

The Necessity of Marcos as a Signifier: Haunting the Lost Era with Derrida and Baudrillard

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Abstract: In anticipation of the nearing Philippine elections 2022—and future elections in extension—the subject of Marcos has perhaps always been relevant philosophically during these times. Considering that the analytic framework of most contemporary theorists has focused on a historical examination or an ideological comparison of the dictator and his era, the pervasive culture surrounding its recurring rehabilitation has been attributed as a factor of the aforementioned. However, we see a potential for a radical subversion. This work provides an alternative philosophical/cultural reading of the Marcoses. In dialogue, we utilize the philosophers’ Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard in order to deconstruct elements of the era into their two seminal concepts: *hauntology* and *simulacra*. The Marcos influence, as we propose, can be read as an indebted symbolization age of which we term ‘post-Marco politics’. By arguing for an age in which the specter of Marcos is the incorporeal host of the Marcosian simulacra, we demonstrate that the Marcoses, both as figures and epoch, haunt us beyond the grave; their symbolic deaths ensured that we ‘never forget’ their transgressions, while simultaneously setting the stage for our political nostalgia of a once-whole

Philippines and overwhelming political cynicism for a future that could have been.

Keywords: Marcos, hauntology, simulacra, signifier

INTRODUCTION: LEGACIES, SPECTERS, AND TRACES OF MARCOS POLITICS

There has perhaps been no greater political phenomenon in the Philippines than the Marcoses. From the harrowing declaration of the Martial Law in 1972, to the revolution that eventually toppled them from power in 1986, until the death of the revered figure and beyond, the name Marcos remains a homage to today's shifting political landscape. Moreso, during a fast approaching election season, the name Marcos has once again appeared as a candidate in virtue of restoring what was deemed lost by time. On this attempt of return, the political machinations of the Marcoses are unmasked as a dimension of the image and symbolic. As the journalist Primitivo Mijares best describes: "Marcos is relying on too much cosmetics to improve his image instead of getting to the root of his world-wide isolation, which is his oppressive martial regime."¹

Following this is a common feature to write off the significant portion of the Marcos regime as a dictatorship that was engorged by totalitarian nationalist ideals. Yet, much more is that the regime represents an aesthetic of the dead Filipino ideal within its obscene underpinnings, reduced to desperate political locutions. Resembling the perspectives on Hitler's concept of *weltanschauung* (worldview),² the various elements

¹ Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017), 408.

² See Todd H. Weir, "Hitler's Worldview and the Interwar Kulturkampf," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53:3 (May 2018), 597-621, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009417747045>>; and Emil L Fackenheim, "Holocaust and Weltanschauung: Philosophical reflections on why they Did It," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3:2 (1988), 197-208.

that shaped German politics frame a dynamic similar to Marcos's parallel usage of "Filipino destiny" and "restoring the Filipino glory." What is proclaimed to 'never be forgotten', precisely forgets its own death, thus refusing the insignia of memory attached to the horrors that transpired and what the image chooses to forego. The Marcos image transmutes and becomes disjointed as an era and a culture; in other words, it is a legacy doomed to forever play itself to itself.

To ask the question of the ages: is Marcos politics still an ideology? Or better yet, was it ever an ideology as history had so ardently accused its followers, his family members, and the man himself? Some conscious declaration had pushed some scholars to continue this ideological framing. Vicente Rafael had written a piece four years after the revolution, perspectivizing the couple's role of power plays and gender staging that highly influenced the Marcos' Filipino dynamic across appealing and deceiving demographics—particularly that of Imelda's power-hungry coyness and Marcos's destiny driven brutishness.³ Similar notes appear in descriptions of describing Marcos as the political embodiment of Philippine ideologies,⁴ a contingent legacy built on an otherwise sinister triad of Marcos, Imelda, and the Filipino people,⁵ and even a branding as a cult of personality, likened to that of dictators whose malevolent intentions were shrouded by rigor and populist gusto, specifically Stalin and Hitler.⁶ It was these remarks that prompted the ruling approach of arguing

³ Vicente L. Rafael, "Patronage and Pornography: Ideology and Spectatorship in the Early Marcos Years," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32:2 (1990), 282-304, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500016492>>.

⁴ Nicole Cu Unjieng, "Ferdinand Marcos: Apotheosis of the Philippine Historical Political Tradition," *Undergraduate Humanities Forum 2008-09: Change*, 2009.

⁵ Talitha Espiritu, "The Marcos Romance and the Cultural Center of the Philippines: The Melodrama of a Therapeutic Cultural Policy," *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 45:1 (2015), 141-162.

⁶ See Mark M. Turner, "Authoritarian Rule and the Dilemma of Legitimacy: The Case of President Marcos of the Philippines," *The Pacific Review* 3:4 (1990), 349-62, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09512749008718886>>; and Jose Mario Bautista Maximiano, "Strongmen Hitler, Stalin, Marcos – a Character Study," *INQUIRER.net USA* (18 July 2018), <<https://usa.inquirer.net/13895/strongmen-hitler-stalin-marcos-character-study>>.

indefinitely as to what was the extent that Marcos' influence had pervaded Filipino life. However, to link Marcos by means of optional interweaving is a scholarly disservice that misattributed today's concept of 'Nationalism' or 'Democracy' solely to his name. Seeing the essential shift of public sentiment, it is more important now than ever to read the traction of the Marcoses for what it really is: not a clamoring "authoritarian nostalgia"⁷ of radical traditionalists, nor what Cleve Arguelles depicts as a project of erasure.⁸ By a postmodern fashion, the problem had always been seeing political nostalgia as a definite object—an encoded dichotomy—and in face of its apropos genre, a rereading of revisionism is merely one of the disjointed specters of the Marcos legacy. A suspicion here arises then out of the reading of two prominent theorists who question the formal structure of how signifiers and traces ought to be politically understood. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida had contextualized the mode of Marxist thought parallel to his corpse that continues to decay among an age that remembers him as a ghost to be politically exorcised; Baudrillard, in turn, posits a similar counter-statement during a time of heralding for the end of history, stating rather than the merited ideological victory of the cold war, what the 21st century represented is the disappearance of the utopian fantasy in both political sides of the globe.⁹ Within this sprouts the extensive footing of reading Marcos, not as an ideology, but as we propose, an archived *signifer*: the hauntological *geist* of forgotten pasts and lost futures, and a hyperrealistic pastiche of the present.¹⁰

⁷ Adele Webb, "Why Are the Middle Class Misbehaving? Exploring Democratic Ambivalence and Authoritarian Nostalgia," *Philippine Sociological Review* 65:SI (2017), 77-102.

⁸ Cleve Kevin Robert V Arguelles, "Duterte's Other War: The Battle for EDSA People Power's Memory," in *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essay on Rodrigo Duterte's Presidency*, ed. by Nicole Curato (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017), 263-282.

⁹ Jean Baudrillard and Chris Turner, *The Illusion of the End* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 263-264.

¹⁰ Reading Derrida's concept of *Geist* as a phantom of Heidegger's conception of it is important to note here. In his work *Of Spirit*, Derrida expounds the relation of Heidegger's politicization and metaphysical exaltation of the authority of the *Geist*. By the same degree, while a clear thesis is not provided, Derrida instead procures the authority of the phantom

With both theorists, the Marcos signifier—as we purpose for this new found intersection, climaxes as a necessary realization of the postmodern dialogue between the *hauntological* and *simulacral* properties uniquely situating Marcos’ continued traversing today. Through the obscenities of the regime’s symbol to the renegade resistances comes a grounding that persists in its death; it slowly offers the degradation of the era, only to then return with ironic distance and illusory fantasm. As today’s age slowly erodes the modern utopian dream and incrementally hearkens back to a condition of nostalgia towards the Marcos epoch, it is in the best interest of today’s contemporary theoretical stances to depict a more deciphered and nuanced understanding of the philosophical specter characterizing the atavistic alterity of the return to a ‘Marcosian’ incorporeality. It is our position to press towards these two philosophers as the leading theoreticians in prescribing our enter into *Post-Marcos* politics, an age—not necessarily a time after the regime—where the disjointed periods of Marcos’ influence and death coincide to play a leading role in our conception of the epoch’s emerging progression of political intrigue. We are at a point of indeterminate transition, and moving to anti-political obscenities, Marcos’ name becomes a more powerful venture of Filipino reality. We do not purpose post-Marcos politics as a subversive communication that bridges the differences of Derridean and Baudrillardian thought; however, the underlying assumption that their seminal concepts can be read through the political phenomenon purports close proximity with respect to their contrarian relationship of the specter

in which chains and glimpses of the otherness in the *Geist* is the clear saying/unsaying that he later appropriated in his main work, *Specters of Marx*. Baudrillard, on the other hand, presents the accurate depiction of the simulacra in his own work: “It is not that there is no remainder. But this remainder never has an autonomous reality, nor its own place: it is what partition, circumscription, exclusion designate... what else? It is through the subtraction of the remainder that reality is founded and gathers strength...” See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2020), 94.

that haunts the simulation. In the best statement of the excessive value of their political irrelationship, Ross Abinnett observes that

Baudrillard's account of the vulnerability of the hyperreal brings his work into a transformative relationship to Derrida's ideas on death and political responsibility. The nature of this relationship is complex and is essentially bound up with global regimes of connection between knowledge, technology and capital.¹¹

We aim to outline Derrida and Baudrillard's dimension of the global political climate and localize it to history's figurative anomaly of democracy, excess, and power. In later sections, we augment Derrida's main concern of political hauntings and the death of such 'Marcos-like' figures and Baudrillard's focus on the virtual erasure of otherness from a disintegrating technological real, registering a trace of Philippine politics in today's physical and digital sphere. In effect, the symptoms of one of the remaining un-living genre of our haunted epochs is expressed into its political place with two thinkers who, not only exhausted the eventual complicities of past regimes to our lost futures, but heralded the possibility of the cathartic recurrence of the "erasure of the original to the advantage of the copy."¹² There is a troubling lack of comprehensive literature regarding Marcos and his legacy outside of the historical aspect, as most cultural representations downsize portions of his historical 'ghost'. This article hopes to begin an unorthodox scholarship of post-Marcos politics as a cultural opening, and contribute to existing dialogues on the ideological spaces left liminally blank by past theorists regarding his era.

¹¹ Ross Abinnett, "The Spectre and the Simulacrum," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25:6 (2008), 69-87, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408095545>, 71>.

¹² Ryszard W Wolny, "Hyperreality and Simulacrum: Jean Baudrillard and European Postmodernism," *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3:3 (2017), 75.

THE POLITICAL APPARITION OF DERRIDA

“What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum?” (Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*¹³)

Derrida’s political project is a consistent trove of his concepts of deconstruction and archive, a subsequent lead to his comments on marxist specters capable of speculating the classical to post-politics transition of today. The importance of keeping a separate trajectory to both, leading into hauntology, lies in the emphasis on the transformation of figures like Marcos into representational inflections (or Derrida’s postal metaphor). For a start, in his famous essay, *Archive Fever*, Derrida presented his interest of the antiquitous Greek *arkheion*—an archival place commanded by the ancient Greek magistrates, namely the *archons*—which stored data under the their commencement but retained its public access in a loose sense of both commandment and willing dissemination. Lynch comments on Derrida’s relation to this:

The classical archive is in certain respects like the Cartesian mind, in that it is domiciled in a private space and controlled by a person who dwells in that space. There is one big difference, however. An archive, though guarded, is a public space. It is not a private collection locked in an inaccessible vault. But, as Derrida suggests, the prior consignment of documents to the archive limits what visitors can find in it, and in cases in which the archive is tightly constructed to enhance the reputation of an author or to cast an event in a

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 10.

way that supports a partisan cause, the archive can be said to embody an intentional design.¹⁴

Derrida's critique of the Freudian 'mystic pad' in this essay contends with the political position of Psychoanalysis as a seeker of a past and future unaffected by the medium, a consequence of its structural subscription; the objectifying power of the signifier, in this case, is not so much determined as it is critiqued by process of detaching recuperable deconstruction within systems of symbolic ambivalence. Given the position of politics and metaphysics in relation to each other,¹⁵ it is to this end that Derrida's archive touches upon the privilege of writing over speech, as 'the archivization produces as much as it records the event.'¹⁶ Deconstruction plays a role in Derrida's consideration of the mutual effects that the relationship of political language and its idea constitute in terms of the need for codification and the thought in its purest medium of idealism. Critically, Derrida's analysis in his book *Of Spirit* of the Hegelian *geist* and *Sittlichkeit* (ethical order) cuts into a recapturing of Heidegger's *Dasein*, essentially the philosophical search of foundation pre-dating the question

¹⁴ Michael Lynch, "Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives and Paper Trails," *History of the Human Sciences*, 12:2 (1999), 65-87, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/09526959922120252>>.

¹⁵ Cf. "Evidently we have to acquire knowledge of the original causes (for we say we know each thing only when we think we recognize its first cause), and causes are spoken of in four senses. In one of these we mean the substance, i.e. the essence (for the 'why' is reducible finally to the definition, and the ultimate 'why' is a cause and principle); in another the matter or substratum, in a third the source of the change, and in a fourth the cause opposed to this, the purpose and the good (for this is the end of all generation and change)" Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by W. D. Ross (NuVision Publications, 2009), 8; and "...ontologies of presence, as they have informed political philosophies, institutions, and practices, necessarily lead to reactionary and repressive forms of politics. "Nondemocratic systems," Derrida suggests, "are above all systems that close and close themselves off from this coming of the other. They are systems of homogenization and of integral calculability" Pheng Cheah and Suzanne Guerlac (eds.), *Derrida and the Time of the Political* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 14.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics*, 25:2 (1995), 9, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>, 17>.

of one's relation to the nation and culture.¹⁷ In other words, the specter, which archive and deconstruction both predetermine and allude to, is not the *geist* that speaks of the political ontology accounting dialectical history and collective presence: it is one that is not named, suspended within institutions and the dimensions of life and death, and contingent of the modes of being that continually return to stage its haunting of universality—of which Marx's writings inherently contain the spectrality moving with the political power of transformative global hauntings.¹⁸ It is in these traces, gaps, and archived proximities in the points of present reality that the specter is able to haunt from beyond the events and stage the public space that, to paraphrase Derrida, that rightfully places the political inheritance as an active affirmation of an injunction, not mere reception.¹⁹

In its widespread conception today, the term *Spectropolitics* was introduced as the globalized figure of the ghost in present-day spreads of social and economic influences. Spectropolitics, in pursuit of ghostly memories and political platforms, speculate the dead domain of what comes back in form of the virtual haunting; a synthesis of the once-thought mutually exclusive deconstructivist project and the Marxist frame. Disjointed regimes—remnants of the age—as such had resulted in 'global

¹⁷ See Jacques Derrida and Rachel Bowlby, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁸ Derrida's argument of the ethico-political standard of the specters of Marx accounts for the revolutionary demand upon the arrival of the specter itself. The ghosts of modern capital and the operative logic of global history technologizes the staging of the responsibility of those of us still present within its vestiges, long past Marx and Marxism itself. As Derrida rightfully calls out: "Marx, for his part, announces and calls for a presence to come. He seems to predict and prescribe: What for the moment figures only as a specter in the ideological representation of old Europe must become, in the future, a present reality, that is, a living reality. The Manifesto calls, it calls for this presentation of the living reality: we must see to it that in the future this specter—and first of all an association of workers forced to remain secret until about 1848—becomes a reality, and a living reality." See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 126.

¹⁹ See Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Ecographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. by Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge : Polity Press, 2002) 25-26.

falsification' amidst a post-political challenge to critical thought.²⁰ And insofar as criticisms go, the specter became regarded as the fleeting potential of Marxism and Deconstructionism, one that remains unfulfilled and indefinitely inconceivable.²¹ For Derrida, the initial approach of seeing Hauntology as a fulfillment of Marxist ontology is a misnomer; deconstruction has been more or less on the side of neither Marxist nor non-Marxist interest, and more a homage to the spectrality of *différance*, which is the case in Marx proclaiming the antithetical specter of capital (the spirit of commodification) haunting the bases of our ideologies. In defining Hauntology, Derrida exceeds and pushes the atemporal nature of the Marxist disjunction, whose origin is dependent on specific hauntings of the age. In his words, a concept's

element itself is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes. It does not belong to ontology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death. It requires, then, what we call, to save time and space rather than just to make up a word, hauntology.²²

²⁰ In an introduction to *Spectropolitics*, author Maria de Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren argue that essentially, the ambivalence of the specter was addressed by *spectropolitics*, in a way that the empty capacity of today's radical desire in the state is understood in terms of dispossession and profane illuminations (a subversive enlightenment). In lengths, they described spectrality in all three aspects of conceivable timeframes: past, present, future, "as a haunting structure, both in the way it worked when it was in operation—acting simultaneously at a distance and through 'strangely familiar 'uncanny' intimacies'—and in its legacy of 'implicated histories in the disquieting present'." See Blanco María del Pilar and Esther Peeren, "Spectropolitics: Ghosts of the Global Contemporary / Introduction," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by Blanco María del Pilar and Esther Peeren (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 92.

²¹ To see a commentary on the dissociation of Derrida's position in deconstruction to orthodox Marxism, see Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006). For a more contentious view of Marxism as seen in deconstruction, see Robert Young, *White Mythologies Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 2008).

²² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 63.

As a cultural transition, a better view of Hauntology—one that includes speculative media—is offered by the late Mark Fisher. He considers two directions in reading Hauntology: the first which is no longer existing or functional but continues to ‘haunt from beyond the grave’ (lost origins) and second, which has not happened, but is already effective as an anticipative virtuality (aborted futures). In his observations of Hauntology in music, he concluded that technological music (specifically the artists he mentioned, *The Caretaker*, *Burial*, *Philip Jeck*, etc.) was suffused with a certain principle materialized in melancholy and yearning. In one of the elements, the crackle in vinyl soundtracks, he comments that “it makes us aware that we are listening to a time that is out of joint; it won’t allow us to fall into the illusion of presence.”²³ Derrida’s hauntology consists of his ultimate manner of political exorcism. The haunting fates the absence and presence of an archival period, and its evocative function mobilizes a transvaluation of the age to ages, of origins to repurposings. To *haunt* is not to exorcise the ghosts of the past, but to return to a body of abstraction, producing apparitions in the wake of the ontological ‘conjuring trick.’ Derrida writes that:

The production of the ghost, the constitution of the ghost effect, is not simply a spiritualization or even an autonomization of spirit, idea, or thought, as happens par excellence in Hegelian idealism. No, once this autonomization is effected, with the corresponding expropriation or alienation, and only then, the ghostly moment comes upon it, adds to it a supplementary dimension, one more simulacrum, alienation, or expropriation.²⁴

²³ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014), 19.

²⁴ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 157

It is this precise simulacra, of which the ghost's certitude follows, where the haunting of the Marcos era finds the interplay between the *geist* (spirit) and the *gespenst* (specter); in application, the ideology that spans the derivativeness of his regime produces nostalgia in irony and unoriginality. Hence the 'beyond idealism' traction of a hidden phantom. This is also seen in Derrida's thoughts in his work, *Writing and Difference*, where he expresses the disdain for the return to the pure, the structuralist instrument in forms of signification that call for deliberate creation.²⁵ In the advent of today's surge of political caricaturization on the web, post-Marcos politics has entered as a new haunting, a 'metamodernist' one in which, the application to the motifs of political ages itself, as Derrida would put it, has become out of joint.²⁶ Casting a deliberate examination of the contemporary age, the specter that haunts us in Philippine politics is precisely the ruptured reality of the 20th century post-Marcos politics unfolding; nevertheless, assuming the role of the Marcos signifier as the slow looping decay of the century's turn, Derrida's monstrous proclamation

²⁵ See Jacques Derrida's discussion of structures and historicity in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2009), 4-10.

²⁶ A recent discussion on the meta modernist styles of cultural Vaporwave was discussed by Nicholas Morrissey in "Metamodernism and Vaporwave: A Study of Web 2.0 Aesthetic Culture," *Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology*, 14:1 (2021), <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5206/notabene.v14i1.13361>>. In it, the author points out that vaporwave, in perceiving origin as postmodern and pastiche, maintains some level of detachment and self-awareness of the irony it deciphers. Relating to Derrida's discussion of the ageless crisis in *Specters of Marx* (specifically, chapter 3: *Wears and Tears: Tableau of an Ageless World*), Vaporwave appears to answer his phrase the 'time is out of joint' with 'time itself is a joint'. By Derrida's point on Western Democracies itself being risen from the specters of the age (in the same chapter), we can also hypothesize that the measure of which the wastes of our culture preside in the distinguished 'norms' all culminate in Vaporwave, projecting affective transformation over long periods of intervention. This entails that when Katy Shaw writes that "The past cannot simply be buried or denied: the specter must be received as an 'Other' from the past in order to activate its spectral agency in the present, and for the future." See Katy Shaw, *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 11. It is not simply seeing (Marcosian) politics today as a continuation of the past's disjointed eras, but also in the process of becoming an 'Other' for another disjointed era.

baptizes the inheritance of the age and hauntings that never fully appear. In crevices and deafening silences, the specters of the Marcoses have become the most powerful undead figure of the text—incorporating their grand scale evocation of Filipino symbolic hypervisibility, and perhaps their most potent influence (which shall be discussed further later), the ‘Never Forget’ movement that manages to reify the ‘*Hauntogenesis*’ of the irrational and the virtual.²⁷ As post-Marcos politics prove effective as a source of contextualizing Derrida’s initial attempts at defining Hauntology, the post-specter era—one emphasizing the post-communist spirit—of post-Marcos politics provides a liminal transition from the ideological fetishism of the regime to the repurposing of its copies in order to simulate retaining it.

THE MARCOSIAN SIGNIFIER AS A SPECTER

Derrida’s totality is apolitical at the heart of politics. By matter of signifier, “Derrida concedes that even though identification is indispensable, it is accompanied by a process of disidentification.”²⁸ To provide the discourse, the notion of historicity in Derrida’s deconstruction applies to a pragmatic politics that roots Western civilization. The traces of what our democratic opposition stands against still harbors the distinctions of a haunted trepidation of metaphysical boundaries. As it was withheld, “The principles which appear to be liberal and egalitarian, Derrida suggests, rest on a conception of the natural order that emphasizes the fundamental status of distinctions, first among species, but also between sexes, and we now see, races.”²⁹ It is here that the point across Marcos’ signifier becomes rightfully

²⁷ Michael M.J. Fisher, “Epilogue by Michael M.J. Fischer: Hauntology’s Genesis, Catacoustics, and Future Shadows,” in *The Hauntology of Everyday Life*, ed. by Sadeq Rahimi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 77-96.

²⁸ Martin McQuillan (ed.), *The Politics of Deconstruction: Jacques Derrida and the Other of Philosophy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 92.

²⁹ Catherine Zuckert, “The Politics of Derridean Deconstruction,” *Polity*, 23:3 (1991), 335-356, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3235130>, 343>.

subverted: his regime did not produce ghosts merely because its history informed its signifier to do so; it is by the virtue of the shallow apparatus that did not account for his transgressions far enough that the tyrannical character has indissolubly seeped even into today's dissident mass.

By the relation of exterminating the original 'Marcos' copy, what comes supplemental to most Marcos-related analysis are the binary logic of their sins/accomplishments during the height of their political contingency. In popular discourse, mostly media, the popularity of showcasing either side in quantity already protrudes to a certain element of prohibition, being that the Marcos name be held in contempt solely based on their historical record.³⁰ However, drawing on the abhorrent reality, whether it be victims or military generals, post-Marcos politics appropriates a stubbornness similar to a 'return of the living dead'. The philosopher Žižek reminds us that symbolization (essentially symbolic haunting) is also equated with symbolic murder—a suspension of reality appeased by means of integration in the text:

the return of the dead signifies that they cannot find their proper place in the text of tradition. The two great traumatic events of the holocaust and the gulag are, of course, exemplary cases of the return of the dead in the twentieth century. The shadows of their victims will continue to chase us as "living dead" until we give them a decent burial, until

³⁰ While it could be argued that works on Marcos such as Robert L. Youngblood, *Marcos against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publication, 1993) or John Bresnan, *Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014) went beyond the usual scholarly discourses of mere Marcos history, a certain episteme of postcolonial engagement dominated its themes. As most of the writers of these types of books had posited, Marcos was another addition to a line of postcolonial attitudes that was uncultivated; it downgrades the underlying ghost of his regime and outlines few continuity outside of meanings and interpretations to his acts.

we integrate the trauma of their death into our historical memory.³¹

Conditioning Marcos' specter far, however, exceeds the chasing of the victim; as a signifier, the slow, agonizing trickling of history's time itself becomes insufficient in erasing or remembering what the Marcoses or their era truly was, even with empirical history. And on the grounds of Derrida's classification of 'nothing being outside the text',³² our politicized phenomena also undergoes the Marcos event, for in the symbolic integration, they do not stand the test of time but they haunt it instead. Cultural theorist Laura Berlant sees a constitutive relationship to the nationalist movements that form from mass fervor and their symbolic forms. What she calls *National Symbolic* is the 'spirit' of the nation, totalized in a consciousness shared through rituals, symbolic gestures, etc.

The national symbolic, in other words, activates public subjectivity in the realm of fantasy. Here, the fractured and depersonalized colonized subject is restored to state of wholeness by an affective act of identification with an imagined national body.³³

While it is quite easy (and mainstream) to traverse this level of a nationalist complex to the Marcoses' political dimension, the allegory in declaring the loss of their narrative rejects the dynamic that the idea of 'nation' was substantiated solely by Marcos's affirmative rallying and classification of cultural policies. To exemplify the depth of haunting, we provide two spheres of exemplar mediums. The first one is a famous

³¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) 22-23.

³² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 313.

³³ Talitha Espiritu, *Passionate Revolutions: The Media and the Rise and Fall of the Marcos Regime* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017), 3.

propaganda film by Marcos during the events of the First Quarter Storm. Titled *The Threat–Communism*, the anti-communist piece of media was purposed as a documentary for proving the regime’s drastic measures as counter-justice for subversive activities “calculated to undermine our national soil”.³⁴ In the style of the red-scare during the heights of the US cold war, political demagoguery perpetuated the given authority that allowed purification rhetoric—such as that spread in this film—to effectively propagate the ‘citizens vs dissidents’ normativity. The second one is a more recent stylized trend of ‘Marcos nostalgia’ internet aestheticization that had recently invaded Filipino media, and artists of localized, independent communities had banded together to inject the kitschy aesthetic to everyday Filipino life. While most are underground (created by anonymous users), communities like *Virtual Barangay* ホール and *Pinoywave* 咽飲ど had recently established recurring signifiers to the genre: mainly overly-pixelated mixtures of neon colors, glitchy overlays and static backdrops, but, includes consumerist brands mostly known in the Philippines or provincial sceneries coupled with familiar ‘pinoy’ elements such as *Santo Niño statuettes* and Filipino idols/politicians in large scales.³⁵ A brand of Filipino aesthetics attuned Marcos as a leading convergent of all the previous elements—as if his figure had given rebirth and enlightenment to the genre. However, akin to none of its pre-conceived genre work, its politicality is the essence and the medium of the genre, and rather than nostalgia is a heightened sensation of loss and futility.

But how do the two mediums go beyond, but still retain the symbolic dimension as the hypervisible element of the regime? One propagandized (the film), which Derrida may see as the injunction of the specters’ history’, while the other satirized (the genre), and even bastardized the image of the nationalist ‘strong man’ which the masses vied

³⁴ See “Preparing for the Coup: A Propaganda Film,” in *Ibid*.

³⁵ For illustrations, see Scout Contrib, “Enter the Virtual Barangay: A Look at the Vaporwave Scene,” *Scout Magazine* (29 May 2018), <<https://www.scoutmag.ph/28366/enter-virtual-barangay-09122016/>>.

from policies and romanticized information of the time. Bobby Benedicto had created a similar article to ours in which he focused, instead, on the nostalgia for the late Ferdinand Marcos' corpse and how its preservation and reprisal (the burial in the heroes' cemetery) had not killed his sovereignty, but rather transferred it as an inherent in the aftermath of the People's Power, which is democracy. As an excellent excerpt, he writes:

Pronounced dead yet not laid to rest, the figure of the sovereign remains operative under democracy, not only as the ghostly threat that keeps returning, but as the unavowed measure for all aspirations to sovereignty that remain unrealized.³⁶

But Benedicto focuses explicitly on authoritarian nostalgia, such as attributing Derrida's call for a 'democracy to come', to demand an accounting of democratic institutions in order to seek a way out of the repetition in compulsive desire to see the sovereign as an object. As we intend to emphasize, seeing nostalgia as a definite object of contingency is part of the circling problem, as the two medias' comparison earlier proves this in which: Marcos' medium does not matter anymore in an age where his name has become synonymous to hauntings. It goes beyond because our nostalgia is corrupted by the signifier's loss: we do not clamor for a time when the Marcoses' sovereignty "binds democratic notions of individual freedom and autonomy" to a national spirit,³⁷ we clamor for a time when the feeling for this loss was, as the famous aphorism says, still 'Never Forgotten'. This is clearly shown in a music rendition by artist *skinxbones* in the album *Proclamation 1081* where post-Marcos politics becomes an

³⁶ Bobby Benedicto, "The Place of the Dead, the Time of Dictatorship: Nostalgia, Sovereignty, and the Corpse of Ferdinand Marcos," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 39:4 (February 2021), 722-739, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758211013038>, 736>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 733.

apogee of the album's aesthetic.³⁸ Mostly containing slowed instrumental beats merged with crackled recordings of the late dictator, it is unlike Benedicto's thesis concept, of what he calls '*fantasy of sovereignty*', for fantasy alludes to a certain threshold of coordinated *jouissance*. Rather, the revolution, Ferdinand Marcos' preserved corpse, and our current trends of reelecting candidates similar to his wake, all have the common 'lost' archival questions of whether this time, the greatness of a nation is forever lost or just reemerging, providing the listeners feelings of hopelessness throughout the album. It is here that we see the actualization of the specter's ruin which, "Derrida concludes [that], if there is nothing "in itself," as Heidegger argues, there is no unit or unity-no subject or ego, no unitary or universal world or "world view," no determinative or decisive history."³⁹ Instead, what is in the regime itself, like the medium, are the hauntings that repeat the being of the Marcos name.

In finality, what does the 'Never Forget' movement ultimately signify? Here, we bring up the Nietzschean idea of oversaturation, where "an age can become oversaturated with the past, to the point whereby a cultural stultification takes place."⁴⁰ We radically claim that never forgetting is a nonsensical attempt of providing solace for the victims and the nation under the duress of the epoch's intensive influence. What is there to forget? And most importantly, how does one never forget a haunting? To never forget a ghost means to placehold it, remember it, but not signify it. The original Marcos ideology—in its essence of there being one—is lost to its own disjointedness forever. What remains are callings for

³⁸ For a specific sample, see skinxbones. "marcos pa rin mga ulol 『隠された真実』," *Proclamation 1081*, Virtual Barangay ホール, 2016, track 1. *Bandcamp*, virtualbarangay420.bandcamp.com/album/--3. As a support to an earlier argument as well about the recurring elements of post-Marcos politics in Dutertism, see 帰宅します Amado, "Foes from comrades," より良い r e d より dead, Virtual Barangay ホール, 2017, track 8. *Bandcamp*, virtualbarangay420.bandcamp.com/album/--5.

³⁹ Zuckert, "Politics of Derridean Deconstruction," 352.

⁴⁰ Shaw, "Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature," 14

its haunted spectacles, revolutions that fight against its absence, and copied regimes (Duterte, BBM, future dictators, etc.) pasted as a re-simulation in light of post-Marcos politics. While the techno-orientalist themes of today's Filipino politics definitely adds to the post-Marcos politics calling for its postcolonial *geist*, never forgetting exaggerates this need to satisfy the lost genre of Marcos—as if the phrase itself had become a mere set of signifiers to satisfy the repentance of his influence.⁴¹ We propose the phrase 'Never forget what to forget' in place of the former's ambiguity. Like archival memory, post-Marcos politics was never alive nor has it ever died, and forgetting it does not affect its ontological presence/absence in our political conditions. But its insertion in our symbolic dimension furthers our crossroads for today's epoch. It is no coincidence that Duterte's sovereignty and BBM's presidential campaign had lined up the political stars to once again play the lost tune of the signifier post-Marcos politics; perhaps the remnants of what we ought to work with is the very impure, impure history of ghosts that Derrida had precluded today's politics with: "The fault, in any case, by definition, is repeated, we inherit it, we must watch over it. It always comes at a great price—and for humanity precisely."⁴²

THE HYPERREALITY OF THE MARCOSIAN SIMULACRA

"The perfect crime would have been to invent a faultless world and withdraw from it without leaving a trace. But we cannot achieve this. We leave traces everywhere—viruses, lapses, germs, and

⁴¹ Mark Fisher discusses an interesting three-way cultural prognosis on the 'Big Other', the ghost of Capitalism, and postmodernism in his chapter 'All that is solid melts into PR'. There one sentence there stood out as the chapter's expressive force of prescription and it is: "One way to understand the 'realism' of capitalist realism is in terms of the claim to have given up belief in the big Other." See Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010), 51. In similarity, is not this very expression also a synthesis of how one should view post-Marcos politics? A realism of what the Marcos influence really is, without the reliance on the ideological banners that extrinsically pollute the murky incorporeality it really besets?

⁴² Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 220.

catastrophes—signs of imperfection which are, so to speak, man's signature in the heart of the artificial world.” (Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*⁴³)

A never-ending chapter started by the Marcoses plagues Philippine history with the content of its pages constantly being rewritten time and time again from Marcos' cultural and ideological pastiche, the simulated imago of the passive Filipino through the fabrication of the Tasaday tribe, the ghostly regime of the Bagong Lipunan, up until today's historical denialism accompanied by the historicization and glorification of what will be referred to as the Marcosian simulacra⁴⁴—fragmented simulations of the accomplishments, or lack thereof, of the Marcos administration and the image of Marcos—proliferating in various media platforms as either memes or other digital manifestations. The Marcosian simulacra is hyperreality par excellence with its semiotic dominance reaching far beyond the 20th century.⁴⁵ Perhaps the urban legend surrounding their son fundamentally reflects the current reality of Philippine politics;⁴⁶ modernist Philippine

⁴³ Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1996), 40.

⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard had differing conceptions of the simulacra. Whereas Baudrillard referred to the simulacra in the context of hyperreality constituting the fourth order of the simulacra as that stage when signs only refer differentially to other signs instead of reality, Derrida read the simulacra tracing it back to the Platonic distinction between true claimants and false ones which is a underlying theme in the Platonic Dialogues. See Daniel Smith, “The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism,” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 38 (2006), 89-123, <doi.10.1007/s11007-006-3305-8> for a more comprehensive review of Derrida's own understanding of the simulacra.

⁴⁵ In exploring the epoch of the obscene, or “the age which succeeds the age of modern technology,” through Heidegger and Baudrillard, Pasco defined hyperreality as: “the end product of a total simulation based on computerized models produced by a code that produces a purely operational form of reality whose origin, function, and purpose become practically and metaphysical irrelevant.” See Marc Oliver Pasco, “Releasement and Seduction: Heidegger and Baudrillard on the Preservation of Illusion in the Epoch of Obscenity,” *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 22:1 (2021), 74-96.

⁴⁶ There was an urban legend popularized during the early 1980's speculating that the real Bongbong Marcos was already dead, with varying accounts as to how he died, and had

politics—if it ever existed—had long passed, having been replaced by a simulacral counterpart wherein traditional power, or the absence thereof, plays along the closed circuit of pure image, having nothing to do with the political as a concrete site of ideological contestation and everything to do with the aestheticization of politics—the meta-political.

If Baudrillard referred to the hypermarket as the “hyperreality of the commodity” and Beaubourg as “the hyperreality of culture,”⁴⁷ the Marcosian simulacra would be the hyperreality of Philippine politics. It is important to note here Pasco’s exposition regarding the state of hyperreality in the today’s obscene age: “Hyperreality is the performance of the real’s inchoate and inevitably disappearance from history—the meticulous murder of the real by the simulacrum.”⁴⁸ Paraphrasing Baudrillard: The circulation of the Marcosian simulacra is enough to create a social horizon of value, and the ghostly presence of the phantom value will only be greater, even when its reference point (its use value, its exchange value, the political force that Marcos lavishly expended during his regime) is lost.⁴⁹ Indeed, the present generation never experienced Marcos;⁵⁰ rather, something worse than the corporeality of a dictator in flesh is encountered: an undying phantasmatic construct of a dictator that occupies the virtual. The Marcosian simulacra is obscene: “the becoming-

been replaced with a clone that was supposedly a family relative of theirs that underwent plastic surgery. See “The True Bongbong Marcos is already dead,” Facebook post, posted by First Ako! Please Maasar Kayo Sakin (10 May 2013), <[⁴⁷ *Ibid.*](https://m.facebook.com/FACTgasms/photos/a.221668304600165/374800119286982.></p>
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⁴⁸ Marc Oliver Pasco, “Releasement and Seduction: Heidegger and Baudrillard on the Preservation of Illusion in the Epoch of Obscenity,” *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 22:1 (2021), 77.

⁴⁹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 102

⁵⁰ Ranhilio Aquino tweeted: “The present generation that is loud in its condemnation of Marcos never experienced Marcos. So that rant is directed at their construct of Marcos. Shouldn’t they be studying Derrida and Lyotard more?” “The present generation that is loud in its condemnation of Marcos never experienced Marcos.” Twitter post, posted by Ranhilio Aquino (11 September 2020), <[>](https://twitter.com/RanhilioAquino/status/1304348320790384642)

real, the becoming-absolutely-real, of something which until then was treated metaphorically or had a metaphorical dimension.”⁵¹ Nothing encapsulates more the obscenity of the Marcosian simulacra than the effigies of Marcos that have been time and time again burned by protestors to confront the real Marcos by attempting to signify the dictator through their constructs, with the burning of the effigy itself acting as a ritual of expulsion. However, the position of the Iconoclasts and the protestors are the same here, and same goes with the Marcosian simulacra and Baudrillard’s conception of God:

If they could have believed that these images only obfuscated or masked the Platonic Idea of God, there would have been no reason to destroy them. One can live with the idea of distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the image didn’t conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original would have made them, but perfect simulacra, forever radiant with their own fascination.⁵²

It is helpful to think here of Baudrillard’s thought experiment of the simulated robbery.⁵³ With regards to the image of the Marcos effigy, it does not matter whether it is the real Marcos or a simulation of Marcos that is being mocked and burned by the protestors as both will be treated as acts of terrorism that provides the State with the justification to kill the

⁵¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Passwords* (Brooklyn, Verso Books, 2003), 27, as quoted Pasco, “Release and Seduction,” 85

⁵² Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 5

⁵³ According to Baudrillard, the “established order” will punish the simulation of the robbery either as if it were the real thing or because it wasted resources, those resources expended in the operation: “The simulation of an offense, if it is established as such, will either be punished less severely (because it has no “consequences”) or punished as an offense against the judicial system (for example if one sets in motion a police operation “for nothing”) - but never as simulation since it is precisely as such that no equivalence with the real is possible, and hence no repression either. *Ibid.*, 16

protector who commits the crime of revealing that there is actually nothing real behind the appearances.⁵⁴ Baudrillard thus called for the exorcism of the “death of the divine referential,”⁵⁵ whether consciously or unconsciously echoing Derrida. What must be accomplished then is not simply an expulsion of the Marcosian simulacra, which paradoxically manifests today in the saying “Never Forget,” but rather a symbolic confrontation with the specter of Marcos, a conjuration of the Marcosian simulacra which refuses to depart Filipino reality.⁵⁶

THE MOBIAN FANTASY OF THE TADHANA PROJECT

First and foremost, Marcos can be a dictator, a revolutionary, a father, war hero, a savior, and all these at once exactly because the signifier “Marcos” no longer signifies Ferdinand Marcos as such or any of his kin, but rather signifies a phantasmatic construct of nostalgic loss: a pure ideology representative of a pastiche of the cultural and ideological heritage of the Filipino people. Pastiche, in this context, is used in the same way that Jameson applied it in his Marxist critique of postmodern aesthetics, as “blank parody.”⁵⁷ The Marcosian signifier is a pastiche of three particular elements: a Platonic-inspired Catholic monarchism, fetishized Katipunan ideology, and Archeo-futurist millenarianism. With that in mind, it is difficult, if not impossible, to highlight the trace of a Marcosian referent as, being a hyperreal signifier, it has already been subsumed under the political economy of the sign, existing as a free-floating signifier that can take whatever form it wants. If so, the Marcosian signifier is a screen par excellence, an ultimate site of projection and identification for fanatics and

⁵⁴ “A History of the Philippine Political Protest,” in *The Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, <<https://mirror.officialgazette.gov.ph/edsa/the-ph-protest/>>

⁵⁵ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 5

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 59.

⁵⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 23.

detractors alike. However, it begs the question: Where has Marcos the referent gone?

Marcos' simulacrazation of Catholic religiosity, Katipunan ideology, and millenarianism makes his despotic rule barely a secular one. Starting with the first element, Guillermo describes the ideological climate of the Marcos regime as one "with its airy classical absolutes of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty," as if grounding itself on Platonic terms, adding that the regime's return to the "backward and medieval aspects of Catholicism" was "a strategy aimed to condition the minds of the oppressed masses to be receptive to monarchy in a new guise and to accept as inscribed in the order of things the royal posturings of the ruling Marcos family."⁵⁸ There is also the added dimension that Marcos deluded himself as an instrument of God.⁵⁹ As for the second element, the Marcosian simulacra fancies itself with its fetishization of the Katipunan ideology as its historical precedent, supposedly mirroring his ideal of the *Bagong Lipunan* with the *Kilusan sa Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran* (KKK) as "the movement for livelihood and progress, while simultaneously pushing for a 'revolution from the center,'" a deceptive term that refers to Marcos' distorted view of the revolution which in actuality borders more on authoritarianism than mass politics.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Alice Guillermo, *The Convert Presence and Other Essays on Politics and Culture* (Sampaloc: Kalikasan Press, 1989), 162.

⁵⁹ Marcos once wrote in his diary: There was no hesitation in my movements. It was as if there was a script I was following which I had been made to memorize long, long ago and which I merely executed — the role and action coming naturally as to a well-rehearsed actor. And there was no feeling of anger or fear or any other emotion on my part. It was as if I was just an instrument— unfeeling, unthinking and unhesitating." William Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993), 73.

⁶⁰ Marcos's notion of the "revolution from the center" attempts to justify the central role of the government in establishing the New Society, paying lip-service to mass politics and using populist language to claim that "government is hot above the people but in the center of their lives as a national society," akin to National Socialist rhetoric. See "Essay by President Marcos entitled "The True Filipino Ideology," in *The Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, <<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1982/05/12/essay-by-president-marcos-entitled-the-true-filipino-ideology/>>

Lastly, the Filipino ideology that Marcos espouses bears some resemblance to the Fayeian ideological project of Archeofuturism which argues for the “re-emergence of archaic social configurations in a new context,”⁶¹ best describing the Marcos regime’s obsession with pre-coloniality while concomitantly employing it from within a modernist framework, ending up with a pastiche as opposed to an ideological innovation. In Baudrillardian terms, Marcosian reality, especially during the Martial Law period, was merely a “simulacrum of the symbolic,” as Pawlett described Baudrillard’s conception of the “real,”⁶² that is, constantly haunted by radical otherness—Communism, the Liberal Party, anarchy, etc.—serving both as the barrier and the justification for its attempts at surgically removing all forms of alterity through authoritarian measures. Yet as Pawlett adds: “Symbolic exchange forever haunts the sign, threatening to “dismantle” all the formal oppositions on which it depends.”⁶³ In other words, Marcosian reality back then was constantly engaging with radical otherness in the level of the symbolic, something that is gradually being lost as time ensues yet continually persisting alongside his specter.

The Marcosian signifier cannot be reduced as a phenomena to be categorized between the dichotomy of postmodernism and hauntology as it is not quite postmodern but also not purely hauntology.⁶⁴ As opposed to shoehorning the very undefinability of the Marcosian signifier, the Marcosian simulacra appears as the past eating itself—an Ouroborian cycle

⁶¹ Guillaume Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of the Post-Catastrophic Age*. (Hungary: Arktos Media Ltd., 2010).

⁶² William Pawlett. *Jean Baudrillard: Against Banality*. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 23

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Tanner establishes a critical distance between pastiche and hauntology in claiming that: “The shift in focus from mining the cultural past for pastiche or parody to mourning a lost future differentiates postmodernism from hauntology. Whereas postmodern toys with history via an increased skepticism in truly “knowing” the past, hauntology posits that the past notions of future have in some way failed, causing a disruption of time as an orderly sequence of past, present, and future. See Grafton Tanner, *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2016).

that is stuck in the circular referentially of its own undeath—the Bagong Lipunan consuming, if not commodifying, the signs of political nostalgia, and what will be seen later as culminating in his ambitious Tadhana project; yet in its attempt at *consommation*, it ends up barring its *consummation*, thus undergoing its own self-de(con)struction. Tracing this so-called self-deconstruction of the Marcosian signifier, the disjointedness of Marcos and the Martial Law period within postmodern Philippine politicking emanates within it a kind of static, drawing the listener away from the innocence and normalcy of everything thus revealing the ghastly underpinnings of the real through this static which disrupts the flow, rhythm, and linearity of history. Jeffrey Sconce described static in Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* such that it “suggests a sinister electrical presence to the apparatus, exploiting the ambiguity of television as a technology, a virtually sentient being, and a gateway to an electronic unreality.”⁶⁵ Drawing on Sconce, the Marcosian simulacra persists as a sinister political presence exploiting the ambiguity of the Philippine political system, exposing the very core of the country’s rotten democracy: the persistence of rampant corruption, obsession with cults of personalities, and the undeath of the Marcoses’ political power, as if nostalgia has taken its revenge to reveal the sins of the past. Static is as an uncanny interruption, or rather eruption, of a ghostly presence, that which can be said to be the case with Marcos’ “static,” an anachronistic re-appearance wherever and whenever he should not, if not no longer, belong: as a physically rotted yet semiotically preserved corpse in the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*, as a bastardized signifier in the copious ahistorical artifacts generated by TikTok users, as an apolitical element of pastiche in post-ironic Facebook posts, and as a political specter who both simulates its presence onto the ideological realm and dissimulates the atrocities committed during the Marcos regime.

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, ed. by Lynn Spigel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 164.

Drawing on Cixous, Tanner argued that the uncanny manifests itself where: “there exists a rift between the familiar and the warp-of-the-familiar... These animated objects are uncanny because they rob the familiar of its comfort.”⁶⁶ Before becoming a hyperreal signifier, the Marcosian simulacra must have first become uncanny, imposing its *tour de force* in contemporary media, constantly disrupting the linearity of history with its undead simulations of power, a triumph of the Marcosian project of becoming-fascist if anything. Marcos is already dead but the mere utterance of his name continues to be accompanied by a paradoxically present and absent necropolitical regime extending virtually into the recesses of Filipino consciousness. For the believers of the Marcosian simulacra, perhaps all participate in the spectacle anyways: the world is not for the people now but for the lost people of the Bagong Lipunan, and the lost history of the Tadhana project, appearing as something that should have never left yet, at the same time, something that should be never accomplished in the first place. The success of the Marcoses’ projects lies in their never being finished; they are constantly remembered as artifacts, then consumed as virtual signs bearing with them the memory of the spectral dictator.

The Tadhana project was spearheaded by state-sponsored scholars, with intellectuals such as Tan, Salazar, Quiason, and Paras-Perez contributing to the creation of an entirely indigenous oeuvre with traces of justifications to the Marcosian dictatorship: “[i]t sought to recover the earliest period (geologic times) up to the Marcos years in the 1970s.”⁶⁷ Besides the promise of money and power, some of the scholars were drawn to the project as they saw it as a counter-discursive effort against the hegemony of European scholarship regarding Philippine history, especially when it comes to the pre-colonial period: “it was a decolonializing

⁶⁶ Tanner, “Babbling Corpse,” 11.

⁶⁷ Rommel Curaming, “Official History Reconsidered: The Tadhana Project in the Philippines,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage & Nico Wouters (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 237-254.

historiography *par excellence*.”⁶⁸ The historical basis of the project anchored itself in the “Austronesian and Malayo-Polynesian roots of Filipinos identities,” casting doubt at the cultural and political contributions of the Spanish and American occupation as a “temporary disruption” as opposed to an element of the evolutionary trajectory of the heterogeneous Filipino identity being espoused by the state-sponsored scholars.⁶⁹ As an initiative towards the creation of an official history, Tadhana as a political and historiographic project was reactive against another emerging counter-narrative against Western hegemony—the international Communist movement—by instead promoting a functionalist solution to national problems in the form of “the need for national identity, unity, and self-determination” among any other national objective.⁷⁰ In reality, however, the Tadhana project was nothing more than a state-sponsored bastardization of nationalism and indigeneity for the purpose of furthering Marcos’ efforts towards historical revisionism.

Internalizing the stratagems of Western colonialism, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos embody the specter of 20th-century American benevolent assimilation now clad in Barong Tagalog and Filipiniana. As Rafael notes: “she [Imelda Marcos] was resorting to the colonial tradition of “benevolent assimilation” introduced by the United States by claiming to uplift and civilize people in and through the extravagant displays of Marcosian modernity.”⁷¹ It goes without saying that the Marcoses made use of everything in the Machiavellian and Sorelian handbook to ensure that their regime, just like the kings of old, will survive even after the death of the prime dictator, between Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. What is then clearly evident in these cultural and political manifestations of Marcosian

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Rommel Curaming, “Tadhana in Political and Historiographic Contexts,” in *Power and Knowledge in Southeast Asia: State and Scholars in Indonesia and the Philippines*, ed. Duncan McCargo (New York: Routledge, 2010), 67-98.

⁷¹ Vicente Rafael, *The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2022), 23.

modernity is that the Marcosian signifier has completely divorced itself from its Filipino referent, thus becoming a fully-fledged commodity that continues to be consumed until the present day. Whether it be through the persisting historical narratives born out of the Tadhana project, the architectural marvels reflective of the Marcosian edifice complex, or the Marcosian myth seamlessly weaved into Marcos' aspirations of a democratic revolution that would bring about his national phantasy of the *Bagong Lipunan*, all of these are part and parcel of the hyperreality of the Marcosian simulacra which offers something more real than the real to the Filipino masses: it does not have to be true, it simply needs to feel true in order to be accepted as the truth. Post-Marcos politics does not function between the polar opposites of Truth and Falsity. Rather, post-Marcos politics muddles the distinction between these two poles, creating a spectral representation of the regime that is hyperreal in form, fascistic in its content, and spectacular in its delivery.

Finally, we arrive at the illustration of the Mobius strip which particularly presents itself as a surface devoid of dialectics, where everything that was diametrically opposed to each other becomes one and the same, constituting the circular reality of the Marcosian signifier: Archaism/futurism, Symbolic/semiotic, satire/post-irony, hauntology/postmodernity: "All the referentials combine their discourses in a circular, Mobian compulsion."⁷² As Pawlett argued: "The hyperreal is a state 'beyond' dialectics, not in the sense of passing through dialectics, but a state where the dialectic and its distinctive binary oppositions collapse and implode."⁷³ Any and all criticism against the Marcosian simulacra becomes subsumed within its system; just as when Cory Aquino won against Ferdinand Marcos after the dictator, having been overthrown during the People Power revolution spanning from February 22-25, 1986, still Marcos triumphantly emerged as the victor in his spectrality through his three obscene returns: the return of the Marcoses on November 4, 1991,

⁷² Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 56

⁷³ Pawlett, *Jean Baudrillard: Against Banality*, 80.

the museumification of Marcos' body after its return in September 1993, and the burial of Marcos' body in the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* on November 18, 2016. Cory, along with her revolt, disappeared indefinitely. The success of continuous hauntings of the hyperreal body of Marcos largely owes itself to the half-success of a previous political project during the regime which, revealed as it were as a hoax, had become a spectacle capable of eluding the colonizing power of ethnology, just as Marcos is: "But in the same breadth ethnology grants us its only and final lesson, the secret that kills it (and which the Savages knew better than it did): the vengeance of the dead."⁷⁴

But far from being just a fabricated sign devoid of any referent which embodied the Western projections of Orientalism, Dumont argues that the creation of the Tasaday reservation in a secluded area in Mindanao Island "affirmed that [the Marcos regime] controlled what is wanted to control, and it gave a striking example not only of what it believed to be the authority and the solidity of the regime, but at the same time of the docility of the its subjects."⁷⁵ The Marcosian simulacra is the result of the internalization of years, if not decades, worth of propogandation of the Marcosian imago. Whereas the Tasaday was the pinnacle of an externalized imago of the Orientalist stereotype, the hyperreal body of Marcos is the *obra maestra* of the 20 year regime which managed to not only circumvent the limitations imposed by the Philippine Constitution but also that of symbolization. Marcos remains the primary abject of Filipino consciousness, but unlike the Kristevan corpse which haunts the living by virtue of the subject creating itself through the act of abjection,⁷⁶ the hyperreal body of Marcos both demands the abjection of and subjugation under the Marcosian double, a simulation, not that of a fact but of something more powerful than that of the power that Marcos had during

⁷⁴ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 102

⁷⁵ Jean-Paul Dumont, "The Tasaday, Which and Whose? Toward the Political Economy of an Ethnographic Sign," *Cultural Anthropology*, 3:3 (1988), 264.

⁷⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Abjection: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press), 4.

his regime, a double which bears no historicity, no origin, and seemingly no end: “they are already purged of their death, and better than when they were alive; more cheerful, more authentic, in the light of their model, like the faces in funeral homes.”⁷⁷

CONCLUSION: MARCOS THE IMMORTAL SIGNIFIER

In actuality, this work contains no real conclusion, for the haunting cycle of post-Marcos politics is of no short pauses and in-betweens. Instead, an immortal signifier persists, a symptomatic carnality to the pure simulacrum of the patriarchal Marcos. Freud in his famous work *Totem and Taboo* tells us of a tale about the original primal father and how his sons refrained from reaping the sinister spoils of murder out of guilt;⁷⁸ and while its allegorical value tells us of a narrative of an overcoming, it is a reflection of our very political cynicism—one that constructs our bleak outlook for the future time and time again. With this, Claudio notes that following the authoritarian era of Philippine history, recurring renditions of Marcos’ downfall continue until this day (Estrada’s impeachment, Arroyo’s scandal, Duterte’s Drug war, etc.).⁷⁹ Yet in the slight hand of reliving an epoch, the truth is that we see the satisfaction of not burying Marcos in a regal place of signifiers (i.e., the Heroes’ cemetery) as the same sentiment when he was. All the symbolic retributions, thus far, have proven shallow, moreso as that proximate nostalgia are all hauntings of “moment[s] of subjective freedom.”⁸⁰ The so-called ‘revolt’ has itself become a haunted action of the Post-Marcos era, as its very utterance

⁷⁷ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 10.

⁷⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Routledge, 2003), 164-165.

⁷⁹ Lisandro E. Claudio, *Taming People’s Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013).

⁸⁰ Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 214.

signifies a phantomatic return of the ‘People’s Power’ in celebration and in suffering (its ghastly anniversary is superficial insofar as family members of the regime are living). Shuffling to the paper’s relevancy, what does it then mean for Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the esteemed direct descendant, to inherit the ghosts of his father’s age? There traces a return of the simulacra that sins in accordance to the haunting. Mainly the discourse of the sins of the father, and his apparent readiness to form a new steady leadership, somehow dictated the formidable influx of dictatorship structure.⁸¹ The narrative of him inheriting none of it or all of it is a faulty dichotomy of empirical politics; in Post-Marcos politics, BBM consigns himself as the fourth order of the simulacra, wherein while he bears no relation to the image, he is, howbeit, the threshold of the Filipino people’s political jouissance—a medium to transpose desires for the late dictator himself. Facebook ‘cypastas’ of facts about the victims of the regime, hoax exposings, conditions in their political races, all stand as BBM’s order: ghastly renditions that never forget what is already unforgettable. In this direction, his opportunity of restoring what is lost is not through the smiling faces of the patriotic nationalists that supported his late father, but the blank faces of the virtual users that continue to utter his name in the specter of his father.

Unlike Marcos, the dead of the Martial Law era cannot, and will not, have wax figures made of them nor symbolic funerals that will silence their ghosts once and for all.⁸² Like the Tasaday before them, the *desaparecidos*

⁸¹ For the former, see Antonio Contreras, “Bongbong Marcos Should Apologize for His Father,” *The Manila Times* (23 October 2021), <<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/10/23/opinion/columns/bongbong-marcos-should-apologize-for-his-father/1819437>>. For the latter, see Rep. Edcel C. Lagman, “Formidable Tandem of BBM-Sara Is Bound to Flounder,” *The Manila Times* (25 November 2021), <<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/11/25/opinion/columns/formidable-tandem-of-bbm-sara-is-bound-to-flounder/1823553>>.

⁸² Quite boldly, Montalvan II echoes what a close Marcos family friend told him: “that the real Marcos corpse had already been buried underneath that catafalque that bears Marcos the Wax.” See Antonio Montalvan II, “There is no refrigerated crypt,” in *Inquirer* (15 August 2016), <<https://opinion.inquirer.net/96516/no-refrigerated-crypt>>

under the Marcos regime will “provide a perfect alibi, an eternal guarantee,”⁸³ a testament to the fragments behind the hyperreal bodies of the dead which have taken to social media not to simply haunt the living, pleading for justice, but to be simulated in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram posts into endless copies of copies of copies, ad infinitum. The ethnological power of social media, with all its capacity for dissimulating the truth on one hand and simulating the truth so much so that it is drained of any vestige of meaning on the other, has only so far invoked the hyperreal bodies of the *desaparecidos* who are themselves scrutinized under the lens of a political ethnology ever so pervasive in social media: “In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being “discovered” and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it.”⁸⁴ In the latter part of his oeuvre, Baudrillard greatly expands on this notion of the revenge of the object, especially in one of his later books wherein he cites an excerpt from one of Borges’ story from his compendium of beasts, appropriating it by claiming that: “So, everywhere, objects, children, the dead, images, women, everything which serves to provide a passive reflection based on identity, is ready to go on the counter-offensive. Already they resemble us less and less ... I will not be your mirror!”⁸⁵ There will eventually come a time when otherness will refuse the singularity involuntarily imposed by the Same, when the mirror images of Marcos and the *desaparecidos* “will one day rebel, and then our whole system of representation and values are destined to perish in that revolt.”⁸⁶ It will be a time when the calls for “Never Forget” will be replaced by a new call: “Never forget what to forget.”

⁸³ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7

⁸⁵ Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, 150.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

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