

From Collecting to Tracing Documentary Realities: The Intertextuality of “New Society”

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Abstract:

State-produced published documents during Martial Law in the Philippines from 1972-1981 are examined through intertextuality. Under the regime of the late President Ferdinand Marcos, his vaunted ideology of Bagong Lipunan or New Society was foisted on the Philippines. Until now, this period is still highly contested. Opposing views and memories of this era have emerged. Through the engagement of librarians in bringing forth new knowledge and social memory, they are transforming their role from being keepers and collectors of information to mediators and educators that help raise public awareness. This paper demonstrates how librarians can take part in the discourse by analysing documents, especially those that are considered crucial for the reconstruction of memory and history.

Keywords: Martial Law, New Society, document analysis, intertextuality

Introduction

A library can have multiple voices reverberating from its collection and interpretations it evokes. Aside from collecting materials, librarians have a role in creating a ‘free’ space for various voices and non-monolithic discussions from and/or about certain library materials or documents relating to a disputed phase in history. For generations, librarians and libraries may have been expected to be neutral information institutions with apolitical stance, but Chaparro-Univazo (2007) argues that “there is nothing more political than organizing and disseminating information” (p.34). In creating a space where rational deliberations can happen, librarians can start analyzing documents and open the doors for the investigation of truth and dissemination of more novel information. Through the engagement of librarians in bringing forth new knowledge and social memory, they are transforming their role from being keepers of information to mediators and educators that help raise public awareness. This role is vital especially in understanding a conflict-ridden historical and public memory.

For this paper, four state-produced publications during Martial Law in the Philippines from 1972-1981 are examined. These are the first four in the series of publications produced by the National Media Production Center (NMPC) which are still available at the *Filipiniana* Section of the University of the Philippines Library: *One Year of the New Society* (1973), *The Philippines: A Nation Reborn* (1976), *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines II: The Rebellion of the Poor* (1976), and *Primer: Notes on the New Society* (1976). As these were originally published to serve as information sources to disseminate the regime’s ideology, it is worth knowing how the Marcos government

intended to portray itself and mold social memory. This is crucial in constructing memories and history, especially that the country has endured the dictatorial regime's consequences such as billions of debts, failed truth commission, thousands of deaths and unresolved human rights violations.

Nunca más (?): Memories of Martial Law in the Philippines

Through Proclamation No. 1081, the late president Ferdinand Marcos put the Philippines under martial rule and publicly declared it on national television on the evening of September 23, 1972.¹ The Marcos government justified the declaration of Martial Law as its constitutional response to the prevailing disturbances and nationwide unrest brought by threats to the country's security, outbreak of communism, instability in Mindanao, series of demonstrations and riots, and the alleged ambush of the then Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile (Brilliantes, 1987). In 1986, the People Power Revolution, also known as EDSA Revolution, ended Marcos' two-decade rule. The battle cry, 'never again' or *nunca más* serves as the unifying theme in the remembrance of Marcos period and reflects human rights activities and efforts to make healing possible and be discussed in public spaces (Claudio, 2010). However, this battle cry still does not solidify the whole country's view on this period and the Marcoses. It has only unified certain sectors that were directly opposing Marcos' dictatorship. Various memory sites and publications even more polarize people's perspectives and recollections of this period. For instance, museums and monuments memorializing and praising Ferdinand Marcos and his family in his hometown in Sarrat and Batac, Ilocos Norte are frequented by the locals and tourists. On the other hand, there are exhibitions, memorial sites and initiatives to seek justice for the victims and not forget the atrocities committed under Marcos dictatorship.

In the last national elections on May 2016, the dictator's son and namesake, Senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., almost won the vice-presidential race – losing by only 1% of the total votes ("#PHVote 2016 Official Election Results", 2016). This shows that the Marcos' popularity and influence are still alive until now. Months after, under the present administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, the remains of the former president Marcos were buried at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* or Heroes Cemetery despite the long years of opposition from the victims, survivors, and human rights defenders. This controversial burial drew protests from the side of the dictator's victims and Marcos opponents (Paddock, 2016). These are just some of the recent events that show how divided Filipinos are on this issue.

Documents, Memories, and History

Founded in 1954, the National Media Production Center's (NMPC)² mandate was to produce information and educational materials about the government. Under the Martial Law years, NMPC was converted into a "well-endowed agency and used for political propaganda and image-building" (Rosario-Braid & Tuazon, 1999, p. 304). As the international press kept an eye on the events and actions of the government and the situation of the country during Marcos regime, there were attempts from the Marcos government's public relations to improve its own image by giving an impression to outside observers that the regime's reforms ensued a new atmosphere of peace, orderliness, discipline, economic advances, and political stability (Fagan, 1975/2000).

These widely distributed documents are not only sites used to convey information but these are where memories crystallize, which have the possibility of being considered as valid sources and representations of collective memory and history. These sites of memory, according to Pierre Nora (1989), help us remember and reconstruct the past. As sites that mediate collective memory, these documents are products of premeditated accumulation of knowledge that are affected by external factors such as politics. Foucault (1969/2002) maintains that "the document is not the fortunate tool of

¹ Primitivo Mijares, Marcos' former pressman, detailed how Marcos disclosed to a convention of historians that he signed the proclamation on September 17. Marcos publicly announced the implementation of Martial Law on September 23. For further reading on Marcos' dictatorship, read Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (San Francisco: Union Square Pub., 1976).

² It was abolished after the EDSA People Power Revolution in 1986. The succeeding president, Corazon Aquino, founded Philippine Information Agency (PIA). For more information about the PIA, visit <http://pia.gov.ph/>.

a history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked” (p.7). The current history or the actual societal condition and forces mold what a document should contain and how it would be used and interpreted at a given time. Hence, documents shape history, and vice versa. Document is a cultural artifact used to understand ourselves and our position in this society (Brennen, 2013).

Methodology

This study employs document analysis through *intertextuality* to see the alleged reality or ‘voice’ behind the New Society. For the confines of this paper, those that were released during the formative years of Martial Law were chosen. Mircea Eliade affirms that the most significant part of any society’s past is its beginnings because this ‘strong time’ provides the ‘receptacle’ of a new creation (cited in Schwartz, 1982). What had transpired in the society’s beginnings could elucidate the society’s present and give a glimpse of the future.

Intertextuality for Librarians

Intertextuality has extended its scope from being used in literary criticism to document analysis. The term intertextuality was firstly used by poststructuralist theorists and critics to perturb the concept of having fixed meaning and objective interpretation (Allen, 2011). ‘Text,’ according to Elkad-Lehman & Greensfeld (2011), came from the Indo-Iranian word ‘tec’, meaning handicraft, especially weaving. In Latin, the word ‘textus’ means a woven fabric, and the verb ‘texere’ means to weave or to combine. Texts in documents, therefore, do not construct their own static systems or domains of documentary reality; instead, they also refer to other texts and documents (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011), which librarians have on hand or have the knowledge of where to access them. Intertextuality may seem to be a daunting method for librarians, but it can be relatively easy to accomplish. Most importantly, unlike conventional cataloguing and indexing, there is no standard way of dealing with the texts nor controlled vocabularies to make sense of their context. Through this, librarians are given the flexibility to generate interpretations and set a platform for discourses.

Through intertextuality, the librarian and reader can construe how the creators of the documents position themselves along with the ideas and characters of their narratives and their political positions as reflected in the text (Bazerman, 2004). To understand the documentary realities, intertextual relationships are identified among the statements and themes depicted in the documents. The following sections will discuss how this paper discovers the supposed reality of New Society based on the voice of the publications by NMPC under the Marcos rule.

Guide to Textual Analysis Through Intertextuality

Bazerman (2004) offers good recommendations on how intertextuality can be used to analyze texts. The following procedures are based on Bazerman’s guide which I employed to the four publications.

1. *Identify the corpus or specific texts to be examined*

Bazerman (2004) suggests that one may limit the study to a single short text, so I chose only four titles to see how the New Society was represented in these texts for the construction of their own image or reality. To see the evolution of their use and context of the term New Society in the first five years of Marcos regime, the four books, entitled, *One Year of the New Society* (1973), *The Philippines: A Nation Reborn* (1976), *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines II: the Rebellion of the Poor* (1976), and *Primer: Notes on the New Society* were chosen as the corpus to be examined. It may be expected to treat or read the documents chronologically, but I started reading the *Primer: Notes on the New Society* (1976), to get a glimpse of what New Society is in the eyes of Marcos. The word *Primer* denotes introduction that would give me and the other readers a short briefing about New Society and its visions, as well as how different it is from the “old society.”

2. *Identify the traces or references to other texts or people*
Aside from the actual texts or statements from the documents, overt references to other works or authors are also considered. Sources and references such as Nazis, radical democracy in Europe and America, Constitution, W.H. Auden, Jeffersonians, among others, are found to be cited in these documents to prove or justify some points.
3. *Make observations and interpretations, and look for more subtle clues*
Observe for subtle clues why such references and language were used. Were these references used to justify a cause or to set an example to basically prove a point? Did the documents intend to persuade or sway people's opinions regarding New Society?
4. *Come up with a list of words*
This list of words would help expose the underlying intentions of the document creators and their associated meanings. I have come up with is a list of words that illustrates the comparison of the old and new societies as depicted in the texts.
5. *Begin to look for a pattern(s)*
With the lists of words with suggested references and meanings, patterns are then formed to explain the Marcos government's technique in defining and portraying New Society. Patterns such as metaphors, type of information presented and language used are identified.

With this guide, librarians and researchers can investigate other documents or publications to explore more meanings and context that would add to the study of collective memory and history.

Discussion

This section provides the initial findings of the document analysis and intertextuality of the four publications of NMPC. There are more publications and documents that were circulated in this period, and more analysis and interpretations can be drawn for future studies.

New Society as Defined in the Texts

New Society was consistently represented in the texts. New Society, as repeatedly mentioned, was about equality. There should be an equal treatment for everyone, no matter if one is poor or rich. The New Society was the cure to the old and sick society that had suffered from the previous political leaders. Unlike the old society, which was said to have made poor people poorer, the New Society would care more for human life. In the texts, the New Society was situated as the milieu for the salvation of the dying Philippines. In one of the texts, "*The Philippines: A Nation Reborn*," it claimed that the 'command society' had gained widespread support. In that book, former President Marcos (1976) remarked,

...as a matter of fact, the most criticism of my decision was why it took me so long. But the entire matter was, of course, not in my will but in the circumstances. All the same, this further indicates another profound sentiment: our people want to start all over again, to arrive at a new covenant of existence

(para.4).

This ideology also emphasized the need for a strong commitment to nationalism and reversal of the unstable democratic system. 'National discipline' had to be instilled, which may bring about "initial discomforts among a citizenry that had been led to believe that freedom and licentiousness were one and the same", and these "reforms were to call for a measure of sacrifice from the people" ("One Year of the New Society", 1973, p. 4). This suggested that for the reforms of the government to succeed, the Filipinos should learn to sacrifice their liberty and abide by the government's rules. Freedom and sovereignty that the Filipinos were relishing before the martial rule were equivalent to arrogance and would lead to disorder. The need for authoritarian rule was adverted as an essential factor to foster economic growth in the Philippines and to steer clear of communist insurgencies.

Bayan, Lipunan and the New Society

The term New Society or *Bagong Lipunan*³ shares commonality with another Filipino word, *bayan*. Both *lipunan* and *bayan* signify commitment to the country and national identity. However, *bayan* is said to have a more flexible meaning; it varies from being a locale, to community, and to nation (Woods, 2011). *Bayan* also does not have a direct English translation, compared to *lipunan*. Scholars have argued that translating it would make its meaning and context convoluted. In the *Tagalog* language, *bayan* means the people, nation, the place, territory, town, the centre, or capital (Pambid-Domingo, 2011).

Tolentino (2011) remarks that the rhetoric of *bayan* was also used in the motto of New Society, and in the succeeding visions of Philippine presidents such as the Strong Republic of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, *Bagong Bayani* (New Hero), and *Artista ng Bayan* (Artist of the Nation). In the history of Philippine nationalist consciousness, the woman metaphor for nation was and is still used, such as *Inang Pilipinas* (Mother Philippines) or *Inang Bayan* (Motherland) (Pambid-Domingo, 2011). This metaphor of *bayan* signifies “a very powerful way of challenging the structure of colonial powers...the social hierarchies are reconstructed, and the old one destroyed. Everyone would have equality because all the citizens would become brothers from the same mother” (Pambid-Domingo, 2011, p. 94). The struggle for equality and rebellion of the poor were likewise underscored in New Society. To reconstruct the country, strong political bond and strict disciplinary measures had to be implemented. Again, the authoritarian rule was justified as an essential ingredient in reforming the country and renewing its commitment to nationalism. This principle of commitment that “takes the form of rebellion is the new moral weapon of the poor. By committing themselves to nationalism and national independence of their countries, the poor, within the limits of their imagination, expected the beginning of a better life in a new society” (“Primer: Notes on the New Society”, 1976, p.7).

Despite the parallelisms of Marcos’ ideals of New Society or *Bagong Lipunan* and the concept of *bayan*, he used *lipunan* and not *bayan* for his New Society ideology. Marcos must have thought of the need for a more far-reaching impact in the global scene. *Bayan* may not be clearly understood by many, especially non-Filipinos. Marcos pronounced his intention for the Philippines to be active in international relations for economic advancement and said that:

Having decided to make a decisive break with the dependency of the past, we proceeded to chart a new course in our foreign relations. Ours is an “open society,” in that we are not insulated from external influences. This requires us, then, to conduct our international relations with the same clarity and determination that we manage our society.

(“Notes on the New Society of the Philippines II”, 1976, p.xii)

The Battle Between Old and New Society

The old society was described as a sick society that must be destroyed, along with all its negative attributes. The New Society, on the other hand, was always portrayed as the answer to all the troubles and sufferings of the old society because of the previous administrations and insurgence of the radicals (both leftists and rightists). In the text, “*One Year of the New Society*” (1973), the following conditions were used to illustrate the old society:

1. In Manila and the suburbs, radicals and activist youth were behind acts of terrorism designed to cow the citizenry and paralyze both government and private sectors.
2. In the provinces, the insurrection was taking on alarming proportions. Add to this:
3. The temerity of a group of clerico-fascists;
4. The predatoriness of the so-called security guards (in truth nothing but private armies), of politicians and oligarchs;
5. The appalling official corruption which could no longer contained;

³ Bagong Lipunan is the direct Filipino translation of New Society. *Bago* is new, while *Lipunan* is Society.

6. The insatiable greed for power and economic supremacy by the vested interests;
 7. The move by the Moslems in the south to secede from the Republic.
- (p. 4)

The texts also reported the achievements of the government under the New Society such as peace and order, cleanliness in towns and cities, housing development, liberation of farmers, responsible education system, efficiency in government, new deal of workers through the amended Social Security Act, new infrastructures such as roads and bridges, the referendum conducted through the *barangays* that resolved and put Marcos in power to continue his term beyond 1973, self-sufficiency in food, and cultural renaissance. The following table shows some of the words and phrases used to describe old and new society. One can clearly see here that there is a ‘battle’ between these two societies, with the old society as dystopia and the New Society as utopia.

Table 1. Comparison Between Old and New Society

Old Society	New Society
sick society	new nationalism
rebellion	constitutional democratic revolution
combustible	genuine democracy
must destroy	unfulfilled old dream
inevitable destruction	honest-to-goodness transformation of society
unstable	equality
abusive social and political leaders	egalitarian
selfish individual interests	for the poor
subversion	participatory democracy
economic inequality	national development
poverty	conquer poverty
biased media	progressive society
assassinations	political bond
bombings	human compassion
evil means	<i>bayanihan</i> ⁴ spirit
exploitation	national solidarity
disorder and violence	discipline
opportunists	sacrifices

Use of References and Patterns

Intertextuality pervades all texts within the corpus and it would be impossible to identify each of the categories and manifestations of themes (Shaw & Pecorari, 2013). Because of this limitation, this study only focused on the explicit themes and patterns. One of the most prominent patterns seen in the texts is the use of *comparison*. New Society and old society had always been compared, as seen in the previous discussion. There was also a direct reference to the communists, rightists, Muslim in Mindanao and Sulu as ‘enemies of the country’ who wanted to separate from the rest of the Philippines. The rightists are also enemies who were paralleled to the Nazis in Germany because of their plans for *coup d’etat*.

The texts also used *references, sources, and other ideologies* to either prove their purpose or justify their command. They mentioned or made references to *Nazis, C.R. Hensman’s “Rich Against Poor”, radical democracy in Europe and America, Marxism, Communism, Gunnar Myrdal’s new nationalism, John Spanier’s “Games Nations Play”* among others. The texts also made reference to previous history, such as the Philippine Revolution in 1896. Another striking reference made was the

⁴ From the root word *bayan*, *bayanihan* means unity and cooperation within a community.

statement by a political scientist named Lucien Pye, and how this was used to highlight the power of the poor masses.

...according to Lucien W. Pye, “This is also a time of faith in the miraculous powers of politics.” The poor are confident that they can begin to shape society instead of merely being shaped by it. They understand their collective power. And they can use this effectively to their own advantage.

(“Primer: Notes on the New Society”, 1976, p.8)

The rise of the poor and rebellion of the poor were repeatedly used as the key element that drives Marcos’ ‘constitutional democratic revolution’. This revolution would eliminate poverty and exploitation unlike the communist revolution where human lives were sacrificed to accomplish the selfish interests of the rightists or fascists. (“Primer: Notes on the New Society”, 1976). Marcos continued to justify his dictatorial rule by stating:

It seems that we had to survive and prevail in crisis after crisis. The deterioration of society, which brought the nation to the brink of collapse, had, in fact compelled us to take the constitutional recourse of a *crisis government*, as provided for by Art. VII, Sec. 10, Paragraph (2) in the 1935 Constitution: *The President shall be the Commander-in-Chief of all Armed Forces of the Philippines and whenever it becomes necessary, he may call out such armed forces to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion, insurrection, or rebellion. In thereof, when the public safety requires it, he may suspend the privilege of habeas corpus, or place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law.*

(“Notes of the New Society of the Philippines II”, 1976, p. iii)

Aside from the obvious comparisons between the old and new society, the power of visual presentations or photographs was also used as a rhetorical device to display a superior image. Strong language and superlatives were used to see the utter differences between the old and new society and why there was a need for a dictatorial government. The ‘rebellion of the poor’ was also in the forefront of the government’s ‘revolution’ with a promise that poverty and inequality would be eliminated. Statistical data were also used to showcase the achievements of the New Society in a relatively short period of time.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, documents indeed have their own constructed reality shaped by their actors, intentions, and social conditions. In the texts, the recurring comparison of the old and new society, with the latter as the perfect one was evident. While the New Society was being praised and put on a high pedestal, there was obviously no mention of the other side of the story. The photographs and statistical figures may have shown the beauty of the Philippines and soaring economic growth during the Martial Law years, but evidences of plundered wealth and filed cases, photographs and accounts of incarcerations, tortures and deaths also exist. In this way, librarians and libraries can create a space where these disputing ‘facts’ and ‘voices’ can be deliberated.

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