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### *The Sovereign Trickster*

Abstract: In our current moment, authoritarian figures loom large. One of them is the figure of Rodrigo Duterte. He seems to embody two notions of sovereignty. One is related to the power to decide on the exception to the law and determine who will live and who will die; the other, the freedom from the power of norms by way of dissipation, irresponsibility, and excess. In this essay, I seek to ask about the double sources of his power with reference to the works of Michel Foucault. While most of Foucault's work has been focused on Europe (without, however, being Eurocentric), I inquire into the usefulness of his works for reckoning with Duterte and his claim to dominate death while monopolizing laughter. Finally, I speculate on the usefulness of the notion of "authoritarian trickster" in thinking about other "strongmen" today--for example, Donald Trump.

*Justice pursues the body beyond all possible pain.*

--Michele Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

*Duterte: May Utak sa Bayag, May Bayag sa Utak* [Duterte: Brains in the balls and balls in the brains].

--Duterte Campaign bumper sticker, 2016

#### *1. Provincializing Foucault*

For the last few years, I've been teaching a course on Filipino histories during the same term that I've been doing a reading seminar on Michel Foucault at my university. Not surprisingly, the two have become entangled in my mind. Whenever I try to make sense of Foucault, I tend to do so with reference to the Philippines or the US, so that I call on the one to answer my questions about the other, much like dialing the number of a distant call center with impossible questions at all hours of the day and night. Somehow,

Foucault's focus on Europe (without, however, being Eurocentric) helps me see events in the Philippines in a certain way just as events in the Philippines permit me to re-provincialize, as it were, Foucault's historical genealogies of power and knowledge. What follows, then, is an exercise in historical translation as I move back and forth between two sets of events in an attempt to illuminate one by grounding the claims of the other.

To start with, there is Foucault's well-known idea of bio-power. In many of his lectures and books, Foucault refers to the emergence of what he calls "bio-power" in the modern age. Intertwined with, as much as subsuming, earlier regimes of power—what he calls the pastoral, the juridical, and the disciplinary—bio-power concerns power over life itself in its totality. It sums up a style of governing that targets entire populations by working through each and every body. Bio-power, as Foucault succinctly puts it, seeks to set the conditions for the conduct of conduct, with the state acting as a kind of orchestra conductor to coordinate the movements and behavior of each individual for the sake of insuring the survival and development of the whole population. Actualized in a wide range of institutional arrangements from social welfare to sanitation, from tax policies to industry regulations, from public health to policing, from education to housing, bio-power is omnipresent. Engineering behavior while educating desire, bio-power seeks to enlist the collaboration of each and every citizen towards the propagation of life itself. In the context of postcolonial nation-state, bio-power is precisely what animates the programs usually called "national development" designed to benefit its citizens.<sup>1</sup>

But as Foucault points out, bio-power also requires the continued assertion of state sovereignty. This means, among other things, that the state continues to reserve the

right to determine the boundaries of national belonging. Such entails deciding on those who are and can be citizens, not only legally but also culturally, but also those who are not, can never be, or may no longer be considered citizens. Who is inside and who is outside the nation? Who has the right to have rights, and who are those that have no rights at all? And what to do with the latter? How are they to be othered—to be conceptualized and controlled? Are they to be treated as migrants subject to eventual inclusion? As racialized social enemies to be targeted for segregation and incarceration, condemned to bare life, exposed to death or driven towards annihilation? Or as “abnormal” types mired in perversion and poverty bound for perpetual neglect and allowed to perish? Where bio-power is about governing all facets of life, what happens to the administration of death?<sup>2</sup> Thus does the imperative of asserting sovereignty point to the other side of bio-power--what Achille Mbembe among others has referred to as necro-power: the power to put to death.<sup>3</sup> Directly engaged with questions of letting live as well as giving life, on the one hand, and putting to death or letting die, on the other, Foucault’s notion of bio-power and its dark underside, necro-power allows us to think about the history of the present.

Such a history at this moment and for the foreseeable future is dominated by a whole series of authoritarian figures around the world. One such imposing figure is President Rodrigo Duterte. Not only does he monopolize so much of our political attention. Like his North American counterpart, Donald Trump, Duterte has also laid claim to large reservoirs of our intellectual and moral energy. How then, can we use Foucault’s critical apparatus to understand a figure like Duterte and come grips with the crisis brought about by his regime? Let me give a few examples.

## *2. Necro-power and Barbarian Freedom*

My first example has to do with the workings of necro-power and its role in formulating the idea of sovereignty, or put another way, the idea that freedom stems from the right to kill. Since assuming office in July of 2016, President Duterte has fallen woefully short on his promises to improve Filipino lives--from improving infrastructures to alleviating poverty, from shifting to a federalist form of government to peace talks with the Communist Party and much more. Instead, he has focused tenaciously on the drug war, specifically on ridding poor neighborhoods of so-called “drug personalities.” Under his regime, necro-power has consistently trumped bio-power. One way to see his emphasis on the former over the latter is to look at a speech that Duterte gave on August 3, 2018 in the province of Bukidnon. Here, he makes one of his frequent jokes about human rights addressing, as he typically does, drug users and dealers directly:

You enjoy your human rights there in heaven kasi God promised you that lahat ng extrajudicial killing victims will go to heaven. ‘Yan ang hiningi ko sa Diyos. Sabi naman ng Diyos, “Pwede, pwede.” [laughter] Gawain --- gagawin ko ba ‘yan kung walang guarantee? Kasi kaawa naman. T\*\*\* i\*\*\*\*, magdo-droga ka tapos sa impyerno ka. If you have a [consolation?] I’m going to heaven, sabi ko, “God, pagbigyan mo na lang ‘yan. Ako, wala akong hingiin sa akin. Reserve the hottest place in hell for me. And may I burn till eternity.”<sup>4</sup>

[You enjoy your human rights in heaven because God promised you that all extra-

judicial killing victims will go to heaven. That's what I asked God. And God said, "okay, okay." Would I do that without guarantee? That's because these pitiful motherfuckers, they take drugs then they have to go to hell? If you have [consolation?], I said, "God, do them a favor. Me, I'm not going to ask for anything for myself. Reserve the hottest place in hell for me. And may I burn till eternity.]

Enfolded in this joke is the tacit admission of having authorized the extra-judicial killings of thousands of suspected drug users. This confession, however, is displaced by another image: that of the victims going to heaven to "enjoy" the human rights they were deprived of on earth. In effect, the joke converts victims into martyrs. It is a conversion that Duterte accomplishes through a conversation with God Himself. He asks God to "*pagbigyan mo na lang iyan*"—to grant them a favor—and offers to trade places with them—to "reserve the hottest place in hell for me." Duterte's joke suggests two things. First, that he reserves the right to suspend human rights by ordering extra-judicial killings. And second, that as the sovereign leader, he has privileged access to the Cosmic Sovereign himself, a connection that we might colloquially refer to as being "*malakas*" (strongly connected) with Him. This divine connection is what allows the President to make deals with Him. Mimicking divine power, the president aspires to wield the same awesome might. He can decide, for example, on who will live and who will die, on who can be saved and who will be damned, determining the afterlife of his victims even as he usurps the very realm of the devil himself who dwells in the "hottest place in hell."

In this and many of Duterte's other jokes, a macabre sense of humor comes with a

recurring obsession with drug users. Both betray an intense fascination with death. Addiction and death are always linked in his mind. Indeed, for Duterte, the “drug personalities” he addresses are no longer human. Echoing popular belief, Duterte regards crystal meth or *shabu*, as thoroughly destructive, driving users into acts of extreme violence. It is as if they were possessed by a force that they could not control and that has a total hold over them. Unable to defer their desire, they will stop at nothing to satisfy their urges. They have no qualms about raping children and killing innocent people. For this reason, they cannot be considered human, let alone claim to have any rights. Hence, when accused of committing gross human rights violations, Duterte once responded, “What crime against humanity?’ In the first place, I’d like to be frank with you, are they (drug users) humans?’”<sup>5</sup> Against available scientific evidence, Duterte continues to claim that *shabu*, thoroughly destroys the mental and moral faculties of its users. Their brains supposedly shrink, placing them beyond rehabilitation. Incapable of being productive members of society, they are a permanent danger to its inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> Considered inhuman, drug users thus pose an existential threat to those around them. The only solution for Duterte is to exterminate them.

Why this ferocious obsession with the *shabu* addict especially in impoverished areas? Why does he desire their death?

Part of the answer may have something to do with Duterte’s attraction to the inhuman qualities he associates with drug addicts. Induced by drug use, their inhumanity is thought to manifest itself in their criminality. Breaking the laws and disrespecting social conventions, it is as if they recognize no other authority except their own. They seem, then, to be supremely sovereign. If they pose a danger, it is because they know no limits to their

power for destruction. In addressing addicts, Duterte is at once repelled and attracted to this inhuman power and its claims to absolute sovereignty. It is as if he wants to claim that power for himself, often sounding like the criminals he seeks to pursue. For example, in one interview, in response to a question about his involvement with death squads in Davao City, he says, “Am I the death squad? That is true.”<sup>7</sup> And when asked about the death toll while he was mayor of Davao, he responds: “They said I killed 700? They miscalculated. It was 1,700.”<sup>8</sup> Sounding like a gangster himself, he threatens to execute addicts: “All of you who are into drugs, you sons of bitches, I will really kill you. I have no patience. I have no middle ground.”<sup>9</sup>

To be inhuman is to possess a dangerous power that transcends law and life itself. It would not be too far fetched to say that such a power, reaching beyond life, has to do with its access to death. Addicts, in Duterte’s view, are driven only to satisfy their need for drugs, to the point of killing for it. Unable to check their desire, they reject normal social relations to the point of not caring about life. The anti-social nature associated with the addict brings with it precisely that power that Duterte craves. He wants that power for himself.

Historically, States have executed criminals and in so doing claim the power of death over life in the name of justice. Usually, the State has recourse to the law and follows a judicial process. In Duterte’s case, the widespread practice of summary executions carried out by police and their paid assassins short-circuits this process. Official police policy referred to as “Operation Double Barrel,” states explicitly that the government is committed to a “drug clearing policy” that entails the “neutralization” and “negation” of “drug personalities nationwide.”<sup>10</sup> Extra-judicial killings—both the policy and the practice-

-thus seem like the direct translation of Duterte's murderous threats.<sup>11</sup> His rhetoric appears magical: he speaks and sure enough, one sees the effects of his words as multiple corpses nightly populate the streets. In killing them, Duterte can claim to control and channel their inhuman power. He can point to the corpses as proof that his plan is working. For example, in his remarks about an unusually large number of summary executions in August, 2017, he says, "*Yung namatay daw kanina sa Bulacan, 32, in a massive raid. Maganda 'yun. Makapatay lang tayo ng mga* another 32 everyday then maybe we can reduce what ails this country (The ones who died in Bulacan, 32, in a massive raid, that is beautiful. We could just kill another 32 everyday, then maybe we could reduce what ails this country)."<sup>12</sup>

He sees in the death of alleged addicts something aesthetically pleasing. Their extermination is "good and beautiful" (*maganda*). Seeing the death of the inhuman addict, he imagines not only neutralizing their power, but also absorbing it. With each death, he becomes more assured of his power to access that which is beyond life. His sovereignty is reassured by the death of those whom he thinks have access to a greater power. Duterte thus appropriates the very excess he attributes to addicts. Indeed, his own admission of being addicted at some point to a powerful opioid, fentanyl, makes his connection to addicts as imaginative as it is real.<sup>13</sup> The latter have what he wishes to monopolize: an inhuman and uncanny ability to overcome all limitations of the social and the political. We might say that he is addicted to the notion of addiction and the kind of anti-social and inhuman power he sees in it—a kind of power with which to transcend and dominate the human and the social. In this sense, Duterte sees the world through the lens of his enemies.<sup>14</sup>

One way to understand Duterte's rise to power is to situate it within the history of Philippine state-formation seen as an elaboration of a process of counter-insurgency. This means that the state is founded not only on its repression of those it deems subversive; it also depends on the active collaboration of its citizens to carry out this repression. In this sense, counter-insurgency is predicated on the simultaneous workings of bio- and necro-power. The post-colonial Philippine state has been the heir of a legacy of colonial counter-insurgency dating back from the later Spanish and United States colonial period. This counter-insurgent style of governing is founded on the state's ability to confront as much as accommodate insurgent forces that have historically challenged its authority: peasant groups, labor unions, Communists, Moro secessionists and a variety of major and minor criminals located inside and outside of official circles--often at the same time. Such insurgents are also major agents in the gray economies of smuggling, gun-running, kidnap-for-ransom, human- and drug-trafficking, illegal gambling and many other forms of racketeering, allowing them to influence if not capture various parts of the state. As many others have pointed out, the political economy of state formation in the Philippines—and much of Southeast Asia—cannot be understood apart from the role of insurgent figures and their illicit economies in the production and operation of the state apparatus and the legal economy on both the local and national level.<sup>15</sup>

In Duterte's Philippines, the drug addict currently occupies the position of the most dangerous insurgent, thanks in large part to the tendentious hyper-inflation of the numbers of drug users by the president and the police.<sup>16</sup> It is not surprising then that just as Duterte has sought to coopt the communists and the Moro rebels, he also seeks to tap into the insurgent energy of drug addicts. We can see something of this attempt to appropriate the

addict's perspective in his long, improvised speeches.<sup>17</sup> Obsessed with exterminating drug users, he mirrors, if not covets, the very inhuman power he attributes to them. And the only way he can extract this power is by killing them. The “beauty and goodness” of murder is that it brings him closer to the very thing he abhors yet intensely desires.

From this perspective, addicts are not merely the “living dead” who need to be killed again and again. As insurgents who live inside society but who seek to destroy it, they come close to being what Foucault describes as “barbarians.” And in coveting their power over life and death, Duterte himself becomes a kind of barbarian. What does this mean?

In his lectures entitled, *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault retraces the emergence of the figure of the barbarian in French historiography from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century with reference to the Germanic tribes that swept through Western Europe with the fall of the Roman Empire. What made such barbarians so compelling, according to Foucault, was their peculiar relationship to freedom. “The freedom of these [Germanic] warriors is not the freedom of tolerance and equality for all; it is a freedom that can be exercised only through domination. Far from being a freedom based upon respect, it is, in other words, a freedom based upon ferocity... from the Latin word *ferox*: "proud, intrepid, haughty, cruel.”<sup>18</sup>

The barbarian is thus the very negation of the liberal subject. Unbound to social contracts that can only limit his liberty, the barbarian sees his freedom primarily in terms of his ability to take away the freedom of others. Rather than engage in productive labor or the accumulation of property, the barbarian turns to plunder, forcing everyone else to be at his service. Contemptuous of any civilization that would tame and domesticate his

rights, the barbarian's ideal government is "necessarily a military" one, "not one that is based upon the contracts and transfer of civil rights.... Full of arrogance, [the barbarian] has to be inhuman, precisely because he is not the man of nature and exchange; he is the man of history, the man of pillage and fires, he is the man of domination."<sup>19</sup>

Barbarism thus lies at the foundation of both authoritarianism *and* insurgency. Foucault's remarks on the genealogy of barbarism sheds light, however partial and oblique, on Duterte's necro-politics—his fascination with the power of the inhuman to deliver death. He arrives not as an exception, but as one who claims to be so—as one who will vanquish the putative enemies of the people by throwing away the cumbersome scales of Lady Justice and resorting instead to its swift and unforgiving sword. Duterte's barbarian notion of justice brings me to my second example dealing specifically with the President's endless war on drugs.

### 3. "Tokhang": Public Torture and Necro-Economy

In his 1973 College de France lectures gathered in the volume, *The Punitive Society*,<sup>20</sup> and two years later in his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault talks about the major forms of "punitive tactics" used in France and other places in Western Europe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of these included the marking of the body of the condemned, "imposing on it a symbolic stain on his name," meant to "humiliate his character, damage his status...In this system, the infraction is no longer something to be redressed ...but rather something to be emphasized [and]... fixed in a sort of monument, even if it is a scar, an amputation, or something involving shame or infamy... [T]he visible or social body must be a blazon of the penalties, and this blazon refers to two

things: one the one hand, to the offense, of which it has to be the visible and immediately recognizable trace;...and on the other hand, to the power that imposed the penalty and that, with this penalty, has left the mark of its sovereignty on the tortured body. It is not just the offense that is visible on the scar or the amputation, it is the sovereign.”<sup>21</sup>

Anyone familiar with the last two years of the war on drugs will immediately recognize in this punitive tactic the workings of operation *Tokhang*, the process by which suspected drug users are placed on a list, visited by the police and subsequently gunned down -- their corpses left on the streets as gruesome reminders of their putative crime and as the fearsome signs of the sovereign’s power. As hallmarks of the drug war, extra-judicial killings entail a conversion of sorts: the impoverished *shabu* addict is converted from citizen to social enemy and hence an absolute menace to society. Beyond cure or rehabilitation, it is bereft of rights. Killing the addict is a form of public torture that marks him for definitive social exclusion. But by being killed and put on display, the corpse is recruited for another equally important task: as a medium for conveying the power of the sovereign. To put it differently, the corpse is included by being excluded. Its death signals its crime at the same time that it memorializes the power of its killers. Extra-judicial killings are thus a kind of pedagogy meant to teach the living of the consequences of addiction and the fearsome consequences of offending the King. But as with all public torture, it is a vehicle for performing and intensifying the signs of the sovereign’s power.<sup>22</sup>

Foucault makes it a point of saying that, increasingly since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern states have tended to do away with the death penalty as a punitive strategy in favor of the rehabilitation and reform of the criminal. But in places like the United States,

this is patently not the case, as the death penalty continues to be practiced, and racialized imprisonment brings with it a permanent stigma and a kind of social death — the loss of voting rights, discrimination in the job market, and so on. In the Philippines, while the death penalty has been officially abolished, it continues to operate in the form of extra-judicial killings carried out by regular and private armies, death squads, vigilantes, and the police. The deaths that have resulted from Operation Tokhang ranging from a low of 4,500 to a high of 23,000 and counting, have a long history. They were preceded by the countless executions under the colonial regimes of Spain, the US, Japan, and all other post-colonial administrations. The gruesome display of the dismembered remains of enemy bodies was standard practice—see for example, the photographs of dead Filipino fighters during the Filipino American war, the corpses of *Sakdalistas* in the 1930s, or those of the Huks peasant and communist insurgents, the Muslim rebels and NPA fighters, from the 1950s to the present.

As a form of public torture and the death penalty by other means, Operation Tokhang continues the ritual of the ancient penalty of torturing and killing bodies of offenders, writing on them the nature of their guilt while staging the power of those who killed them. As I alluded to earlier, the killings are carefully planned, sustained by a technology of surveillance. Such a technology includes, for example, the making of lists of so-called drug personalities. These lists are compiled by the local government units (LGUs) that include the barangay *porok* (area) leaders and their *tanods* or village security forces appointed by the local barangay captain. The *porok* leaders compile their lists on the basis of personal knowledge, unsolicited tips and rumors of suspected drug personalities. It is not clear how or even if these lists are vetted. Anecdotal evidence

suggests that a number of those put on the list are not even involved in drugs but are simply there to fill the quota. Such lists comprise the basic elements for organizing policing operations directed at specific people in the community. They are then a kind of order of battle that allows the police with the aid of vigilante squads to organize the killings of specific targets.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the list of drug personalities becomes an avenue for financial gain. As Sheila Coronal and others have amply documented, the police are given substantial bonuses for each kill they produce.<sup>24</sup> Vigilante squads riding in tandem on motorcycles are also outsourced and paid handsomely to help the police, some of whom moonlight as assassins themselves. Billions of pesos have been set aside by Congress for the Presidential and Police intelligence funds that can be spent at each agency's discretion with no accountability and one can surmise that these funds provide the financial

wherewithal for the kill bonuses.<sup>25</sup>

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**Profiting from the drug war**

Types of Police Activity	Typical Amounts
Extortion from drug suspects before or during arrests or while under detention.	PhP 5,000–15,000 from poor victims to as much as PhP 1 million from rich victims
Theft of victims' belongings during arrests, or during entrapment operations where drug suspects are killed	This can include cash or property worth hundreds of thousands of pesos as in the Jee Ick-Joo case; may include small amounts of cash, cellphones, jewelry, and other belongings of poor victims
Ransom demands after the abduction of so-called drug suspects, known as "tokhang for ransom"	Amounts can range from a few hundred thousand pesos to P5 million as in the Jee case
Fees or rewards paid to policemen for every person killed	PhP 5,000–20,000 for small-time drug offenders
Bonuses for police officers paid for by civilian officials	Hundreds of thousand pesos
Commissions from funeral parlors	Up to PhP 10,000 for every dead body referred

**Source:** Compiled by the author from interviews, news articles, and human rights reports

Figure 1: A menu of financial incentives for killing "drug personalities." From Sheila Coronel, "Murder as Enterprise: Police Profiteering in Duterte's Drug War," Nicole Curato, ed. *The Duterte Reader*, Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2017, 174.

Alongside the financialization of the killings is the commodification of the corpses themselves. Cops get paid commissions by funeral parlors—some of which they themselves own—for each dead body they call in. Funerals have seen a boom in their business. In the absence of a city morgue, all the dead are delivered to privately owned

funeral homes where they are processed and cleaned. Each body can cost as much as 50,000 pesos to claim. To the families of the dead, the majority of whom are poor, this is a mind-boggling sum. To raise it, they must go in debt, but more commonly they hold gambling sessions during wakes where, of course, the house gets its cut. Hence, wakes no longer follow a set time period—nine days of viewing, as was the custom. Now, burials occur whenever enough money has been raised to cover expenses.<sup>26</sup> In some instances, funeral parlors seek to recover the cost of processing bodies by renting out the corpses to households in order to give the latter legal cover to hold gambling sessions inasmuch the law allows for gambling in the case of funeral wakes.<sup>27</sup> What we see then are the workings of necro-power, understood to be neither murder nor sacrifice, accompanied by a necro-economy that profits from the accumulation and circulation of corpses. To paraphrase Marx, under capitalism, circulation squeezes money from every pore, including that of the corpse.<sup>28</sup> Thanks to the drug war and its lists, the dead are re-animated into labor power for the pursuit of profit.

The President himself is fond of brandishing such lists that contain the names not just of low-level dealers and addicts but also suspected local officials, such as mayors. While the poor addicts are killed, the more politically and financially well-off are rarely touched, except for a few spectacular cases, in order to set an example. For the most part, the mayors and governors, including police officials who are supposedly on the list, are left off and continue to be protected. But the fact remains that the drug lists are important instruments of intimidation. And the power of such lists comes from the fact that while their existence is widely acknowledged as a kind of public secret, their contents remain largely unknown. No one knows for sure who are on the lists, for even those who compile

them, the barangay tanods, could find themselves on it. Furthermore, there is no definitive way one can get oneself off them even if one is found out to be innocent.

To be on the drug list is thus to be guilty regardless of one's innocence. It is to live in constant fear that one's time might be coming up. The lists thus derive their power not only from their panoptic nature—they allow the police to see you without you being able to see them—but also from the way they re-organize temporality. Put on the list, one can only be headed not for redemption or rehabilitation, but for a final reckoning. The seeming arbitrariness by which these lists are put together creates a climate of suspicion in the affected communities. As the anthropologists Anna Warburg, Steffen Jensen and Karl Happal have pointed out in their fieldwork in a barangay of the city of Caloocan, such lists make for an “illegible terrain of violence.” Triggering police operations and vigilante attacks that litter the street with corpses, people are left with a profound sense of uncertainty as to the who will be targeted next, when and by whom. For such communities, the future holds no promise, only a continuous feeling of unease and dread. In this way, necro-power and the necro-economy it enables are produced and productive of fear as the pervasive affect and mode of control in the most afflicted barangays.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, the current practice of EJKs as realized through the tactics of Tokhang are not a retrograde throwback to some feudal past, but part of a post-EDSA style of governing that has emerged since the overthrow of Marcos. It thrives in a setting where the legal system is profoundly politicized, where courts are backed up, and where judges as well as police are badly paid amid a largely impoverished population. And given the financial incentives that accompany the killings, one can see how EJKs work as part of a necro-economy that intensifies the necro-power of the state.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, we can think of

extra-judicial killings, as its name implies, as a kind of violent, arbitrary form of justice in a place where justice is often delayed and diverted. Setting aside the uncertain and time-consuming process of court trials and the difficult task of protecting human rights, EJKs insist on a different temporal and moral order, one where punishment is swift, visible, and unassailable. It is of course a justice that is steeped in injustice, one that is characteristic of the drug war and perhaps all wars.

#### *4. The Drug War as Civil War*

This brings me to my third example of what might be possible when thinking about the Philippines alongside Foucault: the matter of war itself. The tradition of liberal democracy in the Philippines, like that in much of the West, is fragile and daily upended. One of the most problematic aspects of liberal democracy is the notion that war and peace are two separate and distinguishable moments. Foucault has on many occasions pointed out the error of this way of thinking. War is not something that stops once peace is established. Neither is war something that happens “out there,” beyond the boundaries of society. It does not end when everyone decides to enter into a social contract and give up part of its liberty to a representative King or representative body who can then make laws and adjudicate conflicts. Peace is not the natural state that succeeds war whereby laws, guided by norms and rights, are administered beyond politics. For Foucault, there is nothing beyond the political. Invoking Clausewitz (contra Hobbes and Locke), Foucault argues that war is politics by other means, and politics is war by other means. Wherever you have power relations, you have inequalities, oppressions and struggles that at times explode into armed uprisings and at other times manifest themselves in electoral

campaigns, polemical tracts, social movements, dictatorships, coups, and the myriad varieties of insubordinations. In short, inasmuch as social relations are constituted by variegated webs of power relations alongside the resistances they call forth, they always take on a war-like nature.<sup>31</sup>

For Foucault, unlike Marx, the war-like relations that pervade and infuse social relations are not simply based on class differences. Rather, class war is subsumed into a larger civil war. Whereas class war imagines society as riven by a death struggle between those who own the means of production and those whose only possession is their labor power, the concept of civil war stresses the relational, contingent nature of power relations. In civil wars, what we see are intra-class linkages and alliances. Often, these unfold as a series of factional rifts where rich and poor, middle class and working class, are allied against other similarly constructed factions reckoned less along ideological lines as on the axis of dynastic or familial affiliations. We see this, for example, in the cross-class alliances among the fiercest supporters of the President, the Duterte Die-Hard Supporters, or DDS—a play on the Davao Death Squads that Duterte himself allegedly authorized. The DDS are the self-proclaimed “children” of “*Tatay*” or Daddy Duterte and are made up of the aspirational middle class, especially Overseas Filipino workers, old as well as new oligarchs, supporters and family members of previous Presidents. They include working classes and *lumpens* from the police to slum dwellers among whom come the great majority of victims in the drug war. Such alliances are organized hierarchically: as dispersed and mobile clusters of patron-client ties and fungible personality cults that cultivate among its members aspirations of upward mobility, as well as fears of becoming downwardly mobile. Such hopes and fears in turn tend to generate

intense fantasies of patriarchal order and dreams of an authoritarian utopia with which to protect its members from real or imagined threats.<sup>32</sup>

Such threats are figured as social enemies. As Foucault points out—and so, by the way, does Marx—in civil wars, class enemies are supplanted by social enemies: those who pose an existential threat to society and who can come from any class: the monstrous dictator and his cannibalistic wife, for example, or the humanoid drug addict, the immoral female senator, and more recently, the corrupt female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and so on. In this context, we can think of EDSAs I and II as examples of civil war. So, too, with certain qualifications, were the Revolution of 1896, the Filipino-American war and the war against Japan.<sup>33</sup> All of these were less class wars as civil wars pitting Filipinos against other Filipinos from different classes who either resisted against, or collaborated with, the colonial rulers.

Duterte, of course, learned his political chops while serving as mayor of a highly factionalized Davao where civil war was the norm rather than the exception. Prior to being mayor, he was a law student in San Beda College where, as with all law schools, the hyper-masculine culture of fraternities shaped Duterte's violent political outlook. Fraternities operate like gangs where neophytes are brutally initiated and members taught absolute obedience to their masters and aspire to be absolute masters themselves through a combination of coercion and mutual aid.<sup>34</sup> As mayor of Davao, Duterte sought to coopt the deadliest forces unleashed by Pres. Cory Aquino's vicious anti-communist campaign—the death squads—as well as former members of the New People's Army. Integrating these armed groups into the local police force, Duterte controlled and commanded an impressive killing machine that carried out his bidding, clearing Davao of

both its *lumpen* criminal elements (though not its largest drug dealers and smugglers), including homeless children, political foes and the occasional hostile journalist. Thanks to this war against crime and drugs, Davao gained a reputation, however questionable, for safety and security, but one predicated on fear.<sup>35</sup>

Since becoming president in 2016, Duterte has sought to nationalize his style of governing. While summary killings have been the most dramatic tactic in Duterte's civil war, it is closely related to something else that I brought up at the beginning of this essay: his style of humor, especially his use of obscenities. In the last section of this essay, I want to ask: how does humor serve as a vital weapon in the barbarian justice and the endless civil war he is engaged in?

##### *5. The Authoritarian Trickster*

Duterte is known among his supporters as “the Punisher.” But his punitive approach to governing includes telling jokes that disarm his audiences, often reducing them to laughter, as he names and shames his critics—often foreign and female. Those critical of Duterte have called him out on his use of obscenities and misogynistic remarks. But insofar as Duterte is concerned, his sexual banter is yet another way of asserting his sovereignty. It is for him an enactment of his freedom from the constraints of responsibility and the norms of decency. Unrestrained, he takes great delight in spewing profanities. He recounts bawdy stories about masturbation, jokes about rape, publicly kissing women and admiring their anatomy, making references to vaginal odor, and much more.<sup>36</sup> In so doing, he has shown that he will not be bound by the norms of decency, or *delicadeza*, as his political opponents insist, just as he refuses to abide by the

laws of due process and the protection of human rights. Duterte, to put it crudely, doesn't give a fuck and has long run out of fucks to give. To quote him directly: “‘*Putang ina ninyo* (Motherfuckers!)’”<sup>37</sup>

For the President then, part of his executive privilege includes the freedom to take pleasure in joking and shaming, turning these into important weapons. That he manages to hit his targets is indicated by the outrage he stirs among his opponents and the endearment he generates from his supporters. Breaking from protocols of respectability endows Duterte with a rebellious quality in the eyes of the DDS. It confirms to them that he is unlike anyone from previous administrations. As a kind of “bad boy” who commands the room with his menacing charm, his flurry of invectives and sexual innuendos, Duterte seems excessive. It is precisely this excess that, as I alluded to earlier, makes him analogous to the drug addict that he simultaneously despises and envies for its absolute sovereignty. By behaving irresponsibly, he places himself beyond convention and law, endowing himself with power over those who are otherwise obligated to defer to his authority. In his presence, they must observe proper behavior and attend to his authority while he himself seems to flaunt every rule.

Herein lies one explanation for Duterte's continuing popularity, at least if the polls are to be believed. To his supporters, his coarse language and bawdy humor resist what has been proscribed by establishment elites. They relish his irreverence, identifying with his insurgent energy to upset conventions. Indeed, not only does he escape unscathed, his aura seems to be magnified as he becomes even more emboldened with every insult and invective. His insults directed at the Catholic Church—pointing out the corruption and perversion of the clergy, for example—is often followed by hilarious

retellings of the sexual abuse he suffered as a youth literally in the hands of an American Jesuit in Davao. For rather than paint himself as a victim, Duterte turns the story of abuse—where as a youth he was forced to submit to the priest’s hand jobs—into a vehicle for ridiculing confession, associating the ritual with masturbation.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Duterte has projected an image of himself as both a homophobe and a homophile. During the presidential campaign of 2016, he derided his opponent, Mar Roxas’s masculinity, implying that he was too gay to be president. However, he also surrounded himself with LGBTQ supporters. At one point in the campaign, he had a remarkable interview on the TV show of the most popular trans entertainer in the country, Vice Ganda, where he lost no time flirting with her and confided that as a young man he thought he could’ve been gay.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, his administration has a number of visibly queer folks who count themselves as his most ardent supporters such as Mocha Uson (and her sidekick, Drew Olivar), RJ Nieto and Sass Sassot, while a considerable number of those who serve in his social media army trolling critics are themselves gay.<sup>40</sup>

Put differently, when Duterte jokes and cusses, he engages in a form of extended, recurring dissipation. He allows his desires to surface and his impulses to take over. Breaking taboos, he surrenders to what is usually forbidden—something that children are wont to do. Indeed, he performs a kind of infantile regression, lashing out at his enemies and shaming them with allusions to their sexuality. Listening to his speeches—which, when delivered in front of local audiences, usually begin with the act of throwing away his prepared speech and appearing to speak off the cuff—one is plunged into shifting linguistic registers, polemical tirades, abrupt beginnings and endings. In his speeches, he often sounds like someone who is intoxicated by his ability to act out his intoxication.<sup>41</sup>

Foucault writes about what he calls the two great “illegalities” that characterized the advent of the modern period and that threatened the newly dominant bourgeoisie in Europe: depredations and dissipations.<sup>42</sup> The first was easier to police. Depredations consisting of such acts as piracy, smuggling, and various other forms of property theft require stealth, calculation, and circuits of distribution: in short, an organized economy and a political rationality. For this reason, depredations were easily codified as crimes by the 19thC, while the bourgeoisie carved out all sorts of exceptions that would legalize their own predatory acts.

Dissipation, however, was a different matter. It was about indulging in excess and irrationality through drunkenness, intoxication and forbidden sexual relations. It also meant engaging in “festivities,” taking pleasure in games of chance, and various other activities that could not be transformed into profit. The dissipator was regarded as lazy, one who wasted time, or better yet kept time to him or herself. This hoarding and wasting of time violated the capitalist demand that one surrender to the disciplinary demands of production that meant, above all, converting the time of life into the time of profit. By refusing to give in to the tyranny of clock and calendar, dissipators came across as dangerous elements threatening the order of things. They were to be sequestered and trained—for example in the army, in schools, in prisons, and in factories—where their bodies could be re-tooled from sites of pleasure into repositories of labor power.<sup>43</sup>

Duterte, in taking on the role of the dissipator-in-chief, thumbs his nose at these bourgeois demands. He will not be disciplined. Instead, he becomes a sort of trickster figure who entertains by veiling his aggression with jokes and obscenities. As a trickster, Duterte plays the role of the “*pusong*,” a staple figure in traditional *komedya* and

folktales. It is the pusong who makes fun of those in power while managing through deceit or humor to gain power himself. As the anthropologists Donn and Harriet Hart point out, the pusong is a truly pan-Philippine character, with variations of folk tales spread all over the archipelago among Christian, Moro and indigenous peoples.<sup>44</sup> In their survey of the various pusong tales in both urban and rural settings, they observe that he—for the pusong is almost always a young male—is characterized by a set of overlapping traits. More popularly known as Juan Pusong or Juan Tamad, he is at once “tricky, arrogant, and mischievous in addition to being a braggart, liar, knave and arrogant and a rogue....He is always lazy and indolent...[while being] shrewd, witty and immoral... Other stories point out the pusong's criminality, deceitfulness, bravery, compassion, and possession of miraculous powers.” In nearly all the tales, the he succeeds in overcoming obstacles and winning rewards such as “marrying the princess (or rich girl), [gaining] wealth, [having] illicit sexual intercourse, gaining prestige, or merely the pleasure of defeating his opponent...He, like other tricksters, also has his helpful companions or stooges and often appears as a... child in his preoccupation with the humor of elemental incongruities, scatology, and cruelty.”<sup>45</sup>

It is the pusong that most likely informs other variants of the trickster figure such as the Visayan “*bugoy*”—the idler and vagrant—associated with the lumpen or *tambay*—who literally sees things from below. Sitting on his bum at the sari-sari store, he calls out the pretensions to respectability of those on top. In assuming, or being attributed by his followers the role of the trickster, Duterte converts dissipation into an aspect of his authority even as he orders the arrest and prosecution of others who would dare muscle into his monopoly of dissipation such addicts and *tambays*.<sup>46</sup> His dissipatory behavior has

an anticipatory effect: he is able to criticize the authority of anyone who would dare criticize his authority. He steals, as it were, the comedic resources of his opponents, preempting their playfulness while commanding the laughter of his supporters. These supporters, in turn, are drawn to Duterte's style of political engagement, emulating it as a tactic for dealing with his critics by reducing the latter to caricatures ripe for vicious attacks. From cruel stereotyping, it is a small step to declaring critics as social enemies.

Here, then, are the two aspects of Rodrigo Duterte's governing style. He is the sovereign who decides on the exception, setting aside law and putting certain groups to death. But he is also the trickster who, in disarming his critics, endears himself to his supporters as a dissipator, one whose performative excess gives expression to what is at once forbidden and desired. In the first case, he recruits the bodies of dead addicts into signs of his fearsome authority that brooks no limits. In the second case, he transforms himself into the embodiment of the trickster who rejoices in his irreverence and irresponsibility. He thereby conjures the illusion of evading the time of capitalist capture and actively embraces the charges of stupidity leveled by his critics—for example, by introducing his cabinet members as all class valedictorians while he was simply a C student--all the while knowing that he's the one who has outsmarted them all.

The tactical advantage that Duterte enjoys, at least for the moment, comes precisely from his ability to craft what appears to be an impossible image: one that is both the vengeful sovereign *and* the irascible trickster. In doing so, he assuages the fears of precarity and displacement among his supporters, promising them security and laughter. Whether newly rich, aspiring middle classes, overseas contract workers or working poor, they find themselves daily burdened by the pressures and humiliations brought about by

the demand for discipline and conformity in the neoliberal state, whether in the Philippines or abroad. Duterte's double image—what I'm tempted to call, stealing a term from Ernst Kantorowicz great book on medieval kingship, as “The Datu's Two Bodies”<sup>47</sup> -- thus speaks to the anxieties of his supporters who find themselves unable to escape from the temporal demands of capital even as they seek security from those now deemed by Duterte to be their social enemies.

It is thus the figure of the authoritarian trickster—one that he had crafted earlier while mayor for over two decades in Davao--that sutures the wide gap between the president's failure in the realm of the bio-political and his obsession with the necro-political. Reigning under the conditions of neo-liberal precarity that defines the existential conditions of nearly everyone in the country and the diaspora, he sets himself apart from the earlier strongmen in the Philippines, for example, Manuel Quezon and Ferdinand Marcos. Quezon and Marcos were anxious to project their sense of masculine vigor in the way they appeared and spoke. They dressed impeccably in formal barong or tailored suits and spoke in stentorian sentences, meticulously crafted and ponderously pronounced. Under late colonial and Cold War liberal conditions, they could still capitalize on bourgeois conventions of respectability to hide from view the more brutal practices of their government. For this reason, unlike Duterte who boasts of the women he has had, Quezon and Marcos were mostly discrete, and the latter was obviously embarrassed by the revelation of an audiotape of his sexual romps with American actress Dovie Beams in 1971.

With Duterte, there is no shame, only a kind of careless pride in reveling in his desires. Such carelessness is understood by his followers as the explicit permission to

enjoy and engage in the verbal torture and humiliation of their enemies. For them, it signals Duterte's emancipation from colonial and bourgeois conventions of civility. However, this liberation is a ruse insofar as he seeks to govern by fear. With the help of his enablers ranging from the police to the cabinet, from a compliant Supreme Court to his army of trolls, from the legislature to the Marcoses to the legions of ardent supporters, he is able to consolidate his hold and pursue his civil war against all those who oppose him. For Duterte's two bodies face both ways, as perhaps all sovereigns always have: towards life that he animates with derisive laughter, and towards death that he commands with unremitting fear.

How to reckon with this double power, this absolute sovereignty, this comedic tyranny? How to oppose his depredations and dissipations? What are the strategies and tactics available for those who find themselves consigned to the position of the social enemy? These are questions best answered, no doubt, in another essay.

*Coda.*

Could the figure of the authoritarian trickster, one who dominates both laughter and death, be used to think about other "strongmen" figures today and in recent history? One thinks, most obviously, of President Donald Trump whose rise to power is intimately linked not to public service but to the hospitality and entertainment industry, particularly his chain of Trump Towers and the television reality show "The Apprentice." Rather than make people laugh, he projected in that show a kind of decisive, and often dour, personality. In his campaign rallies, however, he engages in a whole range of what we might think of as "tricksterisms": making fun of the disabled, hurling elaborate threats at

the media, demeaning women and people of color with racist and sexist language, engaging in wild conspiracy theories, obsessively insulting political enemies and even allies who fail to do his bidding—all to the applause and laughter of his audience. Charged up by the crowd, he performs like a man deranged, gesticulating wildly and bellowing great gusts of words that often barely make sense. In other words, he behaves, as with Duterte, like a man intoxicated with his ability to seem intoxicated, beyond the control of polite conventions. Trump’s excessiveness, calculated, no doubt, to charge up his base, is in many ways what “entertainment” has come to mean in the United States. In this connection, it is not strange that Trump was a big fan of wrestling—staged matches preceded by incessant and interminable insults exchanged between competitors to delight the crowd. Much of popular entertainment has thus come to mean the intensification of spectacle, the ramping up of sensation and the trafficking in affect at the expense of what use to pass for rational discourse and other modes of taking pleasure.

Often lazily referred to as “populism,” the popular roots of Trump’s version of tricksterism may very well lie in the long history of blackface minstrelsy. The scholarship on what some have referred to as the first mass entertainment medium in North America might help reconstruct this genealogy. In the works of such folks as David Roediger, Eric Lott, Michael Rogin and Nicholas Sammond, for instance, the racist and sexist tropes of blackface minstrelsy are related to white working class anxieties as well as desires for black bodies: wanting to be like *and* unlike them at the same time.<sup>48</sup> Blackface minstrelsy was also a key media for addressing immigrant, especially Jewish and Irish, fears of exclusion and the wish for assimilation. The act of putting on black cork provided a way for acting out the “love” for and “theft” of black labor and culture, using these as ways of

simultaneously accumulating material and cultural capital on the one hand and carving out a place in the social hierarchy on the other. Miming the degraded yet vibrant bodies of slaves, blackface signified that one had the power to take on yet set aside blackness, that one was in possession of one's labor rather than merely enslaved to capital, and that one could mock and escape the effete, feminine demands of bourgeois respectability by the nineteenth century. Small wonder that everyone from Abraham Lincoln to Mark Twain to Walt Disney loved blackface minstrelsy. It made it possible to appear at once rebellious and hilarious, mastering social death while inducing hilarity and always at the expense of those below the social hierarchy.

Put another way, putting on black disguise and often appearing in female drag allowed white male performers to act out the reversal of racial, gendered and class norms, seeking to play out the popular desire to appropriate both the labor *and* capital as well as the productive *and* reproductive powers that lay in the bodies of slaves. At the same time, such performances allowed both actors and audience to imaginatively distance themselves in the very act of owning the abject figures they ridiculed and admired. Indeed, blackface minstrelsy in projecting and seeking to master the unresolved legacy of slavery at the foundations of white identity continues to thrive even without the use of burnt cork. It does so through the deadly mimicry of the cultural repertoire of Black, as well as Asian, Native American and Latinx peoples.<sup>49</sup> As one kind of North American trickster practice among those on top or among those who aspire towards its ranks, racial minstrelsy is a resilient and enduring form of popular entertainment that arguably informs Donald Trump's public performances and political appeal. As President, he has not only re-authorized minstrelsy's violent laughter; he has also used its capacity to obscure real

historical relations by means of a false sense of historical clarity about what W.E.B. Dubois famously called the “wages of whiteness.” Authoritarian tricksterism seems, from this perspective, like the appropriate political aesthetic to so-called fake news in the spread of the new fascism.

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Figure 2: campaign sticker, 2016: “Duterte: In Batangas, we want brains in the balls and balls in the brains.”

### *Notes*

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the College de France, 1978-79*, trans. by Graham Burchell, New York: Picador, 2010; and *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, New York: Vintage Reprints, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> See especially the final chapter of Foucault’s *Society Must Be Defended, Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*, translated by Graham Burchell, New York: Picador, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* (2003) 15 (1): 11-40.

<sup>4</sup> Republic of the Philippines, Presidential Communication and Operation Office, “Speech of Rodrigo Roa Duterte During the Inauguration of the Northern Mindanao Wellness and Reintegraton Center,” Aug. 4, 2018, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/presidential->

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[speech/speech-of-president-rodrido-roa-duterte-during-the-inauguration-of-northern-mindanao-wellness-and-reintegration-center/](#)

<sup>5</sup> Marlon Ramos, “Junkies Are Not Humans,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Aug. 28, 2016, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/810395/junkies-are-not-humans>  
See also Gideon Lasco, “Just How Big is the Drug Problem in the Philippines Anyway?” *The Conversation*, Oct. 13, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/just-how-big-is-the-drug-problem-in-the-philippines-anyway-66640>

<sup>6</sup> Leila B. Salaverria, “Duterte Insists Shabu Can Cause Brain Damage,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 10, 2017, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/895885/duterte-insists-shabu-can-cause-brain-damage>

<sup>7</sup> Karlos Manlupig, “Duterte: ‘Am I the Death Squad? True,’” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 26, 2015, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/693510/duterte-am-i-the-death-squad-true>

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch, “License to Kill: Philippine Police Killings in Duterte’s War on Drugs,” March 2, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/02/license-kill/philippine-police-killings-dutertes-war-drugs>

<sup>9</sup> Nash Jenkins, “Why Did the Philippines Just Elect a Guy Who Jokes About Rape?” *Time Magazine*, May 9, 2016, <http://time.com/4324073/rodrido-duterte-philippines-president-why-elected/>

<sup>10</sup> Republic of the Philippines, National Police Commission, Command Memorandum Circular NO. 16 – 2016, PNP Anti-illegal Drugs Campaign—Project ‘Double Barrel’,” Camp Crame, Quezon City, July 1, 2016, 1-2, <https://didm.pnp.gov.ph/Command%20Memorandum%20Circulars/CMC%202016-16%20PNP%20ANTI-ILLEGAL%20DRUGS%20CAMPAIGN%20PLAN%20%E2%80%93%20PROJECT%20DOUBLE%20BARREL.pdf>

As of this writing, the constitutionality of this official policy is being challenged by a group of civil rights lawyers in the Philippines before the Supreme Court precisely on the grounds that the “neutralization” and “negation” of drug personalities amount to a policy of summary killings, and thus to an officially-sanctioned violation of the human rights of suspects. See Edu Punay, “SC Tackles Drug War: Were Rights Violated?” *Philippine Star*, <http://www.philstar.com:8080/headlines/2017/11/22/1761341/sc-tackles-drug-war-were-rights-violated>

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed and at times hallucinatory report on the workings of police death squads in the drug war, see Clare Baldwin and Andrew C. Marshall, “How a Secretive Police Squad Racked up Kills in Duterte’s Drug War,” *Reuters*, Dec. 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/philippines-drugs-squad/>

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<sup>12</sup> **Nestor Corrales and Leila B. Salaverria**, “That’s good,’ says Duterte on killing of 32 Bulacan Druggies,” *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Aug. 16, 2017, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/923267/president-rodrigo-duterte-drug-war-bulacan-one-time-big-time-operation#ixzz4vM55yLRL>

<sup>13</sup> “Duterte on Fentanyl Use: Felt Like Cloud Nine,” *ABS-CBN News*, Feb. 10, 2017, <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/10/17/duterte-on-fentanyl-use-felt-like-cloud-nine>

However, in subsequent statements, he said he was only joking. But with Duterte, jokes are always tendentious and so contain an element of truth. See, Kevin Lui, “Rodrigo Duterte Says His Admission of Opioid Abuse Was a Joke but Concerns Remain,” *Time Magazine*, Dec. 18, 2016, <http://time.com/4605982/philippines-duterte-health-drug-fentanyl/>

<sup>14</sup> In this and other formulations of the politics of the inhuman especially as it exercises a fascinating hold on the State, I am indebted once again to the work of James T. Siegel, especially *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-Revolution Today*, Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998, and *Naming the Witch*, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> John Sidel, “The Usual Suspects: Nardong Putik, Don Pepe Osyon and Robin Hood,” in Vicente L. Rafael, ed., *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines and Colonial Vietnam*, Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Program Publications, 1999, 70-94; and *Capital, Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; Sheila Coronel, “Murder as Enterprise: Police Profiteering in Duterte’s War Against Drugs,” in Nicole Curato, ed. *The Duterte Reader: Critical Essays in Rodrigo Duterte’s Early Presidency*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017; Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoros, *State and Society in the Philippines*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2017; Francisco J. Lara, Jr., *Insurgents, Clans, and States: Political Legitimacy and Resurgent Conflict in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2014, and Francisco Lara, Jr. and Steven Schoofs, eds., *Out of the Shadows: Violent Conflict and the Real Economy of Mindanao*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 2016. See also the essays in Alfred McCoy, ed., *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009. For the U.S. colonial period, see Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, The United States and the Philippines*, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006; and Alfred McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency puts the number of drug-addicted people at about 1.8 million whereas Duterte claims without any proof that it is closer to between four to five million. For a summary of these contending claims, see Gideon Lasco, “Just How Big is the Drug Problem in the Philippines Anyway,” *The*

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Conversation, Oct. 13, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/just-how-big-is-the-drug-problem-in-the-philippines-anyway-66640>

<sup>17</sup> For the official repository of Duterte's speeches, see Republic of the Philippines, Presidential Communications Operation Office, Manila, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/archive-2016-president-rodrigo-roa-dutertes-speeches/>

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 148-49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 197-98.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Colege de France, 1972-1973*, translated by Graham Burchell, New York: Palgrave, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> There are numerous accounts of the drug war. Among others, see for example, the essays in Nicole Curato, ed., *The Duterte Reader*, QC: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press; Clare Baldwin, Andrew, R.C. Marshall, and Manuel Mogato, "Duterte's War," *Reuters*, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/section/philippines-drugs/>; "The Kill List," *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 2017, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/794598/kill-list-drugs-duterte>

Patrick Symmes, "President Duterte's List," *New York Times*, Jan. 10, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/magazine/president-dutertes-list.html>

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Karen Frances Eng, "A Harrowing Look at the War on Drugs in the Philippines," TED Fellows, Nov. 13, 2017, <https://fellowblog.ted.com/a-harrowing-look-at-the-war-on-drugs-in-the-philippines-b79b0796d3e4>

<sup>23</sup> See the stories under the file, "Duterte's Drug War," *Rappler*, <https://www.rappler.com/previous-articles?filterMeta=Duterte%20drugs%20list> "Local Officials are making 'kill lists' for Duterte's Drug War," *Vice News*, Oct. 10, 2017, [https://news.vice.com/en\\_us/article/j5dvn7/these-volunteers-are-making-kill-lists-for-dutertes-drug-war](https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/j5dvn7/these-volunteers-are-making-kill-lists-for-dutertes-drug-war)

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<sup>24</sup> Sheila Coronel, in Curato, ed., *The Duterte Reader*. See also Amnesty International, “‘If You Are Poor, You Are Killed’: Extrajudicial Executions In the Philippines ‘War on Drugs,’” <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/if-you-are-poor-you-are-killed-extrajudicial-executions-in-the-philippines-war-on-drugs/>

<sup>25</sup> “Are Duterte’s Multi-Million Peso Intel Funds Achieving Their Purpose?” *Rappler*, Dec. 18, 2017, <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/budget-watch/185617-duterte-confidential-intelligence-funds-2018-budget-part-1>  
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<sup>26</sup> “As Corpses Mount, Undertakes in the Philippines Struggle to Cope with Duterte’s Deadly Drug War,” *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 9, 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2053237/corpses-mount-undertakers-philippines-struggle-cope>  
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<sup>27</sup> See M. G. Martin, "Funeral Parlor Rented Murder Victim's Body to Fake Wake Operators," *Philippines Lifestyle News*, August 9, 2018, <http://philippineslifestyle.com/fake-wake-rented-murder-body/>

<sup>28</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, v. I, chapter 3, translated by Ben Fowkes, New York: Penguin Classics, 1992.

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<sup>30</sup> On necro-economy see Walter Montag, "Necro-economics: Adam Smith and Death in the Life of the Universal," in Campbell and Sitze, *Biopolitics: A Reader*, 193-214.

<sup>31</sup> See for instance Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, New York: Picador, 2008; *The Punitive Society*; and *Society Must be Defended, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, New York: Picador, 1973.

<sup>32</sup> See the essays by Teehankee; Abinales, Patricio and Claudio, Lisandro, in *The Duterte Reader*; Richard Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte: A Populist Revolt Against Elite Democracy*, Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> See the essays in JPaul S. Manzanilla and Caroline S. Hau, *Remembering/Rethinking EDSA*, Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing, 2016; Guerrero, *Luzon at War*; Alfred W. McCoy, "Politics by Other Means," in Alfred McCoy, editor, *Southeast Asia Under Japanese Occupation*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Southeast Asia Series, no. 22, 1980,

<sup>34</sup> Despite their importance in Philippine politics, there is as yet no book-length study of university fraternities. But as Patricio Abinales suggests, there is a strong connection between the workings of fraternities and gangs, especially in their hyper-masculine sociality, use of ritualized violence, and fierce demands for loyalty and obedience. See his 3-part series, "UP's Gangland Wars: A Historical Note," *Rappler*, June 27, 2015, <https://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/97510-up-gangland-wars-historical-note>

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<sup>36</sup> See for example the reports on his second SONA (State of the Nation Address), *GMA News*, July 24, 2017, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/619288/duterte-throws-vulgar-word-at-ndf-consultants-in-profanity-laden-sona/story/>; "At Yolanda Anniversary, Duterte Teases Robredo About Short Skirt," *Rappler*, Nov. 9, 2016, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/151751-duterte-teases-robredo-yolanda-anniversary>; Emily Rauhala, "Duterte Makes Lewd Threat to Female Rebels in the Philippines," *Washington Post*, Feb. 12, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/duterte-tells-philippine-soldiers-to-shoot-female-rebels-in-their-vaginas/2018/02/12/fd42c6ae-0fb0-11e8-827c-5150c6f3dc79\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.81aa0bd26b2a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/duterte-tells-philippine-soldiers-to-shoot-female-rebels-in-their-vaginas/2018/02/12/fd42c6ae-0fb0-11e8-827c-5150c6f3dc79_story.html?utm_term=.81aa0bd26b2a)

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<sup>42</sup> See Foucault, *The Punitive Society*, 186-200.

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<sup>44</sup> Donn V. and Harriet Hart, “Juan Pusong, the Filipino Trickster Revisited,” *Asian Studies*, 12:2-3, December 1974, 129-162.

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<sup>47</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957.

<sup>48</sup> See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, New Edition, London: Verso, 2007; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995; Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996; Nicholas Sammond, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation*, Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Minority cultural repertoires are in turn built on the complex and critical mimicry of dominant European and Afro-Caribbean-Latin American-Asian and other forms. Indeed, It would be interesting to read blackface minstrelsy alongside colonial and post-colonial forms of mimetic critique and expropriation and the corresponding tricksterisms that accompany such acts. See for example the classic work of Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York: Grove Press, revised edition, 2006; Homi Bhaba’s “Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, Spring 1984, 125-133; and the films of Spike Lee also come to mind. In my other works, I prefer “translation” (and its allied figures) to delineate mimicry and the subversive possibilities of tricksterism, to which Duterte and Trump would appear as accidental and perverse heirs.