was hostile to anything they imagined to be feminine" (Enloe 2000, 128). These officers, according to Enloe (2000), anchored the decisive defeat of communist rebels on the purging of the military's weaknesses and its successful modernization and remasculinization. *Bin-i's* "benevolent militarization" thus involves making the military and the use of its power "rational" and redefining its

masculine constitution. The novel embodies in its protagonist, Moises Coloma, the local police chief, the project of "benevolent militarization" as well as the military's remasculinization. But the novel also makes Coloma the agent and instrument of this project. In other words, he is both the author and the outcome of a revitalized, rational, and good militarization. Finally *Bin-i* presents Coloma as the good state.

### Moises Coloma as the State

A military detachment is established in Nagtrigoan, a barrio in San Isidro town, Ilocos Norte, to address the province's insurgency problem. Since its establishment, however, armed clashes between the NPA and the military have escalated, resulting in the dislocation of residents of neighboring barrios, including Puritac where Piling (Filipinas) and her family live. Despite the clashes, Piling's family, on the insistence of Fredo, her husband, stays on, arguing that they have nowhere else to go. Detachment soldiers murder Fredo and rape Piling in an act of retaliation over the rebel attack of the detachment. Piling is killed in another clash between the NPA and detachment soldiers.

Coloma's becoming the state is premised on the destruction ("death") of the family, which serves as the metaphor of the nation. He must become the father of the female children-nation, but it would take both their father and their insurgent mother-nation (Filipinas/Piling) to be killed. Because Coloma is being prepared by the novel for such a role, he must never be involved in these crimes. The novel lays the blame on an irresponsible military force and a negligent and ineffectual government. Coloma, as chief of police, must embody or represent a military that is the exact opposite of the present military force that is inefficient, undisciplined, and violent. Also, his construction as the (representative of the) good state is dependent on him replacing the representative of the "negligent state" (the local government), which does not think that militarization is the answer to insurgency.

Both military violence and state negligence are designed to set the stage for Coloma to embody and personify the military, the state, and the good father. Coloma stands for the novel's redefinition of military masculinity, which is the lynchpin of the novel's promilitarism. In his capacity as police chief of San Isidro, he was the brain behind the strategy to contain and defeat the rebels. He staged the ambush that sent the mayor fleeing, and used the incident to gain more support from the provincial command. The result is the possibility

of establishing another military detachment in San Isidro. Coloma asserts that only a stronger military force will ensure the peace of the town and this force could not have been obtained had he not staged the ambush.<sup>13</sup>

Having succeeded in displacing and replacing the unacceptable form of militarization and the state that is ideologically incompatible with him, Coloma adopts the two remaining female children (Lucing and Minda [Luzon and Mindanao]) of the insurgent mother-nation who, together with another daughter Bising (Visayas), is killed by soldiers in a battle with communist rebels. In constructing Coloma as state-father to the two nation-girls, the novel subordinates the nation to the state through the symbolic space and structure of the family and therefore organizes power through and within the domestic(ated) arena of the family. Coloma thus becomes the figure for militarization, a centralized state, and the resurgence of the authority of the state-father (Fanon 1986). But the novel further constructs him as the embodiment of a politicized military, one which sees itself as performing a political role in the nation for he is by every means the savior of the nation. Ultimately, this aspiration harks back to Marcos who, through martial law, consolidated the power of the state and became the state (Tadiar 1996, 324). Coloma is haunted by and haunts Marcos's consolidation of state power.<sup>14</sup>

Ramnaud's representation of the uniting of the nation and state through benevolent militarization seems like a realization of what Marcos claimed was his avowed goal of imposing military rule—national unification, that is, the prevention of national disintegration posed by communist rebellion and Muslim separatism. Moreover, his representation of this benevolent militarization alludes to, and is a realization of, Marcos's transformation of himself as the state. Moises Coloma is so haunted by the image Marcos projected that he comes off as the sanitized resurrection and benevolent reincarnation not only of (the still unburied) Marcos but also of his military dictatorship. At the same time, Coloma's figure may be read as a critique and repudiation of how Marcos used militarization. Here lies the novel's ambivalence toward Marcos and his legacy. Ramnaud appears both to condemn and justify military rule, which Marcos imposed on the nation and which Ramnaud, through Coloma now refigured as the state, has "imposed" on the nation.

### Gender and the Politics of Memory

Work on social and collective memory have focused on the relationship among history, memory, and forgetting (Ricoeur 2006); on "how the past,

once virtually indistinguishable from the present, has become an ever more foreign realm, yet one increasingly suffused by the present" (Lowenthal 1985, xix); on how the suppressed and untold versions of our past keep on haunting and hence questioning our dominant narratives of it (Ileto 1979; 2005); and on "how societies remember" (Connerton 1989). They have focused on the contexts, spaces, institutions, processes, practices, and mechanisms by and through which memory is shaped, shared, and passed on to others. Gender remains to be incorporated into how social memory is theorized despite the fact that there is an increasing recognition of the importance of embodiedness in collective memory (Boyarin 1995; Connerton 1989). I hope to have already indicated above how gender figures in Hidalgo's and Ramnaud's narrative social memory of Marcos, of the martial law period, and of their appropriation of the People Power Revolution. In this concluding section of the article, I explore further how this narrative memory is constituted in gender.

That the nation and the state formed in the novels are masculine and are either imaged as Marcos or as haunted and implicated in how Marcos imaged himself demonstrates the gendering of the novels' narrative memory of Marcos and the 1986 revolution. *Saksi's* memory of Marcos, enabled by a history inextricably bound up with the nation, figuratively reimagines him as the nation. *Bin-i*, also learning from history, develops a discourse of benevolent militarization personified by a male figure, which may be taken as the positive equivalent of Marcos. Finally, their narratives of the goodness of either Marcos or of a military regime are underpinned by a discourse of paternalism.

*Saksi's* retelling of the People Power Revolution ambushes the new beginning that the event came to mean for many Filipinos. It salvages it for Marcos: the event is not the fall of Marcos but ultimately his rise as the Filipino nation. Hidalgo's appropriation of the Bible characters Job and Lazarus may perhaps be an attempt to counter the representation of Marcos as evil (Thompson 1996) and bestows upon the dictator a salvation akin to the ones God gave these Bible figures. *Saksi's* masculinization of this beginning suggests not just its repudiation of the legitimacy and authority of Cory Aquino. Hidalgo's masculinization of Felipe's "self-determination" registers his rejection of the feminine power that came to define the force and movement that expelled the dictator (Tadiar 2004). In presenting Marcos as the nation's redeemer, Hidalgo not only rejects and seeks to counter, if not nullify, the popular construction of Cory Aquino as the nation's redeemer (Nemenzo 1988). Equally important, the novel rejects the legitimacy of her presidency.



In its representation of the replacement of Balliguin's leaders who were mere puppets of America, *Saksi* alludes to only ten presidents (Aquino being the nation's eleventh president).<sup>15</sup> The novel's "historiography" of the nation's redemption excludes Aquino, the person who embodied the period and the force that impelled Hidalgo to rewrite the nation as Marcos.

In contrast, *Bin-i* imagines and realizes a new era marked and embodied by Coloma. He attains and inaugurates an era in which the nation is finally subordinated and united to the state. Like the Bible character Moses, Moises Coloma leads his people to a state where they are no longer oppressed by the enemies. *Bin-i*'s Coloma may be read as the novel's counterfigure to both Aquino and Marcos. He embodies the novel's alignment with military ideology and its repudiation of Aquino. The novel's anti-Aquino stance is not simply directed against the person of Aquino but more crucially and ideologically against what she and her ascension to power symbolized. Aquino not only "appeared as a redeemer, the best hope of unifying a fractured nation and extricating it from a monumental mess" (Nemenzo 1988, 222) but, as Tadiar (2004) has argued, also represented feminine people power that threatened patriarchal power represented by Marcos and the military. Aquino's role as redeemer and unifier of the nation is conferred upon Coloma, who also points to Aquino as a failure. Instead of reorienting and reforming the military, she turned out to be the one whom the military reoriented and reformed. At the same time, Coloma accomplishes what Marcos failed to do. He rejects the dictator's eventual persona but not the military ideology his military regime represented. He is Marcos's "benevolent" reincarnation. Coloma succeeds in making militarization good and the source of the nation's life and survival. This militarization, however, entailed remasculinization, one that could be argued as a remasculinization of Marcos, that is, a rejection of how Marcos masculinized himself through the military to fortify his claim to being the country's alphas, Malakas.

Coloma's redefinition of military masculinity is extreme. On the one hand, Cabacungan, the embodiment of the military in need of remasculinization, is Rambo-like (Enloe 1993; Hilsdon 1995; Jeffords 1994). His military identity is defined by and analogous to the weapons he carries and the military clothes he wears. His speech, always in the form of angry shouting, is littered with "putang ina." On the other hand, Coloma, a well-built man, taller than six feet, is gentle and loving, his language considered and measured. Most crucially, he is sterile. Coloma's remasculinization by sterility

points to a symbolic castration, which, however, is the condition of possibility of a revisioned military-patriarchal complex whose desire is to take control of the nation. Coloma's adoption of only the remaining female children of the murdered Filipinas becomes a logical, if not naturalized, act of benevolence determined by his construction as the state. However, although Coloma embodies what for the novel is the acceptable or ideal military soldier, he does not represent a transformation of military ideology. He embodies the military's and militarization's rationalization (in both senses of making them rational and of justifying them to gain popular legitimacy and acceptance). Coloma's embodiment of this benevolent military may have come with a high price but his remasculinization is the condition of possibility of his centralization and monopolization of power.

Finally, the male protagonists of the two novels are presented as both the symbol and the means of transformation: Felipe, the attainment of "nation-freedom"; Coloma, the nation-state. Historical agency and subjectification are bestowed upon them. Their and the novels' intervention in history, in the history they seek to rewrite, demonstrate the braiding of literature, memory, history, gender, and nation. They use the nation as the mnemonic community (Misztral 2003) of their intervention. It is the nation that frames the novels' appropriation of history and it is to it that the novels' social memory of Marcos and of the Marcos dictatorship is offered.

Examining *Saksi*'s espousal and appropriation of the discourses Marcos used to justify his rule in order to boldly redeem the dictator as the nation and *Bin-i*'s implication in them (its reliance on a military ideology not only to deal with communist insurgency but also to engender the nation-state) and its ambivalence toward Marcos's military rule is a necessary component of any attempt to understand post-People Power Ilokano literature's narrative social memory of Marcos, his dictatorship, and the February 1986 revolution. *Saksi*, clearly an apologia for Marcos, proves that "[i]t is very important to remember that what is considered a founding event in our collective memory may be a wound in the memory of the other" (Ricoeur 1999, 9); it makes memory and remembering into a form and means of forgetting (Misztral 2003) and forgetting into a form of memory (McCoy 2001). For its part *Bin-i*'s ambivalence does not only obtain in Rambaud's rationalization of the military and militarization but also in how he negotiates the complex politics of taking and expressing a position on Marcos and his dictatorship in Ilokano writing and publishing.



Any attempt to understand Ilokano literature's narrative memory of Marcos must recognize the obvious difference between *Saksi*'s espousal and appropriation of Marcos's justifications for his dictatorship and *Bin-i*'s tentative steps toward a reassessment of Marcos and Ilokano writers' loyalty to him. Recognizing this change compels us to consider the factors that have contributed to it, factors that may centrally involve the opportunities and possibilities available to Ilokano writers working in Ilokano whose only major outlet was and continues to be the *Bannawag*, a magazine that itself helped to disseminate among Ilokanos a positive image of Marcos. Moreover, *Bannawag* was staffed by writers with known partiality to Marcos, which would have made it difficult for a work that is explicitly anti-Marcos to see the light of serialization. Also, writing and publishing an anti-Marcos work possibly demanded renouncing personal loyalty to Marcos, a position that was likely to have been known to others. This would have been seen as having become a turncoat or traitor, or, in the language of that period, "balimbing" (literally star fruit). The ostracism would have been particularly acute because the space within which Ilokano writers moved and continue to move is limited indeed, a space shaped by the writers' relations with other writers who may be friends, mentors, or even relatives. Almost all publish in *Bannawag* and all of Ilokano literature's heavyweights started their writing careers with the magazine. Many, if not all, Ilokano writers belong to the Ilokano writers' organization, Gunglo dagiti Mannurat nga Ilokano (GUMIL), whose leaders during the Marcos period courted the patronage of the dictator. Some of its anthologies of Ilokano writing, all originally published in *Bannawag*, were in fact dedicated to Marcos.

In this context *Bin-i* gains even more significance in Ilokano literature and literary history. It indexes and embodies the dilemma and politics faced by Ilokano writers wishing to make a break with Marcos and with Ilokano Marcos-loyalist writers. Equally important, it may be read as a rather prescient intervention in the way Marcos figures in the political and literary imagination of Ilokanos. Published almost a decade after the dictator's ouster, its uncertain and ambivalent position toward Marcos registers the diminished and diminishing status enjoyed by Marcos among Ilokanos. Rambaud, himself born in Ilocos Norte, is here subtly talking about Marcos's much-vaunted Solid North cracking. Despite Marcos's children exploiting Ilocos Norte as the base of the family's political resurrection and as the source of their current local political power, they have failed to perpetuate Marcos in the fond memories of young and future Ilokanos. Although they have run Ilocos

Norte as governor and as representatives of the province's first and second congressional districts, many times running unopposed indicating the still considerable political currency of the Marcos name, Ferdinand (Bongbong) Marcos Jr. and Imee Marcos have ironically presided over the "burial" of their father. Ilokano journalist Christina Arzadon (2007) has noted that since 1998, three years after the serialization of *Bin-i*, attendance at the annual celebration of Marcos Day, which marks the dictator's birthday on 11 September, has decreased considerably. Also, Arzadon says that for the first time since Ilokanos started observing Marcos Day, no Marcos loyalists from other places in the country joined the 2007 celebration which even Bongbong, Imee, and Irene Marcos-Araneta did not attend as they were all allegedly abroad busy attending to their children's school enrollment (*ibid.*).

Although both *Saksi* and *Bin-i* represent the authors' individual remembering of Marcos, such a remembering is only possible in the presence of a mnemonic community that enables and sanctions it. Hence, though this remembering emanates from a subjective origin, it necessarily implicates an intersubjective construction (Misztal 2003). In this sense, the novels "may be said to contribute to the formation of memory as a collective, rather than a merely individual phenomenon" (Walder 2003, 81). If *Saksi* is a loyalist novel pointing not just to Hidalgo but also to other Ilokano writers identified and identifying with Marcos, *Bin-i* in contrast is a novel pointing to Ilokano writers starting to break free from Marcos's grip. This breaking free has not been easy to do as indicated by the lack of a sustained effort among younger Ilokano writers to publicly assert and articulate their revaluation of Marcos and his dictatorship. To my knowledge, the only work so far by an Ilokano to openly attack Marcos, Aurelio Agcaoili's (2000) *Dangadang*, is written in Filipino. Notwithstanding the fact that it was entered for the Philippine Centennial Literary Contest (eventually winning the third prize), that finally, an Ilokano writer musters enough courage to openly criticize Marcos in a novel written in Filipino is suggestive of the heavy burden that writing against Marcos in Ilokano bears on Ilokano writers.

For a people lamented for not having a strong sense of history, or for not having any sense of history at all, the two novels' intervention in the shaping in Ilokano literature of our memory of Marcos and of the country's martial law period testifies to the necessity of a continued struggle over history and memory, and over which versions of our narratives of the past must, in the end, inform our collective memory, and hence our sense of history.

## Notes

- 1 This article is part of a larger study of Ilokano literature and the Marcos dictatorship. It pursues ideas that first emerged in parts of my soon-to-be-published book, "The Promise of the Nation: Gender, History, and Nationalism in Contemporary Ilokano Literature" (Ateneo de Manila University Press). In this essay, I center my analysis of *Saksi* and *Bin-i* on their construction of a social memory of Marcos and his dictatorship, an aspect that was tangential to my aim in "The Promise of the Nation." I thank the anonymous reviewer and the editor of *Philippine Studies* for comments that helped me improve this essay.
- 2 Juan S. P. Hidalgo and Cles Rambaud both served as literary editors of *Bannawag*. Rambaud is at present the magazine's associate editor.
- 3 See, for example, the essays collected in *Memory, Truth-Telling, and the Pursuit of Justice: A Conference on the Legacies of the Marcos Dictatorship* (Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute 2001). See also Schirmer and Shalom 1987, esp. chs. 7 to 11.
- 4 For a discussion that offers a critical problematization of the issue of complicity of Filipino writers with the Marcos dictatorship, see Hau 2000, ch. 5.
- 5 This section's title is borrowed from the title of a painting described in the novel as depicting the suffering and deliverance of Marcos loyalists. The painting's title, "Metamorphosis, a song of the full blooded [sic] loyalist," is an apt description of the novel.
- 6 *Saksi*'s immediate "thematization" (Cheah 2003b) of the 1986 People Power Revolution does not make the novel less reflective. It is in fact characterized by a severe examination of the "kaunggan" (*kaloob-looban*; innermost). Instructive here is Denis Walder's (2003, 82) observation:  
  
Novels that engage with recent attempts to deal with mass atrocities have yet to be written, although the issue has already found a place in the more immediate field of drama. There is always a time-lag before events are incorporated, one way or another, within novels, which is a more reflective genre than lyric poetry or drama—even if the events are already incorporated within the narratives of individual and collective memory by the media of the day. This was true of the Holocaust too: narratives of that experience emerged in diaries (such as Anne Frank's), memoirs (Elie Wiesel's, for example) and various other kinds of testimony, before poems, plays, and eventually novels followed, while attempts were made by historians and others to synthesize all of these into some larger narrative.
- 7 "Felipe" is the name of the Spanish monarch from which "Filipinas" was derived, hence the rather obvious equivalence of Felipe = Filipino nation. "Lazaro" appears to have been derived from "Islas de San Lazaro," the name given to the islands by Ferdinand Magellan. "Saleng" is the Ilokano name for the pine tree and its wood, which is distinctively fragrant and which burns easily, hence its use to start a fire. "Saleng" may be Hidalgo's Filipinization ("Felipenization") of Prometheus whose story of giving fire to humanity and being punished for it is appropriated in *Saksi* as the story of Felipe Lazaro Saleng.
- 8 Marcos fled the country at 9 p.m. of 25 February 1986. I have not dwelt on the events alluded to in Felipe's account of his pre- and post-EDSA experiences. For a helpful reference to the events alluded to, see the timeline in de Dios, Daroy, and Tirol 1988. See also Thompson 1996, esp. 138–79.
- 9 The actions of the leaders and their followers, and the events that attend the violent and bloody change of government in Bautista, follow the script supplied by the leaders. These scripts are

used in turn by a crew or team that was tasked to film this historic moment. This team includes "neutral" individuals, namely, the municipal secretary and two professional video recorders, one of whom is Felipe. Because everything is scripted, the team members know exactly where to position themselves to best record what will happen.

- 10 For a brief but informative discussion of how Marcos involved the military in civic and business undertakings, activities that enabled him to skirt around legislation, see Abinales 2000, 156–59. See also the essays on the Philippine military under Marcos and on the communist insurgency in Abinales 1998, chs. 3 and 4.
- 11 This desire for power dates back to the planned military coup against Marcos even before he called for a snap presidential election in November 1985. The goal was to force Marcos out and establish a military-civilian junta headed by Enrile. In the original coup plan, "people were to play a merely supportive role" (Nemenzo 1993, 39) but the coup was reduced to a mutiny when it was prematurely uncovered. People's power therefore became a crucial factor, and Enrile and Ramos (a late recruit to the coup plot) obtained people's support by "identifying their cause with Cory's" (*ibid.*). The military's political project was thwarted by people's power (Nemenzo 1988). The original coup plot was planned by RAM, a group of regular officers whose leaders belonged to PMA's class of 1971 (McCoy 2000, 198). RAM, McCoy (*ibid.*, 199) says, was fully organized by early 1985 but traces its beginnings to as early as 1982. It was responsible for five coups against Cory, with the December 1989 attempt being the most serious as RAM soldiers "came remarkably close to capturing the state" (McCoy *ibid.*, 198). Without American help for the Cory government, they most certainly would have succeeded.
- 12 McVey (1996, 11) explains that the nation "involves collective commitment; its impulses are egalitarian, its foundation is sentiment" whereas the state "presents itself not as an ideal but as fact. It is hierarchic, suspicious of mass energies; its element is stability, and its desire is for control."
- 13 This alludes to how the imposition of martial law was in part justified by the staged ambush of Juan Ponce Enrile. Dark humor or not, it should alert us to how the novel references itself to Marcos's military regime. Is it mere coincidence that *Bin-i*'s serialization began in September 1995?
- 14 For an account of how Marcos consolidated his grip on the state to serve his aims, see Anderson 1998.
- 15 The inclusion of Marcos among the ten leaders of Balliguin/the Filipino nation creates ambivalence in Balliguin being the embodiment of a nation resurrected as Marcos. The ambivalence, however, is resolved by the newspaper accounts of the robbery Balliguin suffered. They multiplied ten-fold the amount of the stolen wealth. The exaggeration in the media of Balliguin's wealth echoes *Saksi*'s claim that the "Cory press" was engaged in a black propaganda against Marcos by exposing the wealth that he and his family amassed while in power.

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