Writing and Rewriting the Self: Narrative Projection and Transformation in Martial Law Autobiographies

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ABSTRACT

Starting 2000, numerous autobiographical narratives have been published about life during the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1986). In these texts, the autobiographers usually record their own transformations, eschewing their middle-class or privileged backgrounds in order to fight the dictatorship. Jose Maria Sison, founder of the reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines, recounts his origins from the landlord class in Ilocos. The Italian priest Peter Geremia writes about his transition from foreigner to "adopted Filipino" as he identifies with the struggles of Indigenous peoples and peasants. Danilo Vizmanos records his defection from the navy to join the mass movement against Marcos.

Going beyond the real-life conversions of these autobiographers, I analyze how the texts they published after Martial Law project the self. Each author has written two autobiographies. I examine how the changing discourse affected their writing of the self. I also investigate how the autobiographical genre projects the self through the dialogue and exchange in Sison's interviews, the intimacy and intensity that was edited out in Geremia's revised diary, and the personal and familial life that was recorded more in Vizmanos's sketches rather than in his diary. Through this, I also explore each author's understanding of the genre, and the ways autobiography could build identities to expose and challenge those in power.

Keywords: Marcos dictatorship, Philippine autobiography, writing during Philippine Martial Law, Jose Maria Sison, Peter Geremia, Danilo Vizmanos

During Martial Law, one had to master the art of evasion. One did not confront the military head-on; one had to slip, hide, and escape to organize the masses. David Ryan Quimpo explained, "To 'go UG' [underground] meant simply to disappear and be untraceable to the enemy" (Quimpo and Quimpo 145). James Siegel wrote that fighting meant "evading" and "staying out of [the enemy's] sight" (164).

This meant ending one's "legal existence" (Sison and Rosca 17) and changing one's identity—or assuming many identities. Like the Indonesian guerrilla Tan Malaka who took on many disguises (Siegel 162), the underground activists had to seem like ordinary people and blend into everyday life. The American literary scholar and activist Dolores Feria, who was blond-haired and blue-eyed, wore a black wig or veiled herself as an American nun when going out. Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison narrated that he once "dressed up as a local public school teacher" and rode public transportation (Sison and Werning 89).

At times, one is also disguised as one's self but reverted to one's pre-Martial Law identity. Sison, who came from an important landlord family in Ilocos, amusingly reminisced about how he "psychologically disarm[ed]" an army officer manning a military checkpoint (Sison and Werning 65). Detecting the constabulary captain's Southern Ilocano accent from Sison's hometown, Sison simply spoke the same language and acted out his own provincial and class origins: "I assumed the family name of a politically prominent cousin and we got on to talking about mutual acquaintances and he would cite his close political patron whom I told him I knew quite well" (65). Despite this myriad of possible disguises, bodily identifiers would ultimately confirm one's identity, such as when Sison was caught: "One of the officers touched the mole under my left ear in order to ascertain my identity" (94).

Going underground and adopting aliases were some of the ways people transformed their lives and identities during Martial Law. In their life stories, they wrote about eschewing their middle-class origins to espouse a proletarian outlook and lifestyle. Real-life conversions are one thing, but writing about them is another. According to Paul John Eakin, identity is the "version of ourselves that we display not only to others but also to ourselves whenever we have occasion to reflect on or otherwise engage in self-characterization" (xiv). While Eakin studied the ways narrative shapes identity, I am more interested in the ways the changing self is projected in published autobiography.

Creating autobiographical narratives involves a "self-construction" of identity—"between the stories we tell about ourselves and who we really are" (Eakin 2). Going further, the self in autobiography is a complex product of emerging categories

of the self, discourse, culture, and even operations of power despite the highly individualistic utterances of "*I* write my story, *I* say who I am" (22-23). As an added complication, time could also alter how we perceive ourselves: the present affects the way we view the past, informed by our agendas for the future (151). Each retelling is a form of rewriting. The past cannot be recovered objectively because it is recounted using subjective means through memory. Jerome Bruner wrote that the "recounting of one's life is an interpretative feat." Furthermore, memory is selective, and one captures "lived time" through narrative: events are chosen in order to fit this narrative structure (692-93). In the end, the self, "which we take to be experiential fact, is also finally a fiction, an elusive creative that we construct even as we seek to encounter it" (Eakin 125).

By "inquiring not at lives, but at *texts* of lives" (Freeman 7), I seek to interrogate how the "changing self" is projected through narrative, which organizes and plots the details of the author's lives. I chose the autobiographies of Jose Maria Sison, Peter Geremia, and Danilo Vizmanos to illustrate these self-transformations. The "changing self" in autobiography, or how it literally gets written and rewritten in the various *forma* or genres of autobiography (Bruner 696), will be analyzed. Each author produced two books. Sison is the author of *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* (with Rainer Werning, 1989) and *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World, Portrait of a Revolutionary* (*Conversations with Ninotchka Rosca*, 2004) by Geremia wrote *Dreams and Bloodstains* (1987) and *Seeking God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace* (2013). Vizmanos authored *Through the Eye of the Storm: Random Notes of Danilo P. Vizmanos* (2000) and *Martial Law Diary and Other Papers* (2003).

In personal interviews with the authors, namely Sison and Geremia (Vizmanos passed away in 2008), I interrogated their conceptions of autobiography, their reasons for choosing a certain autobiographical genre, and their process of writing. In the discussion below, these personal interviews will be accompanied by textual analysis of the autobiographies. I aim to discuss authorial intention and the mode of production of their autobiographies alongside the meanings generated by the texts through their narrative structure and literary devices. In doing so, I probe into the material conditions and intentions of the "self that writes" vis-à-vis the "self that is written" in these texts.

Not only will I touch on the changes that happened since Martial Law, but I will also investigate how the self in the first book differs from the self in the second book to reflect the changing discourses surrounding the author. Published shortly or decades after Martial Law, these authors built identities to challenge the existing power structures,[1] to expose the ongoing state repression, and to caution the readers against forgetting the evils of the dictatorship.

More emphasis will be given on the autobiographical genre that the authors chose, for "any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told" (Bruner 709). Hayden White also argued that the study of form is also the study of content, with narrative as a way to structure and transmit such reality (1-2). Through their autobiographical narratives, I will explore how the interview method allowed Sison to construct a "communist self," which framed his life in terms of the Philippine revolution; how Geremia's self was edited in the second edition of his published diary, which was originally written during Martial Law to process and record his own self-transformations; and how Vizmanos recorded not much of his personal life but the changes of society during Martial Law in his diary, with his self emerging more fully in the form of autobiographical sketches.

Life and Revolution as One: The Bourgeois "I" Withers Away

Autobiography contributes to image-making. In *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* and *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World*, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, Sison projects himself as an esteemed communist leader. Because he was its founding chair, the life of the reestablished CPP was the life of Sison. His life story is couched in Marxist terms and told in the language of the National Democratic movement—no different from his other articles and speeches explaining the US imperialist aggression or the prospects of the Philippine revolution.[2]

However, these two books do not read like straight autobiographies. They are interviews about the history and visions of the Philippine mass movement. The books position Sison as chief historian, political organizer, and theoretician of the Party. They detail how he led the break from the Lavas[3] during the First Great Rectification movement from 1967, and also explain the Reaffirmist-Rejectionist (RA-RJ) split and the Second Great Rectification movement from 1992.[4] Narration and analysis are combined. The books simultaneously document not only Sison's broad political analysis, but also Sison as historical actor in Party building. They also present Sison as an individual with a biographical life.

Narratives of Sison's personal life in these books are scattered all over and in between answers to interview questions that read like Party tracts penned under his *nom de guerre* Amado Guerrero and Armando Liwanag. Yet, these books are structured as auto/biography, with Sison's life corresponding to the life of the movement. Published in 1989, *The Philippine Revolution* presents Sison's life chronologically, starting from his childhood and ending with his exile in the Netherlands when President Corazon Aquino cancelled his passport in 1988. The chapter headings are divided into phases of Sison's life and showcase his contributions to the movement, most notably during the Marcos years: "Formative Years," "Resurgence of

the Mass Movement," "Re-establishment of the Communist Party," "Martial Law and Resistance," "Detention and Defiance," and "Marcos' Fall: Aquino Rise." The last two chapters, "Trends and Prospects" and "International Questions," are devoted solely to readings and analysis of the Philippine mass movement in relation to that of other countries.

Because of this auto/biographical layout, *The Philippine Revolution* is characterized by "tensions" in the author's construction of the self as a communist—subsumed under the collective, but a known leader of the revolution at the same time. Moreover, these contradictions that call attention to themselves as the ideological framing of Sison's personal narrative had direct references to Marx, Lenin, and Mao. For instance, Sison applies the Marxist stages of history in his own ideological growth: 1) the pre-colonial "animism" from his childhood in the province; 2) the feudal "Catholicism" from his catechism lessons; 3) the bourgeois "liberalism" he encountered at the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines (UP); and finally, 4) the "Marxism" which Werning hinted was "the highest level of [Sison's] development" (17-18). Sison is explicit about this: "In a way, I underwent the same course of development as the history of thought in the West and in the Philippines" (17).

Sison was self-conscious about constructing an identity of a communist who is also a public persona. The choice of autobiographical genre reveals this, as he shunned writing a memoir. In my interview with Sison, he explained that his revolutionary activities did not give him the luxury of time to concentrate on literary stylization that writing a memoir demanded. In addition, Sison considered writing a memoir a summation of one's life: "I thought I have many more years. People who write memoirs are supposed to have retired. I did not consider myself retired." Most importantly, Sison rejected the highly-individualistic nature of the memoir, which has bourgeois origins: "Communist leaders do not write about themselves. It's being vainglorious to do that. But Chin Peng wrote an autobiography. However, as far as I know, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao did not write their own autobiography. Other people wrote their biographies." Thus, the bourgeois "I" withers away.

With these concerns, Sison felt that the interview method used in writing *The Philippine Revolution* would be the best way to relay his life story. It was practical since it was "faster" and "easier done" (Sison). Even if the interview may be akin to journalism, Sison clarified that unlike journalism, which is "determined by immediate circumstances of a very narrow scale," (Sison) he intended the book to have "lasting reference for intellectual as well as popular readers" (xi), especially for the "progressives in general" (Sison). At first, the oral interviews were taped, but later Sison and Werning decided on the written form because they had difficulties meeting physically. Also, transcription would no longer be necessary. Sison contemplated

that the written interview was better because it avoided repetitions, showed "some aspects of fine writing," and gave him time to reflect upon the "significance" of the "facts of [his] experience" (Sison).

As a textual act, the interview is an alternative to the purported self-glorification of autobiography. The interview form is a medium of exchange wherein the interviewer is presented as being interested in another: "the narrator feels entitled to speak only because of a mandate from the interviewer: I only speak because you ask me to (and, often, I will say what you want to hear)," which "justifies the implicit breach of modesty" (Portelli 9). In oral interviews, "performance is turned into a *text*" (13). However, I find that in Sison's interviews, written texts are turned into performance. Even if Werning writes about the deliberate and collaborative process of creating an outline and Sison's revision of his answers over a period of five months (Sison and Werning xviii), the text reads like an oral private conversation, for through publication "personal exchange becomes a public statement" (Portelli 13).

Moreover, the exchange is also between two "bodies," namely of Sison explaining the Philippine communist revolution to Europe as represented by Werning, a German who belonged to the Third World international solidarity group (Abinales 57). The book aims to reach both an international and local readership since it was published by Taylor & Francis Group in New York and was also translated in Filipino.[5] However, no biographical information regarding Werning is mentioned in the book aside from his role as interviewer. I found out later that Werning is an academic, a "backpack intellectual" who lived in the Philippines during the First Quarter Storm (Sison). By immersing himself in Philippine culture and establishing networks with Filipinos, he also viscerally benefitted from the "exchange" between the Philippines and himself. Werning is minimized in the book, and in the introduction he explicitly explains that he "underplay[s] [his] role" (Sison and Werning xviii) to give center stage to Sison. His questions are brief and have no follow-up queries.

There are more contradictions. Werning's role as interviewer recedes to focus on Sison, thereby magnifying the interviewee; however, as collaborator in the text's production, Werning overrules Sison by deciding to use the biographical approach in structuring the book, thus highlighting Sison's modesty. Werning explains in his introduction:

> At first, Sison was agreeable to only a brief biographical introduction because he had wanted the book to focus on his views on theoretical, political, economic, military, cultural and international issues. But I prevailed by pointing out that his activities and ideas as chief theoretician, political articulator and organizer have been the most effective and influential in the mass movement since the 1960s; and that

> the biographical approach would make the book even more lively and interesting to both scholarly and popular readers. (xvii)

Yet, when Sison starts to speak, he tells his tale with much pride and bravado without downgrading his self, contributions, and experiences. Ironically, he subsumes himself under the communist revolution in grandiose terms, constructing himself as an individual, fearless leader. For instance, he uses the pronoun "I" instead of the collective "we" to talk about his activities and accomplishments (Abinales 61). The "self for the masses" does not blend with the collective, and when Sison describes himself in relation to the latter, it adds to his importance as its theoretician and organizer. These paradoxes could be inherent in self-narration about one's leadership in the revolution, i.e., of making one's self big and at the same time negating it. A good revolutionary thinks that he is *not* the revolution, or that the revolution is totally dependent upon him. As its figurehead, Sison identifies the revolution with the self but at the same time it exists outside of the self. Sison exhorts, "It does not speak well of a cadre if the result of his work bursts like a bubble after his capture of death. Revolutionary cadres create organic collectives among the people. The loss of a cadre, no matter of what rank, does not spell the death of the living movement" (Sison and Werning 96). Likewise, Sison challenges Marcos during his capture: "I am now imprisoned but you cannot imprison the revolutionary movement" (96).

Detractors like Abinales dismiss Sison's self-portrayal as a caricature and criticize his depiction of the revolution and the masses in the abstract as alienating. Nonetheless one cannot not deny the risks Sison took, or the possibility that this was what kept Sison strong, especially during his solitary confinement as Marcos's top political prisoner: "The most important thing for me was to hold on to my revolutionary convictions and keep my fighting spirit. I felt angry instead of afraid" (Sison and Werning 99).

But overall, Sison constructs himself as a revolutionary hero, minus his "real human traits and frailties" (Abinales 63), making the text feel contrived at times. Even his personal life is still represented in terms of the revolution. He refers to Julie de Lima as his "comrade-wife" and wrote a poem "You are My Wife and Comrade" in *Prison and Beyond*. He describes his relationship with her in terms of revolutionary work: "My comrade-wife Julie and I were almost always together throughout my underground years in whichever workroom, village, or mountain we were. We worked as a team" (Sison and Werning 111). Personal wishes are also framed in terms of the revolution. To Werning's question, "What do you and your family hope for in the years to come? Any special wishes?" Sison replies, "We hope for the revolutionary movement to win total victory not later than the 1990s. It will only be after total victory that we will find the best circumstances for our family reunion" (178).

This stiff portrayal of Sison becomes more relaxed in the succeeding book, *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World*, even if it addresses more controversies after the earlier book *The Philippine Revolution*.[6] Among these are the boycott error in 1986, the RA-RJ split in the 1990s, the Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos (KAHOS) and the Oplan Missing Link (OPML), and the alleged responsibility of the communists in the Plaza Miranda bombing.[7] While the questions in *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World* attempt to fill the gaps in the time frame and establish a historical continuity, the context in which this book was written is different. The first book was written a few years after the transition from the Marcos dictatorship to the "democratic spaces" within the Corazon Aquino administration. During that time, the Left was criticized for the boycott error during the EDSA People Power 1986.[8] The earlier book aimed to introduce and give importance to Sison and the Philippine revolution. *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World* was written to refute the inclusion of Sison in the "terrorist" listing of the American and Dutch governments in 2002, in the aftermath of the September 9/11 attacks in 2001. Hence, the second book was intended to counter character assassination by portraying Sison's humanity. As its recurring theme, the book asserts, "a revolutionary is not a terrorist" (Sison and Rosca 1).

In some parts, the tone between interviewer and interviewee is casual yet penetrating. Rosca is Sison's contemporary, having known him since their student activist days in the 1960s at the University of the Philippines. Thus, she is a "witness" to Sison's life and times (33). Also a political detainee during Martial Law, Rosca is an award-winning New York-based Filipino writer known for her novels *State of War* and *Twice Blessed*. She continues with her activist engagements in America. In *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World*, Rosca's presence and personality are felt throughout. A picture of her interviewing Sison with a voice recorder is seen on the back cover, beside her biographical information. Her questions are longer, more probing and personal (for instance, questions about his quitting smoking and love for singing) than Werning's, with equally longer follow-up questions.

The interview is dubbed as "conversations"—a dialogue where Sison is sometimes challenged. One might think that the questions were answered spontaneously and orally, even if Sison wrote down his answers. The interviews were intended to be a character sketch of Sison, as the title *Jose Maria Sison: At Home in the World, Portrait of a Revolutionary* (emphasis mine) suggests. This is in contrast to the earlier and more commanding *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* (emphasis mine), where Sison gives both insider information and top view analysis on the Philippine revolution. Also, unlike the biographical chronology that organizes the chapters of Werning's book, Rosca's is arranged conceptually and thematically. Sison's poems are placed after each chapter, reflecting on the latter's theme and adding more of Sison's insight in verse form.

Rosca is a friend who testifies to Sison's revolutionary commitment and humanity. With her literary and journalistic background, Rosca wrote the book's introduction in beautiful and engaging prose, compelling the readers to understand Sison. The introduction is a biographical sketch of Sison, with details that could also be found in Werning's book. Yet, she goes further by providing brief personal anecdotes of pranks played by Sison and describing the relaxed and collegial atmosphere in the National Democratic Front (NDF) secretariat room during the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (GRP-NDF) peace talks[9] in Norway (35). In a short, sweeping paragraph, Rosca enumerates Sison's distinct traits:

> [O]ne could list down some personal items: he is married to Julieta de Lima; they have four children together, he likes to dance, he likes to do karaoke, Frank Sinatra's "My Way" in particular which he sings "Mao's way;" he likes to play pranks on old friends; he has a very strong sense of pride matched by an occasional disregard for his own safety; he is restless but can focus for hours on work to be done; he has strengths; he has weaknesses—he would be the first to admit both, objectively. (248)

Despite these sketches of Sison's humanity, one can also find the same contradictions—the equating of Sison to the Philippine revolution—inherent in Werning's book. Werning is more literal by structuring the book according to Sison's life, while Rosca is more literary and symbolic. Rosca writes that Sison personified the movement and his personality characterized the movement: "Because he was himself a voracious reader and prodigious writer, Sison conferred a tradition of scholarship to radical Filipinos. […] Because he was a poet, Sison also bequeathed to the open mass movement a tradition of culture-making" (18-19). Rosca even goes further by renaming the era of Martial Law, shifting its focus from Marcos's dictatorial rule to that of Sison's Party rebuilding. She calls it "**Sison Time**" (original stress), which is "a much more accurate label to those years of sacrifice than 'Marcos time'" (34).

This equation of self to revolution also defines the logic of the "enemy" (a term Sison is wont to use, referring to class, political and ideological adversaries), and the reason for the continuing threats to his life despite being in exile. Sison explains, "They wish to discredit or intimidate the entire movement by focusing on my person. They think that destroying me politically or physically is a shortcut to destroying the movement. The campaign of character assassination is aimed at discrediting the entire movement and is probably a preparation for my physical assassination" (71).

Sison discredits the logic of the "enemy" by presenting the organizational make-up of the movement: that it is composed of collectives, which he no longer handles, not having been Party chair since his capture in 1977.[10] There are also instances where he refers to the Party structure that subordinates the individual to the collective. This is evident in his answer to Rosca's question about his accomplishments as Party chair: "As an individual, I had some share in the development and victories of the revolutionary movement. But these were basically due to the correct leadership of the CPP and the hard work, struggle and sacrifices of the entire Party and the people" (78). He cautions against equating himself with the movement: "It is absurd to simplistically blame or even credit me for the growth and advancement of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines" (75). The relationship between the individual and the collective work in a symbiotic fashion, for who he is as an individual is largely due to the collective. Yet it is he who stands out as the leader of the collective.

However, readers may sense that most of Rosca's questions are leading, prompting Sison to project the identity of a "good" revolutionary. There are some difficulties (and sometimes awkwardness) in reconciling the binaries of the individual and the collective, pride and modesty, personal and political, which Sison seems to exemplify simultaneously. Rosca also interrogates Sison about his identity and how he straddles being a nationalist and internationalist, a solitary poet and a communist surrounded by the masses. Sison's attempt to label the self according to neat categorical "-isms" feels contrived and mechanical:

> As a communist, I am a proletarian internationalist first, one interested in the worldwide victory of socialism over imperialism, in order to make way for communism. […]
>
> I am at the same time a Filipino patriot fighting for national liberation and democracy against US imperialism and its puppets. In fighting for national liberation from US imperialism, the Filipino people cannot and must not fight in isolation from the rest of the people of the world. (143-44)

The contradictions of the personal and the political are also explored, especially since as a public figure, the personal affects the political. Sison's carefree lifestyle as a "disco king" (272) in the Netherlands is shown as an anticommunist propaganda against him. Again, he attempts to resolve these binaries by saying that his few instances of personal relaxation are also political work:

> [Rosca:] You have a reputation for working hard like a water buffalo when it is time to work and fight. But it is also rumored that when you relax,

> you engage in fun beyond norms acceptable to communists or in fun that could compromise your security.
>
> [Sison:] I work 12 to 14 hours a day, including Saturdays and Sundays. In a year's time, I go to community and solidarity festivities, with singing and dancing, some five to 10 times. When I invite visiting comrades and friends to go out for cultural entertainment that is within the range of three to six times a year.
>
> Among my closest comrades and friends, I have the reputation of being a parsimonious Ilocano and talking more about fun rather than having it. I take security precautions whenever necessary. But I do not live in fear.
>
> When I relax with comrades and friends and we enjoy ourselves, I am simply recharging myself and absorbing facts and insights informally for more work. When I participate in social drinking, singing, dancing and swapping jokes in social gatherings of the Filipino communities, solidarity groups and foreign organizations, it is with the consciousness of developing rapport and cooperation with people.
>
> [Rosca:] You can't sell me on the idea that your fun activities are simply another form of work. Don't you think that a measure of enjoyment and relaxation is necessary for the stamina required by a protracted revolutionary struggle?
>
> [Sison:] Indeed, there has to be a healthy measure of enjoyment and relaxation [....] Workers are entitled to holidays and opportunities for leisure and cultural development. It is not healthy to work continuously even when one loves and enjoys the work. A bow that is always drawn taut is liable to break or lose its resilience and thus fail to send the arrow straight to the target. (72)

With a life that is lived for the revolution, Sison answers the more personal questions always with the movement in sight. When asked what his biggest mistake was up to 1977 (the year he was imprisoned during Martial Law), he answers that it was his carelessness in being caught: "Getting captured was my biggest mistake because it separated me for a very long time from my work and the main flow of events in the revolutionary movement. . . . I made other mistakes in revolutionary work but none bigger than that which would put me away for so many years, from 1977 to 1986" (87). Rosca directly probes Sison regarding his conception of self that sums up his being:

> [Rosca:] You have expressed nothing of personal desires and wishes. Do you think you are still capable of narrowing your focus enough to consider

> what Jose Maria Sison, independent of the movement, of organizations, or responsibilities and obligations, might want for himself alone? If so, what could such a wish be?
>
> [Sison:] I have no desire independent of the class struggle and the revolutionary movement, if by desire you mean that which carries a modicum of thought and which is not spontaneous or trivial. Still in the service of the people and the revolution, I can only desire writing more poetry than either polemical or theoretical prose. (214)

As I have suggested earlier, the "bourgeois 'I'" might have withered away, but in its stead is a strong revolutionary figurehead. Sison's self with a more pronounced "I" than a "we" might seem in danger of Orwellian construction. At the same time, it is a "communist 'I'" in which notions of the individual and the collective continually negate each other. Nonetheless, as a historical figure, his life story must be told even as he grappled with how to frame his life story. What a waste if out of "modesty" he refused to write or speak. Moreover, Sison would inevitably be prone to skepticism in attempting to reverse "naturalized" bourgeois values and marry concepts of self and others, selfishness and selflessness, personal and political, nationalist and internationalist, which are often kept separate.

Ultimately, what is historical is not only Sison's first-hand account and analysis of the revolution, but also his conception of the self. Even if it may seem artificial and his language pedantic, the "communist self" that Sison tries to project is still evolving. After all, Sison himself admits, "In my experience, drawing away from a feudal background was much easier than drawing away from the circumstances, mentality and habits of the petty bourgeois. Until now, I continue striving to remold myself into a proletarian revolutionary" (82).

Self, Editing, and the Continuing Martial Law

If the past, self, and memory are written and rewritten in the present, publication will preserve one's narrative for the future. For example, Bonifacio Ilagan consciously lightened the tone of Lualhati Abreu's manuscript[11] for her future self to be relieved from the weight of the past. Ilagan explained in a personal interview:

> Her first draft was very bitter. Her writing was very "black" as was her personality. It's really heavy. I tried to convince her if she would want to deflect her formulation a little, etc. She agreed in some parts, but not in other parts. But as a whole, she followed my suggestions.
>
> For me, it is not to defend anyone or whichever Party. Rather, because she will read it—it will be printed and it will stay for so long. So that if she

> will read it, it won't be as heavy. I have retained some heavy parts, but lightened some, so that if she will read it after some time, there will be some breather. She agreed. (my trans.)[12]

Rewriting could also be through editing a previously published work. Peter Geremia's two books demonstrate how writing a diary aided in his self-transformation. The revised version of the first book, which is included in the second book, reflects his changing attitude towards his transformation. The later book *Seeking God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace* documents the continuing Martial Law through the life and involvement of Geremia in Mindanao. The first part of *Seeking God's Kingdom* is an abridged version of *Dreams and Bloodstains: The Diary of a Missioner in the Philippines* while the second part covers the militarization and extra-judicial killings in Mindanao until the book's publication in 2013. Writing and editing the diaries correspond to Geremia's evolution and changes in society.

A diary, since it is written at the moment, is "fixed in time and space." Its plot may come as a "series of surprise to writer and reader alike" since the events are unfolding and the end is unknown (Cully qtd. in Smith and Watson 193). If autobiography is attuned towards the past because it reminisces a life, the diary with its continuous narrative is directed towards the future (Lejeune 103). Themes of life and death, which abound in *Dreams and Bloodstains*, are embedded in a genre with a predisposition towards death. "The diarist is protected from death by the idea that the diary will continue," and its publication is one of the ways to signify its end (Lejeune 100-01). For Geremia, the end of the diary signals his own death: "Diaries are best exposed after death. But since I have been almost killed and I don't know how long I will last, I may be allowed to share at least part of my diary" (*Dreams and Bloodstains* xi).

The inward, intimate, and open-ended nature of the diary helped Geremia in his self-transformation. Writing a diary allowed him to reflect on poverty and injustice in the Philippines since he did not feel inhibited: "I feel freer to say something, because it is confidential" (Geremia). Eventually, the insights from his diary would be broadcasted through his lectures, speeches, and sermons in mass. But if published, the diary would no longer be private, as the inner self would be revealed to the reading public. Or it might be edited for public readership—authors might repress their selves in published diaries, while unpublished diaries may exhibit more transgressions.[13]

Though a singular, first-person narrative, *Dreams and Bloodstains* is mediated by many. Geremia thanks "all who helped in piecing together this book, particularly to Sonia Perdiguerra" in his acknowledgement page. As a published product, the book was made highly readable. The chaptering thematizes the events, while Geremia's

public pronouncements in the form of human rights reports, poems, letters, and sermons appear in between diary entries. A diary is traditionally chronological and Geremia starts the diary when he arrived in the Philippines in 1972. However, flashbacks of his childhood in Italy and earlier vocation in America explain his outlook and personality.

Despite the contradictions between the public and the private lives, Geremia "reluctantly agreed to publish this diary" (*Dreams and Bloodstains* xi) to show how the innermost self unfolds and processes these conflicts during Martial Law. Even if Geremia described himself as "shy," "pessimistic," and "prone to depression" despite his strong exterior, he published parts of his diary because as he explains, it was "to show what my involvement was, and explain myself through all these reflections. And then my commitment—my choices, what to do and what not to do—went through this internal reflection process" (Geremia). The raw and dark emotions are retained to reveal that it was natural to doubt God even if he is a priest in Mindanao. He wrote about his desire to die in a place that reeked of death during Martial Law:

> Of course the emotions were heavy. I think the heavy emotions are self-explanatory because I was caught between movements that used armed struggle, and then killings were taking place. Some of my closest collaborators were involved, my companion was killed, and then I was also in danger so many times. And then how to overcome these doubts? The doubts are part of the struggle to find meaning in what was happening and then to give reason to others not to lose hope. We often share these kinds of doubts, but then we continue in our work. (Geremia)

In the end, the diary worked in two ways. First, it helped Geremia change at the time the diary was written. Second, it is a public record of his personal conversions caused by the existing political climate. Once published, the diary became an autobiography for the timeline ended and everything became past: "It is as diary that autobiography is unfinishable. Likewise, it is as autobiography that the diary can be 'finished.' All autobiography is finishable" (Lejeune 103). Moreover, the present moment of reading reduces the unknown future to the past. *Dreams and Bloodstains* abruptly ends with cloudy visions of the future as it concludes with a "postscript" a few months after the end of the Marcos dictatorship. Geremia's last diary entry, November 1986, is about the assassination of labor leader Ka Lando Olalia, who was one of the many killed in the aftermath of EDSA 1986. The start of a new "era" under the Corazon Aquino administration was a repeat of the Marcos dictatorship; the blood of the past would color a hopeful but still uncertain and bleak future. Geremia closes the diary ambiguously, "Unfortunately the atrocities and the blood are all too real. I was beginning to forget the bloodstains and their

unnerving scent drugging us into another bad trip. . . . Or can the crimson-red sunset announce a clear day? As the book says, 'Red sky in the evening surely forecasts a bright tomorrow . . .'" (*Dreams and Bloodstains* 297).

Despite this arbitrary closure of the textual universe, the narrative of *Dreams and Bloodstains* becomes the beginning of *Seeking God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace*. However, *Seeking God's Kingdom* does not only pick up from where *Dreams and Bloodstains* left off. *Seeking God's Kingdom* also contains edited parts of *Dreams and Bloodstains*. Hence, *Seeking God's Kingdom* is both the second edition of *Dreams and Bloodstains* as well as its part two. As the future foretold of *Dreams and Bloodstains*, *Seeking God's Kingdom* establishes the narrative continuity of Geremia's vocation as a missionary amidst the ongoing "Martial Law" in succeeding presidencies. Geremia was harassed while organizing in Colombio in Sultan Kudarat, and Kidapawan and Arakan in North Cotabato, Mindanao. He was falsely accused and imprisoned for kidnapping and rape in 1987, and for robbery in 1992. Both cases were dismissed. Militarization intensified when President Estrada declared the All-Out War in Mindanao in 2000. Under the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration in 2006, vigilantes killed Geremia's close friends, the activist and journalist couple George and Maricel Vigo, in broad daylight. Just like Fr. Tullio Favali who was the victim of extrajudicial killing during late Martial Law, another Italian Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) priest, Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tentorio, was murdered during Benigno Aquino III's presidency in 2011. To highlight these parallelisms, journalist Patricia Evangelista observed, "Sometimes [Geremia] says Fausto when he means Favali, or Favali when he means Fausto" (qtd. in *Seeking God's Kingdom* 181).

The narrative of *Seeking God's Kingdom* goes back to the past events in *Dreams and Bloodstains* and then moves forward until its "present" moment of publication. The diary in *Dreams and Bloodstains* was revised to reflect the changes of the current milieu such as the different writing conditions. Writing during the Marcos dictatorship was dangerous since the military might get hold of Geremia's notebooks, which could implicate people. Thus, Geremia had to be cautious and guard against both self-censorship and haphazard documentation, even if the diary was not initially intended for publication. He explained, "So I had to be careful to express all those opinions, but at the same time avoid direct blaming. . . . I didn't write many names because I thought maybe somebody might look at my notebook. It was for my own private use, so I thought I would remember whom I'm referring to, even though later on I could not remember everyone or everything" (Geremia). Except for a few obvious cases, most names could not be revealed in the published version that is *Dreams and Bloodstains*. The continuation of Martial Law tactics under the Low-Intensity Conflict of President Corazon Aquino still posed a security risk.

The second edition of the diary, that is *Seeking God's Kingdom,* allowed for more revelations since it was released around two decades after the end of the Marcos dictatorship. In *Seeking God's Kingdom,* some of the names of bishops, PIME priests, missionaries, public officials, and other prominent personalities (which appear only as initials in *Dreams and Bloodstains*) are divulged. These personalities are now inscribed in the narrative as a caution against forgetting. The book attempts to recover Geremia's memories because he had forgotten some names and events since he did not document them earlier. Geremia names those who have been killed "as a way of honoring them as martyrs" (Geremia).

Moreover, the highly personal and dark passages of *Dreams and Bloodstains* were edited out to reflect the attitudes of the "present" self. "In the second edition, I reduced the more personal reflections, and then just kept the flow of events for more general information," Geremia explained in my interview with him. When I asked Geremia if he omitted the pessimistic views and feelings because he felt that he had overcome them, he clarified, "Some, yes. Even though I have come to a point where I do not intend to hide all of my so-called hesitation or negative feelings."

Through editing, the textured and emotional diary in *Dreams and Bloodstains* became an event-based chronological account in *Seeking God's Kingdom*. Despite its mixed autobiographical genres, *Dreams and Bloodstains* is smoother and more sustained in terms of prose, compared to *Seeking God's Kingdom* which has a choppier narrative structure. Part two of *Seeking God's Kingdom* feels like a collage of Geremia's diary alongside reprinted articles that appeared in websites, blogs, news reports, editorials, human rights reports, and statements. All of these were written by other priests, journalists, and activist organizations, not only Geremia. Some of the statements assume a collective identity since the pronoun "we" is used, while other writings refer to Geremia in the third person. Hence, the "I" in *Dreams and Bloodstains* is an individual who wrote his own story, while *Seeking God's Kingdom* positions Geremia as a composite entity and a point of reference from which the story is told. There are parts in *Seeking God's Kingdom* where others recount experiences and opinions of militarization in Mindanao through details of Geremia's life. These testify to the commitment of Geremia as well as to the grim realities in Mindanao.

Despite these changes, the narrative suture of *Dreams and Bloodstains* to *Seeking God's Kingdom* shows how the past resonates in the present and the future. The climax of *Dreams and Bloodstains* is the controversial and widely publicized killing of Fr. Tullio Favali by Norberto Manero, Jr. in 1985, where Geremia was the intended target. This incident affirmed Geremia's identity as a Filipino for it proved that some foreigners and priests defended the oppressed in the Philippines, to the point of

death. Geremia reflects on the impact of Favali's assassination on him: "I am also a genuine Filipino, sharing more of the life-experience of the masses than most professionals born and raised here. I can say I was born again and raised to a new identity here. As Tullio was in a sudden transformation" (*Dreams and Bloodstains*, 256-57).

In a narrative twist, *Seeking God's Kingdom* covers Manero's release from prison and his dramatic Christian conversion in 2008. Manero changed his name from the ferocious-sounding moniker Kumander Bukay as leader of the infamous paramilitary Ilaga group, to the innocent-sounding "Nonoy," "which is the common way of calling a good boy." In *Seeking God's Kingdom,* Geremia reflects, "[Bukay] no longer appeared as a predatory wolf, but as a gentle lamb" (158-59).

Like the prodigal son, Manero begged for forgiveness from Geremia, which the latter accepted. As visual proof, a picture of Manero and Geremia walking side-by-side and holding hands after paying respects at Favali's grave appears in *Seeking God's Kingdom*. However, this incident is written in a few paragraphs and is presented only as one of the many narratives in Geremia's life. Manero's conversion in *Seeking God's Kingdom* neither acts as the narrative resolution to the later edition of the diary, nor provides closure to Favali's case. Rather, *Seeking God's Kingdom* stresses the killing of Fr. Fausto Tentorio in 2011 and ends with this event to prove that tragically, history is doomed to repeat itself. It is the same narrative stemming from the same structural inequalities in society despite the change of presidencies from Ferdinand Marcos to Benigno Aquino III. *Seeking God's Kingdom* does not go back to the Marcos dictatorship for the dictatorship had not ended.

Both of the books' narratives open and end with death—from the foreword of *Dreams and Bloodstains* to the epilogue of *Seeking God's Kingdom*. Ironically, death is the raison d'être of these two books but it functions differently: in *Dreams and Bloodstains*, it is a dark, nihilistic wish from an eyewitness living in a wasteland, while in *Seeking God's Kingdom* it is a start of a new life. Geremia wrote *Seeking God's Kingdom* in commemoration of his 50 years as a priest: "A long journey! Seminary teacher and formator from 1963 to 1972. Then in the Philippines from 1972 up to now. 41 years! I have never expected to last that long. I experienced recurrent death wishes, I have poor health and I survived several attempts to kill me. A failed martyr?" (*Seeking God's Kingdom* 208). Despite this, death looms near because of old age. Yet, the pessimistic stance towards death in *Dreams and Bloodstains* becomes more positive in *Seeking God's Kingdom* since death now welcomes the Parousia or the "Second Coming of Christ." Like yin and yang, the binaries of death and life complete a full circle, as death heralds a new beginning and allows Geremia to experience everlasting life. Ultimately, he ends his life narrative with wishes of

death: "Allow me to dream my last dreams while I'm waiting for sister Death to open the door into the 'Parousia.'" But with much more emphasis, he affirms life: "MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME!!! MARANATHA!!!" (*Seeking God's Kingdom* 208).

Saying Without Saying, Revealing Without Revealing

The movement considers Danilo Vizmanos a fine example of radical conversion during Martial Law: he was a US-educated and pro-American naval officer for 22 years who publicly renounced the military upon his retirement shortly before the imposition of Martial Law. Because he became critical of Marcos during his twilight years, he had the image of a wizened old man who thought through his life decisions. In my interview with Professor Roland Simbulan, who had known Vizmanos since the 1980s, he remarked, "Because of that background, his [Vizmanos] credibility is strong. He is not the typical firebrand, the young activist. He was not an activist before. When he became old, he became an activist, especially when he was about to retire" (my trans.).[14] Until the death of Vizmanos at 79 years old in 2008, he was active in the national democratic movement as president of the activist organization Bagong Alyansa Makabayan (BAYAN) and chairperson of human rights group Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDA). This interesting subject position is reflected in his diary, which records the deterioration of society during Martial Law. Yet, the diary does not reveal much about his personal life or innermost emotions. A more sustained and fuller narrative of his life is more evident in his later autobiographical sketches. This shows how autobiographical narratives written in different genres also present different aspects of the self.

Vizmanos wrote in the moment during Martial Law but published his diary decades later in 2003. His *Martial Law Diary and Other Papers* starts on 1 January 1973 and ends on 19 May 1974. By the time he began his diary, he had already retired from military service. In retrospect, he explains, "[F]or lack of something better to do, I maintain a daily account of what was happening in Marcos' 'new society' in a confidential diary" (*Through the Eye of the Storm* 183).

Even if a diary chronicles the diarist's life, the diarist also chronicles the diary's life. Vizmanos foreshadows the impending danger of keeping a diary. A month prior to his arrest, he writes, "This diary will have to go to a safer place for the time being. Entries will have to be post-written temporarily" (*Martial Law Diary* 224). The actual diary begins on the New Year after the imposition of Martial Law and ends a few days before Vizmanos' arrest. The mass arrests of his comrades might have hinted at the possibility of Vizmanos's own arrest, but he neither dwells on this, nor gives any indication that his diary is about to end. His last entry is a reflection on Mochtar Lubis; afterwards nothing follows.

Real time as recorded in the diary is plotted within a bigger historical era. *Martial Law Diary* is both chronicle and recollection. In the introductory essay, he recalls the implementation of Martial Law on 23 September 1972 with news blackouts, mass arrests, rumors, and speculations about his own arrest. Afterwards, he decided to publicly announce his defection from the military. The postscript is an account of his arrest, torture, detention, and a comparison between the demeanor of the soldiers and the political detainees. The introductory essay and postscript are written from memory after 30 years in expository form. They provide a proper introduction and closure to the diary that was written in the moment. These essays reopen the diary and move back to the past to situate the diary's progressing narrative within the time frame of Martial Law. Moreover, the book is divided into three parts. The diary proper in Part I forms the main text. Part II, entitled "Victims and Resistance," contains brief write-ups of human rights reports, revolutionary martyrs, jail visits, mass demonstrations. It also includes pictures of the author as naval captain and activist. Part III, "Other Papers," is composed of reprinted essays, commentaries, letters to the editors and public officials, and book reviews in magazines and national dailies. The inclusion of these two parts integrates the diary's narrative into the narrative of struggle during Martial Law. It also shows how insights from the private diary made their way into public pronouncements.

Despite the sense of confidentiality of the diary, Vizmanos does not reveal his activities at length. In contrast to Geremia's *Dreams and Bloodstains* and Dolores Feria's *Project Sea Hawk: The Barbed Wire Journal*, Vizmanos's *Martial Law Diary* is composed of scattered notes and lacks a sustained narrative. Nor are his entries colored with complex and myriad emotions. His accounts are mostly short, terse, calculated, and no-nonsense just like brief military reports, with an overarching tone that is flat. Diaries reveal a lot about the personality of its writer, and in this case, it shows the author's tight-lipped personality.

While Vizmanos did write about secret meetings with the Leftists, he did not disclose the nature of such encounters—in short, the diary is characterized by saying without saying, revealing without revealing. One would wonder about the necessity and the irony of recording underground meetings in a confidential diary, but actually not revealing its secret agendas. Should they be written and published in the first place? In his foreword to *Martial Law Diary*, Satur Ocampo, a journalist and former left-wing legislator, also ponders on this unsolved contradiction:

> I must say I am amused—and intrigued—in finding a dozen entries in "Martial Law Diary" [sic] that simply say, "Met with Tony and Satur," referring to the clandestine meetings Ka Dan had with Tony Zumel and me at various places. The last entry, on 7 March 1974 says, "Satur has

> been reassigned to the countryside." I should ask Ka Dan why he opted not to record what we talked about in those secret meetings—which went on for hours. (*Martial Law Diary* xi)

Hence, *Martial Law Diary* records Vizmanos's movement in society, but not too many details of that movement. Rather, Vizmanos's diary is a chronicle of the decay of Martial Law society and his attitudes towards it. Vizmanos clarifies in his preface, "'Martial Law Diary' [sic] is not a personal diary in the conventional sense. Except for some entries of a personal nature, almost all its pages are devoted to accounts, observations and comments on significant happenings during the early and critical stage of martial rule" (*Martial Law Diary* xiii). The published diary is fragmentary and difficult to read because it is not divided into headings or chapters (unlike Geremia's and Feria's works). The continuous entries cover a lot and oscillate from one topic to the next: both macro- and micro-level analysis of the social, economic, and political conditions of Martial Law. Vizmanos also connected the Philippine situation to world events. Reading enlarged his "universe," and he included book reviews in his diary. He read books on the wars in China and Southeast Asia such as Wilfred Burchett's *The Second Indo-China War*, Vo Nguyen Giap's *Big Victory, Great Task*, and Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* to name a few. These reviews show how he understood the rationale behind these wars and how he compared these people's struggles to that of Filipinos. He also reacted to news reports coming from a variety of sources—from the Right-wing Voice of America and *Daily Express* to the Left-wing Radio Peking, *Liberation*, and *Ang Bayan*. Moreover, Vizmanos's position as a former military official who eventually established underground connections made him privy to the classified operations of both sides. He challenged Marcos's mythmaking and propaganda by countering them with unreported news from the grapevine that he culled from personal contacts from the Left and the military.

Satur Ocampo notes Vizmanos's progression of thought in his foreword: "Moreover, I think that this diary may well be regarded as an account—sketch and staggered though may be—of the quantum advance and consolidation of the author's own political and social enlightenment, and the sharpening, with an effluence of new insights from extensive reading and observations, of his political-military education" (qtd. in *Martial Law Diary* viii). However, this diary begins *in media res* after his defection, so one could not see his progression in thought from an "Amboy" to a nationalist. Vizmanos instead drew from his military background to analyze political events, particularly his views on the Vietnam War, Communist China, and the guerrilla warfare in the Philippines.

The diary also shows Vizmanos's private life as a citizen although a snappy militaristic language is evident even in the parts about his family life. These are described in

a few sentences. Simple birthday celebrations of his children are marked off in his diary, which reveal the family's frugal lifestyle. He also stressed the private nature of such gatherings: "Minnie's 11th birthday. Gave her P5, a Magnolia 'drumstick' and *valenciana* dinner at home. Strictly family affair" (*Martial Law Diary* 130), "Alice Marie's 18th birthday. No party. Just simple family dinner at home" (190). Like the entries of his underground meetings, parts of the diary function as a calendar—dated and noted but without the lengthy elaborations.

Yet, the diary relays how Martial Law permeated everyday life including those of his children: "Erwin has come to hate Marcos, Albarracin and authorities in Araullo High School for 1) forcing him to study the bogus 1973 Marcos Constitution followed by an exam on its provisions, and 2) requiring him to have a military haircut" (*Martial Law Diary* 61). "Danny Boy's 20th birthday. Makes him subject to call by Marcos as cannon fodder against the rebels. What a ghastly non-choice!" (*Martial Law Diary* 64). In addition, Vizmanos concretized the economic hardships experienced by his own middle-class family in Manila. He wrote about the long lines because of food rationings, as well as the rice shortages and rising prices he observed from trips to the market. In these instances, Vizmanos was reporting from the ground up. Despite the brevity of his entries, much about the impact of Martial Law society on the people is revealed.

Although Vizmanos does not disclose a large part of his private family life, flashbacks from his youth and early naval career pop up intermittently. Written in italics and with a loose connection with the main topic, these flashbacks feel disjointed and disrupt the flow of his diary entries. Some entries could be confusing in terms of time. For instance, one "flashback" in *Martial Law Diary* talks about his detention in 1974 in an entry dated 30 June 1973 (*Martial Law Diary* 96-97). These flashbacks are excerpts from *Through the Eye of the Storm* that are inserted in *Martial Law Diary*.

Through the Eye of the Storm, which was published three years earlier than *Martial Law Diary*, portrays Vizmanos's conversions more exhaustively. His writing in a different autobiographical genre showed different aspects of his self. Vizmanos's diary, which started as a private activity not meant for publication, devotes less attention to the author's past as it focuses on the present milieu of writing. Time also feels stretched and repetitive with a scattered, non-linear plot development. In contrast to the diary, *Through the Eye of the Storm* is both an exposition of Vizmanos's life and reminiscence. Time, though compressed, seems to go further back and reveal a more selective but detailed past. Even if *Through the Eye of the Storm* is entitled "Random notes of Danilo P. Vizmanos," the accounts are more structured and arranged chronologically—they cover his family lineage, childhood, education, military assignments in several war-torn places, influential people, and

close encounters with high-ranking government officials. Eyewitness accounts of the workings of the government, which Vizmanos was able to access as a rising naval officer, are also included. *Through the Eye of the Storm* could be a companion to *Martial Law Diary*, where accounts of the past (as autobiography), and the present-now-past (as diary) complement each other.

Through the Eye of the Storm is fuller and more revealing of Vizmanos's personal life than the wry and fragmentary *Martial Law Diary*. The former's narrative is more fully developed, and his political commentaries are embedded in his own concrete experiences in various points in history. Thus, one would know his vantage point and the basis of his commentaries. His accounts, written in retrospect, also reflect on how he handled tricky situations. For instance, *Through the Eye of the Storm* recounts one incident during the administration of President Diosdado Macapagal, where Presidential Military Adviser General Victor Dizon suddenly summoned Vizmanos to Malacañang. Dizon offered Vizmanos to be promoted to presidential naval aide, which the latter declined. Through the use of dialogues in that brief encounter, the character of those who are in power and how Vizmanos conducted himself in front of them unfold before the readers.

> This was the first time I came to know about their intentions in the palace. Caught by surprise, I had to think fast and come up with a snap assessment of the unexpected situation that confronted me. I had to be ready with the most appropriate response.
>
> ***
>
> General Dizon continued, "I have before me your bio-data which I find very impressive. May I know your response?"
>
> After a brief spell I blurted out, "Sir, how much time can you give me to consider this important matter?"
>
> "If you can decide right now so much the better," was his immediate response.
>
> I tried another tack, "Sir, with your permission may I take this up with my wife first?"
>
> Pushing the telephone close to me the general said, "Why don't you call her now and find out?"
>
> "Sir, we don't have a telephone in the house," was my lame reply.
>
> Even then he told me to let him know within twenty-four hours should I finally decide to accept the offer.

> It was at this point where Mrs. Eva Macapagal suddenly entered the room. After the introduction by General Dizon, the First Lady looked at me intently and shot a question, "Commander, how many wives do you have?" I was rendered speechless and just smiled weakly in response. She was in a light mood and so I assumed that it was my white navy uniform that prompted her to ask the question of the ages which has always been closely related to the cliché of "a girl in every port!" Even then that was one question I never expected from a First Lady. (*Through the Eye of the Storm* 137-38)

Dialogues are absent in *Martial Law Diary*, which gives a bird's eye commentary on society during Martial Law. His personal life is used only as a brief point of departure. However, Vizmanos stresses the importance of writing during the moment: "I believe that after a period of more than 2 ½ decades, whatever recollections I may have today cannot compare with what I had written on the spot and during moments of solitary confinement in my concrete-and-steel cell some 26 years ago" (*Through the Eye of the Storm* 190). If any, *Martial Law Diary*, as well as his smuggled notes from detention, are records of how the immediate circumstances during Martial Law forged Vizmanos's character.

Life and Death, Continuity and Closure

Joining the activist movement during Martial Law spelled death. Since many were killed because of their involvement in the struggle, Geremia, in his narrative, calls the movement the "underground movement of death" (*Dreams and Bloodstains* xi). Likewise, Rosca explains, "Under Philippine laws, joining the CPP was punishable by death. This meant that all questions regarding life's options had been resolved." She adds "If a cadre survived for a year in the countryside and was neither captured not killed, he was considered a veteran" (Sison and Rosca 21-22).

Despite these dangers, Sison, Geremia, and Vizmanos were able to survive and write their life stories decades after Martial Law, but with a view towards their own retirement (or non-retirement). Earlier, I touched on the notions of life and death, continuity and closure in autobiography. Publication ended the textual life of the diary as both writer and reader could no longer turn a fresh page and begin a new day. The memoir became, so to speak, a remembrance of things past, which ended at the present moment of writing.

Since autobiography is a referential art, timing is of utmost importance. It is best to end one's life narrative at the pinnacle of one's success or at the end of an era. In my interview, Sison explained that one should not write autobiography when Marcos

was in power: "If one writes your comprehensive biography during Martial Law, your life is finished. Marcos has already won, and you haven't defeated him yet. It is better if your biography or autobiography be written after his downfall" (my trans.).[15] Yet, this idea of writing an autobiography could occur early on during Martial Law, like Vizmanos who felt that solitary confinement illuminated the meaning of life: "Before they confined me here, I had always felt that there was something missing in my life experience. Now I know that this is the missing episode. With my recent incarceration under the 'New Society,' I feel that my experiences in life are just about complete and rounded up. Who knows, I might yet be able to write an interesting autobiography in some future time" (*Through the Eye of the Storm* 192).

The author's death may spell the end of autobiography, which paradoxically eludes death. One could not have new material for writing or publish a succeeding book—one could no longer act, write, or rewrite. Or one could no longer open and reopen one's narrative and give it multiple closures, like what Geremia did. According to Smith and Watson, "For the life narrator, on the other hand, death is the end of the matter. While a life narrative can be, and often is, written over a long span of time, as is the case with the multiple narratives of Edward Gibbon and Maya Angelou, it must be written during the writer's life span—or be published posthumously 'as is'" (5-6).

As a genre, autobiography may have one foot in the grave and one foot towards immortality. The writing of the narrative may have ceased with the author's death, yet the memory of one's life and times will linger in the future. One's life has been reduced to history, but it is a history that still speaks: the reader can still hear the author's voice telling the story, still projecting the self and creating that self-impression.

NOTES

1. Cf. Eakin 23.
2. Among Sison's notable works are *Philippine Society and Revolution* (which he originally published in 1971 as Amado Guerrero), and *Struggle for National Democracy* (originally published in 1967).
3. After World War II, the brothers Jose, Vicente, and Jesus Lava, leaders of the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP), committed a series of party errors, characterized by adventurism and "sw[inging] from Right to Left and Left to Right opportunism" (Sison and Werning 47-48). These include putschism within its armed wing, the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Pilipinas (HMB, or People's Liberation Army), dissolution of party collectives under the "single-file" policy, and rivalry with the Taruc brothers. In 1955, Jesus Lava decided to eradicate the HMB in favor of parliamentary struggle. Lacking the ideological guidance of the Party, the HMB under Commander Sumulong in 1962 became a rebel, roving band, and was used for criminal activities. The PKP and HMB were in complete disarray, as Sison wrote: "When I joined the old merger party in December 1962, it had been reduced to practically nothing. The general-secretary Jesus Lava did not have his own collective and neither did he have any collective to communicate with. There was not a single active party branch" (43-44).
4. This refers to the splitting of the Left in the 1990s due to ideological differences. The "reaffirmists" or RAs reaffirm their commitment to armed struggle in the countryside and adherence to Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. The "rejectionists" or RJs reject the armed struggle in the countryside to give primacy to parliamentary struggle.
5. Published as *Rebolusyong Pilipino: Tanaw Mula sa Loob* (Lagda Publications, 1994).
6. Werning's book was written during the beginnings of the split and the purges. It touches briefly on the issue of the Deep Penetration Agents, which emerged in 1985 (Sison and Werning 106).
7. Sison maintained that he, the CPP, NPA and Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. were not responsible for the Plaza Miranda bombing. He stressed that Marcos instigated the bombing as documented by Primitivo Mijares in his book *Conjugal Dictatorship*. Raymond Bonner in *Waltzing With a Dictator* also wrote that the CIA investigations showed that Marcos was behind the bombing (Sison and Rosca 59).
8. The Left declared a boycott of the 1986 snap presidential elections, which led to the ouster of Marcos in the EDSA People Power uprising. Sison admitted that the boycott policy was a "major tactical error" which critics claimed caused the marginalization of the Left. However, Sison explained that this was "not a strategic error" that caused "permanent or long term 'marginalization' of the legal and illegal forces of the national-democratic movement." Moreover, the Leftist organization BAYAN was among those who led the People Power uprising (Sison and Rosca 115-16).

9. Peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

10. He has a different function in the Netherlands as chief political consultant of the NDF. He also promotes international solidarity among people's organizations.

11. This was later published as *Agaw-dilim, Agaw-liwanag* (later translated as *Dusking, Dawning*), which is an eyewitness account of the killings under the Oplan Missing Link (OPML) in Southern Tagalog in 1988.

12. From personal interview with Bonifacio Ilagan: "*Yung* first draft *niya ay* very bitter. Black *na nga yung sinulat niya eh,* black *na siya. Grabe, mabigat na mabigat*. I tried to convince her *na baka gusto mo na i*-try *na medyo i*-deflect *ng kaunti yung mga* formulation, etc. *Sa ilang bahagi pumayag siya, pero sa iba hindi. Pero sa pangkalahatan, sinunod naman niya yung aking mga mungkahi.*

    "*Ang sa akin lang naman, hindi para ipagtanggol kung sino man o ano mang* party, *kung hindi para kapag binasa na niya… kasi mapri*-print *na iyan eh at iyan ay magtatagal. Para kapag binasa na niya hindi maiiwan sa kanya yung sobrang bigat. May mga ine*-retain *akong mabigat, pero may kaunting bawi,* so that *kapag nabasa mo na* after some time*, medyo may kaunting hinga. Pumayag naman siya*."

13. Cf. Marching.

14. From personal interview with Roland Simbulan: "*Hindi naman siya yung* typical *na* firebrand*, yung batang* activist*. Kasi hindi naman siya* activist *dati. Noong tumanda na, doon na naging* activist*, lalo na noong mag*-retire *na siya*."

15. From personal interview with Jose Maria Sison: "*Kung sinulat mo yung* comprehensive biography *mo noong panahon ng* Martial Law*, eh di tapos na ang buhay mo. Panalo si Marcos, hindi mo pa naibabagsak. Mas maganda magawa mo ang* biography *o* autobiography *mo kapag bumagsak na siya*."

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