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Editor's Introduction

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That which is repeated will be remembered. From teachers, who hammer away their points to get them across to students, to advertisers, who use various media to communicate a barrage of messages that influence consumer behavior, there is no lack of examples to show the truth in this almost tautological statement. But what happens when the efficacy of repetition is used to justify authoritarianism? In his article Gene Segarra Navera dissects Pres. Ferdinand Marcos's key speeches and publications from 1972 to 1985 and employs the methodologies and frameworks of conceptual metaphor studies to identify the key metaphors that Marcos deployed repeatedly to justify martial rule. Navera argues that the overarching schema that became the ideological foundation of martial law can be distilled in two contradictory and untruthful statements: that martial law is a constitutional form of authoritarianism, which is a democratic means to preserve and at the same time change society; and that the authoritarian leader is a democrat. Navera concludes with the rather disturbing observation that all presidencies that came after Marcos have appropriated these mnemonics of martial law to stifle dissent. Orwellian or oxymoronic, the ideas of Marcos's fabricated sophistry have managed to survive even the dictator himself, somewhat proving the correctness of Joseph Goebbels's infamous quote about repeated lies.

That which is remembered will be repeated. In recalling harrowing episodes in the past, people suffering from trauma deal not just with abstract memories but also with real psychological and physiological pain, making the act of remembering akin to reopening a fresh wound. Jocelyn Martin explores this understudied aspect of the history of martial law and argues that the Marcos era can be classified as traumatic in the medical-scientific sense. Martin focuses mainly on the autoethnography of Cristina Montiel and secondarily on the published works of Karl Gaspar and the Quimpo siblings, activists who figured in the anti-Marcos struggle and displayed signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Their autobiographical writings evince the symptoms of PTSD that are directly related to experiences of torture, incarceration, depression, self-doubt, and other forms of physical and mental pain inflicted by an oppressive regime. Martin situates her analysis

within the wider terrain of cultural memory and trauma studies to foreground the need for more studies on non-Western alternatives to the conventional Holocaust model. Doing so entails new ways of understanding trauma, such as putting more analytic weight on “sacred” (rather than exclusively secular) forms of “healing,” incorporating other forms of literary genres (such as poems and memoir-writing) other than the usual (post)modern works of fiction, and dealing with the reality of a culture of impunity, which in the Philippines has led ultimately to a failure of giving justice to the victims of the dictatorship, especially the thousands of imprisoned, tortured, and murdered anti-Marcos activists.

At the same time, how do we confront the excesses committed by those who were also fighting the dictator and the controverted memories associated with this struggle? Joseph Scalice presents such a challenge in his article on the nostalgia surrounding the Diliman Commune, a massive anti-Marcos demonstration of student activists who barricaded the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman campus for more than a week in early February 1971 in conjunction with a strike by jeepney drivers. Scalice argues that this celebrated event has been shrouded in myth: that the student action was spontaneous and it was contained in Diliman. Analyzing documents archived in UP Diliman’s Philippine Radical Papers, which holds documents pertaining to Marcos-era radical movements, he uncovers not just the involvement of the campuses of UP Los Baños and those in downtown Manila’s University Belt but also the help the communards received from opposition politicians and businessmen. Although “a good deal” of the students’ behavior was spontaneous, Scalice contends that an organized machinery was behind the commune that was engineered to embarrass and delegitimize Marcos’s presidency. He offers a blow-by-blow account of the commune’s nine days and, based on this narrative, arrives at a critical, if controversial, conclusion: that the Communist Party of the Philippines, pinpointed by the author as the main actor behind this “planned and coordinated anarchy,” betrayed its proletarian ideology in Stalinist fashion by furthering its nationalist program of building socialism in one country through a tactical alliance with the “progressive bourgeoisie.” In the end, Scalice argues, the barricades provided another pretext for Marcos’s declaration of martial law.

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