



### Abstract

These poems were written shortly after the recent national elections that saw the victory of the late dictator's son. Like most disaffected voters, bogged down by the upsetting news, I could not bring myself to accept the election results that would herald another Marcos in power and allow for a continuation of the Duterte administration known for its bloody war on drugs. So, these are poems of rage and protest—an anthem railing against a government marked by political dynasties, traditional patronage, deep-seated oppression, democratization of disinformation, and human rights abuses. Never again!

### Keywords

Protest,  
Resistance,  
Marcos,  
Historical  
Revisionism,  
Human Rights  
Abuses

# NONE OF OUR WARS ENDED WHERE THEY BEGAN

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## WOMAN OF NO ACCOUNT

*“At age 23, Liliosa Hilao was a bright young girl who had her entire future in front of her. Despite her asthma and allergies, she was talented, smart, and outgoing. She had many friends. She was set to graduate cum laude with a degree in communication arts from the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. She was also the first reported case of a political prisoner’s death under Martial Law.” ~Martial Law Museum website*

*“In April 1973, Lilli was taken by the military, and was raped and tortured in front of her 16-year-old sister. By the time Lilli’s family retrieved her dead body, it bore cigarette burns on her lips, injection marks on her arms, bruises and gun barrel marks. Her internal organs were removed and her vagina was sawed off to cover signs of torture and sexual abuse.” ~Rappler.com*

In broken syllables  
speech splinters

my name—Liliosa Hilao,  
or Lilli as I am called.

I live in the negative  
spaces of history

languaged & unlanguaged  
for your convenience.

In April 1973, I was  
abducted, tortured, raped

track marks on my arms  
my vagina sawed off

to cover up their crimes.  
There’s only so much

a body at 23 could handle.  
But that doesn’t matter.

I too was a writer  
writing for *Hasik*.

But in other news,  
in crevices of the Internet

I am re-written, mistranslated:  
A warning against the female:

“A woman should know  
her place in society.”

My fault is that I did not  
speak enough, or that

I spoke a lot, too soon.  
My mouth a dark ocean

carrying endless bodies  
swept away by currents.

Sir, did you mistake me  
for my brother?

Are we too much alike?  
Was I too dangerous?

Silence plays blood-catch.  
He unholsters the gun.

You a communist?  
Harlot, whore, *putangnamo*?

Sure, everyone has theories.  
Sure, I'm a permutation.

I lean smack against  
his hard chest

cold barrel pressing  
between my hips

the lilt at the end  
of his question

stretching the truth  
till it averages out.

# MY GRANDFATHER AS A MARCOS APOLOGIST

*"Para akong binubura." ~Ricky Lee*

1.

He speaks of a golden era              of a lapidary time  
    when prices were cheap  
    and there's a great deal of talk about discipline.

*Only subversivos went to jail because they disobeyed rules.*

He sticks his hands into the guts of a slaughtered chicken.

*Back in our day, back in our day.*

He roasts the bird over the fiery pit.

*If only we could go back in time, if only we could go back.*

But what about what about my friend, all alone  
    for an entire year              imprisoned              tortured  
without any evidence nor charges?

The military officer pinned him against the wall:

*Where's your gun?*

*Where are you hiding your gun, tanginamo?!*

When he tried to cough up              blood  
    so they'd feel sorry for him              and let him go  
his body betrayed him and got another beating.

There are horrors more unspeakable.



3.

Tonight, I keep vigil

underground voices / silent sisters / broken brothers / pistol-  
whipped / waterboarded / manacled / electrocuted / mas-  
sacred in the night / tired bodies over San Juanico Bridge

In the end, unhistoried.

*None of our wars ended where they began.*

Papang, this is how memory works:  
a moth or two take flight  
disinterring the buried past  
up towards the surface of light:  
what had lain hidden, but *why*.

## HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

This is how they did it:  
While we were looking away.  
While we had our eyes peeled.  
While it was hot and dry.  
While it was cold and comfortable.  
While we were asleep.  
While we were vigilant.  
While we were making love.  
While we were nursing our hate.  
While we were fighting misinformation.  
While we were ignoring all the lies.  
While we were counting coins.  
While we had nothing to spare.  
While we were raising our children.  
While we were burying the dead.