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**Claudio, Lisandro E. 2013. *Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 226 pp.**

The 1986 EDSA People Power is widely perceived as a turning point in Philippine political history. Having resulted in the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos, it is often associated with ideas of change and democracy. Such a narrative has formed part of the tapestry of the Philippine imaginary. On the other hand, some scholars view EDSA—named after Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the national highway that was the main site of People Power—as a “lost revolution” (Coronel 1991), resulting in the restoration of the elite-dominated political system that existed prior to martial law (Anderson 1988). How must one make sense of these contradictions? It is within the context of these competing perspectives that Claudio makes his contribution. He differentiates between People Power “as empirical reality” and as “symbolic construction” (15), and his work focuses primarily on the latter. Making such a distinction highlights the political dimension of representation as a competition for meaning among different actors. Though reality may have its objective dimensions, its interpretation and significance can vary.

In this work, the author deconstructs what he calls the “national myth” (17) of People Power by looking at two different narratives of the event: on the one hand, there is the dominant triumphalist narrative that frames EDSA as a miracle and places the figure of Cory Aquino,

along with the anti-Marcos political elite, at the center of democratic revival; on the other hand, there is also the alternative narrative of the Philippine Left, riddled with a complex history and whose development had been closely intertwined with the anti-dictatorship movement and, ironically, declined along with the overthrow of the dictatorship. To unpack the contents of these narratives, Claudio uses a multivocal approach—that is, he derives discursive patterns from multiple sources not necessarily limited to text. For instance, Claudio conducted interviews with actors who supposedly represent alternative narratives about EDSA, such as some members of the Left movement as well as with farmers in Hacienda Luisita. In his analysis, he also takes a look at selected symbolic spaces that he views as distinct embodiments of these competing narratives. The multiplicity of symbolic spaces representing competing narratives may be understood as a reflection of the fragmented nature of the overall People Power narrative.

The first case study is the EDSA Shrine, an epitome of the dominant People Power narrative. The EDSA Shrine is a Roman Catholic church situated in a prominent location at the heart of the Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue. It is made visible through the tall image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Such an image frames the People Power narrative in quasi-religious terms. Inside the church, the images fuse together divergent figures of religion and Philippine politics: the Blessed Virgin Mary, former president Corazon Aquino, and Jaime Cardinal Sin, among others. For Claudio, the EDSA Shrine is a clear manifestation of the dominant actors in the Philippine political scene.

The second case study used by Claudio is Bantayog ng mga Bayani, located in a less visible area along Quezon Avenue. Bantayog is a memorial that pays tribute to the activists of the Left who lost their lives in the anti-dictatorship struggle. Claudio notes that the lack of resonance of this narrative compared to the first may be a reflection of the Left's declining influence. He writes, "one can view the general exclusion of the Left's history from public history as a product of its political alienation in 1986" (82). Moreover, Claudio notes "an internal difficulty within the Left of writing its own history" (85) primarily because of its own fragmented past stained by the internal conflict among the members of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

To further highlight the contradictions embedded within the People Power narrative, Claudio's fourth chapter discusses Hacienda Luisita, a sugar plantation in Tarlac owned by the Cojuangcos, Cory Aquino's family. It is also the site of a peasant struggle for land reform,

the “dark side of the People Power narrative” (115). Caught between the two narratives discussed above, Hacienda Luisita is situated by Claudio as a representation of “voices silenced by virtue of the tendency in popular nationalism to forget inconvenient memories” (21) and “an analogue for the Philippine nation as it is a community trapped between the dual imaginaries of people power and National Democracy” (162). In the lifeworld of the hacienda’s inhabitants, the conventional People Power narrative is somewhat reversed: Marcos’s figure is seen to have more redeeming qualities for the 1985 attempt to cleave the estate from the Cojuangcos; conversely, Cory Aquino is viewed as “Madame Cory,” a member of the ruling cacique oligarchy, contrary to her popular EDSA image as a humble housewife.

Situated within the subfield of memory studies, this work demonstrates how the significance of history depends not only on *whether* it is remembered but also on *how* it is remembered. In this sense, remembering can be considered a political act, a platform for contestation. The very act of remembering is conditioned by various political factors. In the case of People Power, Claudio demonstrates how the dynamics of class come into play in the different narratives of the event—that is, the narrative of the Philippine elite remains to be the dominant narrative of EDSA, and the marginalized narrative is that of the grassroots, seen, in this particular case, in the “silenced struggle” (89) of Hacienda Luisita farmers.

In the process of analyzing these divergent discourses, Claudio breaks open some of the key issues in historiography, particularly the frequent tendency to construct a unitary narrative of the past premised on a linear notion of historical development. This tendency may at times be justified by nationalist projects—that is, an attempt at nation building through symbols meant to forge a singular sense of national identity. Unfortunately, such an attempt at nation building may compromise truth: the actual reality of a fragmented past. This idea is echoed and elaborated in another work by Claudio (2013).

To end, Claudio’s work also gives some interesting insights on alternative ways of thinking about history, particularly about our own history. This book is a good addition to the existing literature exploring alternative narratives about People Power written by other scholars (e.g. Thompson 1995, Timberman 1991, Wurfel 1988). This work’s main contribution is its analysis of symbolic spaces as arenas of discourse, i.e., as representations of competing narratives about the past. As the Philippines approaches the thirtieth anniversary of People

Power (and the end of the second Aquino presidency), it is apt for Filipinos and scholars of the Philippines to embark on a renewed reflection on the significance of EDSA in the development and trajectory of the contemporary Philippine state. However, far from engaging in triumphalism, such reflection must be imbued with a spirit of openness and brutal sincerity in coming to terms with the events of the past. As this book effectively demonstrates, history, as well as the act of remembering, is characterized by a multi-linear and oftentimes fragmentary nature. Moreover, it demonstrates the flaws of unitary narratives meant to create a homogenous understanding of history, to the point of reducing it to mere propaganda.—**MARIA CELINE ANASTASIA P. SOCRATES**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN

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