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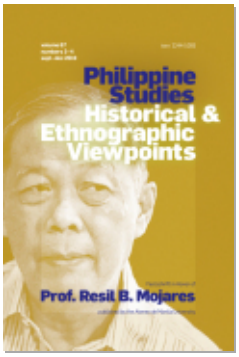

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Dovie Beams and Philippine Politics
A President's Scandalous Affair and First Lady Power on the Eve of Martial Law

This article explores the ramifications of American actress Dovie Beams's exposé of her affair with Ferdinand Marcos in 1970. The ensuing scandal provoked subversive laughter and provided ammunition to various anti-Marcos groups; significantly, some believed it enabled Imelda Marcos to accrue greater political power. The competing accounts of this affair raise questions about the politics of sex scandals and the role of First Ladies, but the turning point of Imelda's rise to power was the declaration of martial law. Still, the Dovie Beams affair is no mere footnote in history because what is often downgraded intellectually as personal, private, or intimate has an important bearing on how politics is conceived, delimited, and played out in real life.

KEYWORDS: DOVIE BEAMS • FERDINAND AND IMELDA MARCOS • CONJUGAL DICTATORSHIP • SCANDAL • WOMEN AND POLITICS

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On 11 November 1970, at a press conference held at the Bayview Hotel on Roxas Boulevard, American actress Dovie Beams[1] dropped a bombshell—a *bomba*, to use the popular Filipino term of the time for such a dramatic exposé—by revealing details of her twenty-three-month affair with Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos. As proof, Beams played portions of the tape recordings she had secretly made of the trysts. The ensuing scandal, with its titillating mix of sex and politics, blackmail and strong-arming, cat-and-mouse chases and conspiracy theories, provided fodder to a news-hungry, politicized press, ammunition to vocal and silent critics and opponents of the Marcos administration, and spectacle and object lessons to the general public. The airing of Marcos's bedroom antics—from the most intimate of conversations to the most intimate of acts—exposed him to public hilarity and humiliation, effectively chipping away at his own carefully crafted public persona as devoted husband and heroic statesman.

Equally important is the role that the scandal played in shaping a number of influential accounts of the Marcos dictatorship and its trajectory. Dovie Beams was far from being the only woman with whom Ferdinand Marcos had been sexually involved before and during his marriage to Imelda Romualdez. It is also true that, in the years that followed, there were far bigger bomba concerning Marcos's fake war medals; the torture and killing of civilians and dissidents; and the rapacity of the Marcos family, relatives, and cronies—bomba that proved destructive of the myth of the "smiling dictatorship." And yet the relationship between the putative strongman and the American B-movie actress has had a remarkable career of its own as a literary device (that is, a technique for driving plot and character that is used to engineer particular effects and interpretations) in narratives constructed around Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos as power couple and around the dictatorship they installed and inflicted on the Filipino people. Indeed, a number of Marcos analysts and biographers have viewed the scandal retrospectively as clearing the ground for the consolidation of the "conjugal dictatorship" that saw Imelda gaining economic concessions and accruing greater political power and leverage during the martial law era.

Interpretations of the scandal would serve as character studies not only of Dovie Beams and Ferdinand Marcos, but also of Imelda Marcos. Too, the scandal would expose the fabulation, myth making, and mendacity behind the gendered public images of the three principal players. Above all,

it would lay bare the dynamics and, just as crucially, figure in the unfolding plot of the First Couple's marital and political partnership and, in so doing, shed light on the controversies and debates surrounding the evolving role of women in politics and society and their fraught relationship with power.

Mina Roces (2000, 2) has argued cogently that postwar Philippine politics is a gendered system that accords official power to men and unofficial power to women in their capacities as wives, daughters, and mistresses. While manliness is encapsulated in images of potency and virility that valorize male (war) heroism and aggression, women draw on a varied range of role models, capitalizing on their beauty, religiosity, militancy, maternity, and moral guardianship (ibid., 3).

The Dovie Beams affair and its multiple, competing accounts and analyses raise broader questions about the ways in which sex scandals figure in Philippine politics. The affair sheds light as well on the changing realities and perceptions of women's status and authority in the postwar democratic and martial law eras. It may be a mere footnote to the study of the Marcos years specifically and Philippine history generally, but it reveals that what is often downgraded intellectually as personal, private, or intimate has an important bearing on how politics—and the contested place of women in politics—is conceived, delimited, and played out in everyday life.

In light of the Dovie Beams affair, this article seeks to complicate the dominant narrative constructed by a number of critical assessments of the Marcoses. It argues that Imelda's rise as a formidable politician owes more to two intersecting political phenomena than to the defining "trauma" of the Dovie Beams affair: the evolution of the First Lady's role in the postwar Philippines, which resonates with similar developments in the United States, and the dismantling of institutional checks and balances by the Marcos dictatorship, which removed the constraints on the power of the First Lady and made the conjugal dictatorship possible.

The Bare "Facts"

Although a number of supporting players were witnesses to, and enablers of, the affair between Dovie Beams and Ferdinand Marcos, only two people knew the full extent of what really went on in that relationship—and of these two only Beams provided over the years specific, albeit fragmentary, details of the affair. The most complete account (as of this writing) is the one provided by journalist Hermie Rotea's (1984) *Marcos' Lovey Dovie*, a

book on which initially Beams had collaborated and for which she even allowed two of the secret tape recordings she had made to be transcribed and published verbatim, but whose author she would later fall out with and sue for alleged theft of her diary, unfinished manuscript, photographs, and a tape recording (Mathews 1986).

The narratives, spun out of Beams's recollections and Rotea's (re)writing and retailed as biographies and historical accounts pertaining to the Marcoses and their time in power, need to be taken with a grain of salt. In any case, their usefulness as narratives does not necessarily reside in their truth-value or even credibility, but in their ability to advance various agenda, not least those of Beams and Rotea, but also those of journalists, biographers, scholars, pundits, and many others who would subsequently harness the Dovie Beams affair to their respective discussions (and, most important, postmortem dissections) of the Marcos era. The bare "facts" of the case do not preclude elements of embellishment, fabulation, or outright mendacity. Indeed, the persistence and staying power of the Dovie Beams affair in the popular imagination may have depended precisely on the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fabulation, between truth telling and lying. Bare "facts" do not simply feed the curiosity and stoke the fantasies of the public; rather, people engage in active meaning making, interpreting these "facts" and assigning them significance (or otherwise) in light of their own variegated concerns and interests.

Rotea (1984, 18, 70) relates that American producer Paul Mason had contacted Beams sometime in mid-December 1968 about a role in *Ang Mga Maharlika*, a US$3-million film based on Ferdinand Marcos's war exploits. Marcos crony Potenciano "Nanoy" Ilusorio, whom Marcos called "Calbo" (Rempel 1993, 23) and who was producing the film, arranged Beams's trip to Manila (Rotea 1984, 18). Beams flew to Manila on Christmas Day. Although registered at the Manila Hotel, she stayed at the Sulô Hotel (ibid., 19–20).

Beams was with a fellow American, Joyce Rees, when they met the man who was called "Fred." Rees might have fit better the profile of the classic Hollywood bombshell, with her blond hair and ample bosom (ibid., 19), but it was Beams who made a deep impression on Fred after telling him that she did not "date lawyers, doctors, or ministers" (ibid., 22) because "lawyers are dishonest" (ibid.) and, asked to sing something by way of an audition, belting out the song "I Want to Be Bad" (ibid., 22–23). Fred complimented Beams on her "best-looking legs" (ibid., 23) and her "big eyes" (ibid., 24), confessed

that he was the president of the Philippines (ibid., 24), and, in parting, kissed the back of her neck (ibid., 25). The following day, the president told her: "I really love you, Dovie. Do you love me, too?" (ibid., 30). At the time of their first meeting, Marcos was 53 years old, Beams 38 (ibid., 15).

They met again two days later in Baguio, where Marcos's security team smuggled Beams by car in and out of the Mansion House (ibid., 42). Fabian Ver, who was in charge of the arrangements, declared that Beams had "creeped like a cat" (ibid.). It was in Baguio that Marcos and Beams allegedly had sex for the first time.[2] Marcos showered Beams with jewelry and put her up at the five-star Peninsula Hotel during her shopping trip to Hong Kong over the new year (ibid., 48–50).

In a strange but revealing conversation, Marcos told Beams that he and Imelda had been "sexually estranged for a long time" (ibid., 39) and that Beams looked and sounded like the "ghost" of his "first love," an American mestiza named Evelyn, "who gave her life for him" (ibid., 40)—according to Rotea (ibid., 177), Marcos claimed that Evelyn was the daughter of "President Quezon," and he was supposed to marry her—during the Second World War and whose character Beams would be playing in *Maharlika*.

The affair intensified in the first half of 1969, with Marcos spending as much time with Beams as he could spare, even staying overnight in their Greenhills love nest whenever Imelda was out of town (ibid., 61). Marcos talked of wanting to have a son by Dovie (ibid., 64, 65);[3] their first quarrel, in fact, had been over Marcos's discovery that Beams—who was not sure Marcos would divorce his wife (ibid., 65)—was keeping a stash of birth-control pills (ibid.). At the thirtieth Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences Festival (FAMAS) ceremonies in April, Marcos supposedly used a prearranged series of secret hand signals to telegraph his love for her (ibid., 85). One observant columnist later wrote that the president had looked in the direction of the actress a tad too long (ibid., 72).

Meantime, Ilusorio, worried that Imelda would find out about the affair and have him "shot" (ibid., 53, 112), tried to convince Beams to return to the US and do a war film there instead (ibid., 52). To cover up the affair, Beams "dated" the Spanish mestizo actor Pepito Rodriguez (ibid., 71). Ilusorio also handed her US$10,000 (ibid., 54) and allegedly made advances toward her. Another Marcos crony, Diosdado Bote, manager of the Wack-Wack Golf and Country Club, had helped install Beams in a house in Greenhills and arranged for his son Ray to chauffeur her around (ibid., 61). Ilusorio and

other cronies routinely overcharged Marcos for reimbursement of the costs of keeping a querida; Marcos, despite complaining about it, paid anyway (ibid., 62–63).

Beams had recorded Marcos singing songs like "Pamulinawen" and "Come Closer to Me" (ibid., 97–98) into the microphone of a tape recorder and had allowed Marcos to take photographs of her in the nude. Two of the tapes transcribed in the Rotea book were recorded on 17 and 22 January 1970. Furthermore, Rotea claims that Marcos confided in Beams about his political activities. Reelected in 1969, in one of the most expensive and bitterly fought elections in the country's postwar history, Marcos allegedly told Beams that he had instigated the student demonstrations with the intent of justifying the eventual declaration of martial law (ibid., 103–4).[4] Beams had moved from one love nest to another because the Liberal Party was keeping a close watch on Marcos's activities (ibid., 104) before, during, and after his campaign for reelection.

Matters came to a head with the publication of the 3 October 1970 issue of the *Philippines Free Press*. An article on Beams written by veteran journalist Jose A. Quirino (1970, 33) carried the suggestive title "A Lovely Argument for Special Relations." Beams was quoted as saying, "I don't know why I attract married men," and adding, "In the last few weeks and also during my stay last year, all those who tried to date me were married men" (ibid.). The article concluded with the following sentences: "She's a convincing argument indeed for 'special relations'—very, very 'special relations'" (ibid., 49).

Although the article was careful not to hint at Beams's affair with the president, even going so far as to deflect attention away from Marcos by stating that Sen. Salvador "Doy" Laurel had dedicated the song "The Impossible Dream" to Beams at a dinner in a Makati restaurant (ibid., 33) and that Beams had dated "the European philanthropist Baron Ernst Valentine Von Wedel" (ibid.), the article's double-entendre confirmation of the open secret embarrassed Marcos, who briefly stopped seeing her (Rotea 1984, 120). Subsequent meetings between Beams and Marcos erupted into quarrels as the president exhibited his "Jekyll and Hyde" personalities (ibid., 127).

Imelda, alerted to the affair, put pressure on Ilusorio to cut Beams out of the *Maharlika* production and allegedly instructed Commissioner of Immigration Edmundo Reyes to deport the actress (ibid., 120–21).[5] Manhandled by immigration officials, Beams consulted an attorney, with whom she deposited some of the evidence of the clandestine affair that

she had collected. Calling a press conference was a way to "guarantee her survival" (ibid., 122). Beams would claim in the Rotea (ibid., 130) book that Imelda had tried to bribe her with US$100,000 to keep quiet and disappear from Marcos's life by using the American embassy as conduit.

The Art of the Exposé

The Dovie Beams affair provides a good case study for exploring the possibilities and limits of scandal as an instrument for regulating and transforming political perception and reality. In a short but illuminating essay, Resil Mojares (1997, 117–18) explores the "art of the exposé." The one who engineers the bomba must be an enterprising sort, possessed of good "media sense" and a "sense of prime time," and combining a "flair for risk-taking" with the "nerve to offend, a maverick streak, and a fair dose of ambition" (ibid., 117). The bomba expert, well aware that the exposé is an "opportunistic art" (ibid., 118), never forgets to "calculate risks," knowing when and how much to reveal and careful not to end up a "loose cannon" or "dead" (ibid., 117).

Politics is a "spectator sports," offering "vicarious thrills" and eliciting "moral outrage" from an audience already familiar with the story line (ibid., 118). Exposés "perform functions analytic (allowing us to understand the ills of society and government), preventive (introducing checks to the abuse or miscarriage of authority), and enabling (setting the groundwork for corrective and alternative procedures and structures" (ibid.). At its best, then, an exposé is an instrument of critique, an exercise in vigilance that "keeps alive among citizens a healthy sense of discontent with the way things are" (ibid.). But exposés also breed cynicism, building up anxiety without any promise of release. Mojares draws an important analogy between the exposé artist, whose political performance is the exposé, and the pornographer: "he generates a level of surface excitement that never builds up to a satisfying climax. Like pornography, his is a shabby and repetitious art" (ibid., 118).

Harassed by government agents and fearful for her life, Beams went public with her account of her affair with Ferdinand Marcos. In detonating the bomba against the Marcoses, she was not acting alone, for she was enabled by critics and political opponents of Marcos. The most seasoned of these opponents, the Lopezes, were well-versed in the art of the exposé. Beams was a consummate exposé artist, providing tidbits over the years to the mass media, which peddled the intimate revelations by both parties as works

of pornography that would be serialized over decades without any definitive climax or resolution.

Anatomy of a Scandal

There can be no doubt that the impeccable timing of Beams's exposé gave this particular bomba its explosive charge. Marcos had been reelected in 1969, in a presidential election that had reportedly been "the dirtiest, most violent, most corrupt election since 1946" (Salonga 2003, 168, citing foreign media reportage). Between September and October 1970, four major typhoons—Oyang, Sening, Titang, and Yoling—hit the Philippines, killing at least 1,348 people and wreaking extensive damage and destruction (Daly 2016, 33). Fueling the civil unrest sparked by public criticisms and protests—notably the mass demonstrations of January 1970 that would later be immortalized as "The First Quarter Storm" (Lacaba 1982)—against the Marcos government and a fledgling insurgency spearheaded by the Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (officially founded on 26 December 1968), the Dovie Beams exposé at the same time crystallized anxieties, doubts, and anger over the "special relations" between the Philippines and the US, as the presence of the American military on Philippine soil and the continuing influence of the US in Philippine affairs came increasingly under fire.

Marcos typically insisted that a hidden hand was engineering the scandal, providing advice and other forms of support behind the scenes to Beams. In his diaries he claimed to have met Beams (whom he insisted on calling Dovie Boehms, using her official married name before her divorce instead of her stage name) at the FAMAS Festival in 1969. He said he encountered her when he was introduced to the cast of *Maharlika*. Marcos claimed that Beams was a "name dropper" who approached Imelda at a tourism conference at the Hilton Hotel and "proudly announced that she knew her (Imelda's) husband. Imelda properly ignored her" (Marcos diary entry of 19 October 1970; also cited in Rempel 1993, 87, 90).

Marcos (in his diary of 5 November 1970, cited in Rempel 1993, 87) called Beams's "extortion activities" a "diabolical plot" (diary of 10 November 1970, cited in Rempel 1993, 88) and speculated that it was either the "CIA or the American embassy" or else his "political opponents who are encouraging this or have planted her" (ibid.). Marcos (diary of 12 November 1970, cited in Rempel 1993, 89), summoned the American ambassador Henry Byroade and other staff members of the embassy to "find out what the participation of

the American government is in the Boehms blackmail conspiracy." In his 15 November 1970 diary (cited in Rempel 1993, 90), he wrote: "Lest our people feel the Americans have succeeded in coercing me with the Dovie Boehms alleged revelations of 'intimate relations' with me (which are patently false), I have ordered a renegotiation of the Military Bases Agreement with the U.S. . . . And tomorrow I will reiterate the demand for the return of Sangley Point by the U.S." If we go by Marcos's account, then the Dovie Beams affair played no small role in the recalibration of the Philippines–US relations![6]

Although there is no evidence that Dovie Beams had a starring role in a real-life American version of Ian Fleming's (1957) *From Russia with Love*, the spy angle was one of several conspiracy theories bruited about in the press, and it attracted its own share of public protest. The Profumo scandal in Britain—in which the 1961 extramarital affair between then Secretary of State for War John Profumo and showgirl Christine Keeler, who was simultaneously involved with a Soviet naval attaché, had brought down the Conservative government under Harold Macmillan in 1963—was still a fresh memory.

Newspapers like *Taliba* (owned by the Roces family) speculated that Beams might have been a spy (*espiya*) sent by the millionaire businessman Harry S. Stonehill, who had been deported in 1962 following his involvement in a major corruption case that implicated then Pres. Diosdado Macapagal, or that she was sent by the CIA to tease out state secrets that had a bearing on American interests in the Philippines (Digos 1970; Bancoro 1970b). These interests included the Holman case (in which American Col. Averill Holman was cited for contempt by the Philippine court owing to his failure to produce a key witness to the forced abduction and rape case implicating US Air Force Sgt. Ronald E. McDaniel), possible changes in the constitution that might affect the controversial Parity Agreement between the US and the Philippines, the presence of American military bases, and the sabotaging of the Philippine government attempt to open and improve diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries (Bancoro 1970a).

The scandal also spurred student protest against the "moral bankruptcy of top government officials" (*Manila Times* 1970, 1). Members of the Samahang Molabe and the Katipunan ng Kabataang Demokratiko (Federation of Democratic Youth), holding aloft placards that read "Ferdie, sino si Fred?" (Ferdie, who is Fred?) and "Palinawen ang Pamulinawen" (Explain Pamulinawen), picketed the main gate of the presidential palace and issued a manifesto decrying the "rotten and bankrupt" "system that

thrives on military force and wholesale deception of the people." National spokesperson for the Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA, Free Movement of New Women) and legendary activist Lorena Barros was quoted as saying that the "Dovie Beams case reveals that US imperialism will not stop at anything and will use the foulest and dirtiest means, including the exploitation of the degraded status of women in bourgeois society, to perpetrate its political stranglehold on the Philippines and its oppression of the Filipino masses" (ibid.). Similar pickets were planned in front of the American embassy (Bancoro 1970c).

The Dovie Beams scandal tapped into the nationalist dissatisfaction with the inequality and asymmetry that underlay the much-vaunted "special relations" between the two countries (in which staunch allies could also be covert saboteurs). Its significance, however, lay in the fact that the opposition to the Marcos administration was much closer to home and needed no prodding to exploit the scandal for their various agenda.

The Liberal Party was said to have helped Beams arrange the press conference (Thompson 1998, 275), and the Lopezes were thought to have had a hand in emboldening Beams to go public with her revelations (Seagrave 1988, 222, 238). In his diary of 19 October 1970, Marcos accused Beams of blackmailing him and pointed his finger at a cabal of conspirators led by Joaquin "Chino" Roces, owner of *Manila Times*, and Eugenio Lopez Sr. Marcos in his diary of 11 Mar. 1971 claimed that Roces had distributed photostat copies of a *Boston Free Press* article (dated 28 February 1971) that carried an autographed photo that Marcos allegedly gave to Beams (signed "with all my love into eternity, Ferdinand"). He also stated in his diary of 17 April 1972 that the "Lopez camp" had wired funds to Beams in California; was supporting "the escalating demonstrations, mobs and riots"; and had teamed up with Gerardo Roxas and J. Amado Araneta.[7] Meantime, Imelda blamed Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. for passing on copies of Beams's tape recordings to the students of the University of the Philippines (UP), who would make a loop of the more sensational parts and, at the time of the so-called Diliman Republic (otherwise known as the Diliman Commune [see the excellent account by Scalice 2018]), air them all over campus through the DZUP radio channel (Seagrave 1988, 369).

The scandal did not just reverberate in the early 1970s but would be resuscitated for another round of anti-Marcos opposition in the early 1980s. If the perfect timing of the Dovie Beams affair largely accounted

for its explosive impact, the timing of the American publication of Hermie Rotea's *Lovey Dovie* was similarly opportune. Coming out in 1984, a year after the assassination of opposition leader Ninoy Aquino, the book's tell-all account of the Dovie Beams affair detonated the thirteen-year-old bomba yet again. The staunchly anti-Marcos Rotea, editor of the *Philippine Press* in Los Angeles, had met Beams in 1973; he had been a friend of Marcos critic Primitivo Mijares and had authored *Behind the Barricades: Story of the January 26 and 30 Student Revolt in the Philippines* (Rotea 1970), which he said had been blacklisted by Marcos in 1970 (Rotea 1984, 6–7). In the martial-law 1970s and the 1980s, the American West Coast had emerged as a hub and hotbed of exiled-Filipino and Filipino American anti-Marcos activism (Hamilton-Paterson 1998, 255, 267).

Bomba!

As John Thompson (2000, 7) has pointed out, political scandals often prove to be ruinous, sometimes tragic, for the persons involved. These personal dramas play themselves out and are contested in the discursive terrain (ibid.), with the public playing a crucial role in making sense of what has happened and discussing and commenting on the events in light of their variegated interests and concerns (ibid., 87).

Scandals are characterized not only by the flouting or "transgression of values, norms, and moral codes," but also by the disapproval or, worse, denunciation and opprobrium heaped upon the transgressors by other people. But the context and circumstances in which a scandal explodes matter more than the actual content or quality (let alone degree) of the transgression (ibid., 13–14). For one thing, "what counts as scandalous in one context—say, extramarital affairs among members of the political elite—may be regarded as quite acceptable (even normal) elsewhere" (ibid., 15). For another, the fact that the values, norms, and moral codes at stake in a given scandal are routinely flouted, perhaps even largely tolerated, in everyday life by ordinary people does not detract from the seriousness of the scandal and its consequences (ibid., 20). As Thompson (ibid., 124) argues further: "One of the paradoxes of sexual-political scandals is that, while they presuppose a degree of moral bindingness of sexual norms and codes, there is not a clear and direct correlation between the seriousness of a sexual-political scandal and the degree of the moral bindingness of the relevant norms and codes." In other words, scandals do not lose their power to stigmatize people for their

alleged transgressions even if ordinary people themselves do not abide by or fail to adhere to these codes (ibid., 125).

Scandals sell newspapers, of course, but they are also political weapons that can damage the reputations and impugn the integrity of political figures. The Americans were known to have used information on the sexual dalliances and peccadillos of both American and Filipino officials to manipulate colonial politics during the first few decades of the twentieth century (McCoy 2009, 97–104). In the postindependence period, Americans aided and abetted Filipino politicians in scandal-mongering, using the threat of scandal to compromise their enemies.

Ironically, the Lopez clan, which Marcos blamed for egging on Beams, also fell victim to sexual blackmail. Fernando Lopez Sr., who served as vice president and secretary of agriculture under the Elpidio Quirino administration, had joined the Magsaysay team for the 1953 presidential elections, only to follow Claro M. Recto's lead in breaking away from the Magsaysay camp. A person close to Magsaysay had borrowed recording equipment from the CIA and made secret recordings of Lopez's afternoon sessions with his querida in a side room next to his office in order to "lean on him [Lopez] a little bit" (Smith 1987, 149–50).

Moreover, the "politics of trust" (Thompson 2000, 8, 111) that places emphasis on the "character" of politicians has become more important in the wake of the postwar expansion of the mass media and the retreat across many of the world's electoral democracies of the kind of "ideological politics" that had once been the purview of class and sectoral-based parties. In the Philippines, distinctions between political parties, already ill-defined to begin with, had weakened considerably by the late 1960s, aided in no small measure by the practice perfected by Marcos and other *trapo*s (traditional politicians) of bolting from one party to another and the negative public perception—sharpened by the critique and activism of nationalist individuals, groups, and organizations—of the two-party system (Wurfel 1988, 97).

Furthermore, scandals do not simply figure in intra-elite debates and power struggles (the term "elite" here includes media persons, the educated class, and politicians, among others) (Adut 2008, 5–6); they also speak to a growing disconnection between the principle and practice of sex and sexuality. Scandals continue to flourish in times when (and in places where) sex and sexuality have become matters of open public discussion and their shame, embarrassment, and discomfort factors are subject to demystification

(ibid., 181). The affinities between the sexual revolution and the revolutions against political and parental authority (ibid., 197) are fittingly encapsulated by the Profumo scandal, which turned Cold War pawn Christine Keeler, photographed nude, into a poster girl of sexual liberation and the Swinging Sixties (cf. *The Economist* 2017–2018, 120).

Such affinities between free sexuality and resistance to political and parental authority (Adut 2008) also resonated strongly in the Philippines in an era of decolonization and Third World nationalism, socialist internationalism, and youthful activism and rebellion.[8] Vicente Rafael (2000, 123) has pointed out that the heyday of the bomba—"impassioned political rhetoric" that is also a "synecdoche for scandalous charges and countercharges of graft and corruption made by politicians in Congress or during political campaigns" (ibid., 132)—coincided with the advent of the bomba film, which enjoyed its own heyday between 1970 and September 1972, as "new images of female subjugation and ambition emerged in film and politics" (ibid., 123).

The breakdown of the Filipino studio system in the late 1960s had flooded Philippine theaters with imported Hollywood films. The year 1969 was heralded as the breakthrough "Year of the Bomba" (Samonte 1970, 38). Bomba films like Celso Ad. Castillo's *Nympha* (1971) and Ruben S. Abalos's *Uhaw* (Thirst) (1970) delivered a much-needed shot in the arm for the flagging native film industry (De Vega 1975, 33–35; cf. Matilac and Lanot 1994, 84; Hofileña 2016), even as they stoked the interest of urban elites in local films. Talitha Espiritu (2017, 87, 89) argues that the "radical youth politics associated with this audience group bled into the potentially subversive qualities of the bomba film."[9]

In an era of bomba in film and politics, however, the real-life bombing of Plaza Miranda on 21 August 1971, at which members of the Liberal Party had originally planned to unleash their own bomba against the government and which ended up killing nine people and injuring a hundred more,[10] was a sobering reminder of the ferment, turmoil, and violence of the time that would culminate with the declaration of martial law on 21 September 1972 and the gathering storm of the Muslim, Communist, and other insurgencies.

Subversive Laughter

Moreover, the scandal was being wielded as a political weapon not just by Marcos's elite rivals and opponents, but also by far larger communities that were critical of, and more importantly mobilizing against, the Marcos

government. Steve Salonga, then a student activist at UP, had this to say about the fillip to the student movement provided by the exposé concerning Marcos's "personal life":

> By 1970, *ang mga issue namin kay* [our issues regarding] Marcos were very basic, political issues. To finally get something that had to do with his personal life, of course, *Pilipino tayo* [we are Pilipino] . . . first, amusing, second, explosive, possibly, but most of all, scandalous, *dahil galit na galit na kaming mga estudyante kay Marcos noon eh* [because we students were very angry at Marcos that time]. *Lahat ng maibabato namin ay naibato na namin* [We already hurled all that we could lob]. I guess this was one more piece of ammunition in our locker. But *hindi kami nag . . . hindi namin nalaman iyan hangga't hindi nag*-press conference *si* Dovie Beams. [But we did not . . . we would not have learned of this had Dovie Beams not held a press conference]. (cited in De Veyra 2013)

The political charge of "amusing," when coupled with "explosive" and "scandalous," owes a great deal to the subversiveness of laughter. Laughter is a kind of bomba, an often uncontrollable bodily eruption with equally uncontrollable effects in communication that are capable of either reinforcing or transforming the social order (Douglas 1975a, 86, 88). Shoshana Felman (2002, 87) tells us that "If laughter is, literally, a sort of explosion of the speaking body, the act of exploding—with laughter—becomes an explosive performance in every sense of the word."

As a form of communication, laughter creates community among those infected by it—a "collective of laughers," to use Anca Parvulescu's (2010, 3) term. While laughter is said to be a universal feature of our humanness, it is also culturally bound, as evident in Steve Salonga's contention that Filipinos find talk of sex and intimate bodily functions amusing. Laughter also has the potential to question community. As Mary Douglas (1975b, 152) has argued, making a joke out of something that is not meant to be one does not so much unsettle and reverse as levels and dissolves the hierarchies and differentiations that subtend a community, if only for a moment. Laughter closes the gap between ordinary people and a high official like Marcos, pulls down the high and mighty and punctures their highfalutin rhetoric and their hugely inflated self-regard and self-worth. One can imagine the

different reactions of the soldiers sent in to break up the Diliman Republic (or Commune) to the broadcasting over loud speakers of a crooning and moaning Marcos (Ordoñez 2003, 15).

For activists like Salonga, the mirth provoked by the public outing of private passion, however conservative its underlying moral assumptions may be, nonetheless makes laughter "a project against deep, heavy, oppressive seriousness" (Parvulescu 2010, 5). Laughter challenges the high seriousness of a Ferdinand Marcos, who suddenly finds himself dwindling from object of respect and admiration to laughing stock, from His Excellency to "Lover Boy" (Garcellano 1971c, 11).[11] As Hannah Arendt (1970, 45) puts it: "To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter." More, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, 123) makes a strong case for laughter's philosophical import and implications: "Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality."

Walter Benjamin (1980, 159, cited in Parvulescu 2010, 154) has called laughter "the most international and the most revolutionary affect of the masses." When "a people" laughs, one hears the "echo of revolutionary noise" (Parvulescu 2010, 155). Dictatorships tend not to find anything amusing about laughter, especially when they are its object. José Rizal's *Noli me tángere* offended church and government authorities with its ideas, leavened with satire and irony, the combination of which proved incendiary. It is no accident, either, that one of the first things Marcos did within twenty-four hours of declaring martial law, other than arresting his critics and opponents, was to close down the radio and television stations and print media; subsequently, he would allow only "official" press to function (Franco 2001, 105). Magazines like *Graphic*, the source of the "Your move, Lover Boy" (Garcellano 1971c, 11) jibe, would no longer be allowed to subject the newly minted dictator to ridicule.

After the imposition of martial law, the Dovie Beams scandal would become part of the repertoire of anti-Marcos stories and memories that people retailed in private as a way of keeping the spirit of resistance alive. In her memoir of growing up under martial law, Vicky Pinpin-Feinstein (2013, 96–97) comments on the political uses of rumors and the critical value of the scandal:

> Marcos was also rumored to be a womanizer. It has been said that if politics is around the corner, libido is never far behind. The combination of sexual and political power has been the domain of politicians and public figures throughout history. Marcos as a politician was no exception. I remember well how I disliked the way he smiled, the crinkle on his lips, a gesture between a smile and a sneer. The smile was lecherous, a smile that replaced many an indecorous word when directed to the opposite sex. For that reason, his marital infidelities regularly greased the rumor mill. How could any Filipino of my generation, or the one before me, forget his affair with the American starlet, Dovie Beams? Her picture graced the gossip pages of periodicals at the height of their affair. We reveled at hearing this gossip and stories like it because there was not much we could say freely regarding the fact in a repressive public arena. Inane as it may sound, there was much private humor we could derive in the image of a strong man with a penchant for dropping his pants. How about the Filipino actress who allegedly had acid thrown in her face by Imelda upon learning of her husband's marital indiscretion? Unfortunately, his many affairs and conquests of women only served to incite traditionally chauvinistic Filipino men to beat their chests and boast their male virility, never apologizing for it because they believe it was their God-given right to behave that way.

The sexual excesses and psychopathologies that the Dovie Beams affair supposedly laid bare functioned as sociopolitical commentaries in their own right. Under less explosive circumstances, an affair with a beautiful white woman might actually have boosted the masculine, virile, infallible persona that Marcos wore like an armor. But the magnitude of the scandal and the way the scandal was played up by Marcos's detractors did have a corrosive effect on his public image, as he found himself subject to ridicule and, worse, laughter.

Damage Control

In the immediate aftermath of the bomba, Marcos and his team sought damage control. The weapon they used was the age-old one of slut shaming. Marcos had his spin doctors unleash a battery of negative gender stereotypes against Beams. Ten articles serialized in the crony-owned *Republic Weekly*

between late February and April 1971 did their hatchet job on the actress. Beams was labeled a prostitute and a lunatic (A. E. 1971a, 3), a gold digger deluxe. The articles set to work on milking a psychiatric report that had been submitted on behalf of Beams's husband, Edward Boehms, during the couple's divorce proceedings. Selectively lifting quotes from this report, the articles characterized Beams as "extremely narcissistic," prone to self-indulgence, and a bad mother to boot (according to the report, "[s]he is too poorly integrated to be very giving to others except as it serves her own needs . . . [S]he is not capable of loving the child and is apt to neglect the child" [ibid.]). The psychiatrist's report diagnosed her as a "latent schizophrenic," even though the doctor who prepared the report admitted that he "never found any evidence of explosive aggressive hostility but rather that of withdrawal from responsibility and the pursuit of erotic self-satisfaction through music and romance" (ibid.). The report also said Beams "suffer[ed] . . . from illusions if not from hallucinations" (ibid., 24). A subsequent *Republic Weekly* article (A. E. 1971g, 20) went on to define "schizophrenia" for its readers as a "psychotic disorder."

To the rhetorical question, "What sort of lady would tape her most intimate bedroom moments and play the recording at, of all places, a press conference?" (ibid.), succeeding articles responded with the following: a woman who had a "strong sex drive" (A. E. 1971b, 4), who took lovers while still married to another man and was not above "press[ing] her attentions upon" one of them (ibid.); who boasted of dating, among many others, John and Edward Kennedy, Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau, former English prime minister Harold Wilson, "the present Prime Minister of Germany," a "former mayor of Berlin," the Sheik of Kuwait, Howard Hughes, "George East, Jr. and Sr.," "Senator Gore of Tennessee," and a "certain 'pogi' [handsome] Filipino senator," and "passed them [these stories] off as true even though they were a pack of lies" (A. E. 1971c, 5); who staged "orgiastic nights in the bedroom . . . with various men, sometimes with homosexuals as well" (ibid.); and who had a "fantastic imagination" (ibid.) and inflated her own business dealings and acumen (ibid.; A. E. 1971e, 6). Beams was even compared to typhoons Sening and Yoling (A. E. 1971c, 6) and accused of extortion, even as the article admitted that Beams had been offered (by the film's producers) US$1,000 in cash upon departure from the Philippines, US$8,000 in escrow in Los Angeles, and a 5 percent commission on the sale of the film for no less than US$750,000 and two more sums—US$13,500

and US$17,500 drawn from Los Angeles banks no later than 12 October 1970 (A. E. 1971f, 7).

In response to the *Republic Weekly*'s slut-shaming hatchet job and claim that tape recordings were inadmissible as evidence in court (A. E. 1971a, 2), Beams sent a copy of one such tape to the *Graphic* office (Garcellano 1971a, 11). She also informed *Graphic* that she had saved other evidence such as letters, telegrams, and mementos (Garcellano 1971b, 11). She then dropped another bombshell:

> I have, in my possession, pubic hair from X X X which I believe can be scientifically proved as to its origin. Maybe this will be the proof to the people of the Philippines that I have told the truth and that persons in very high positions have perfectly told incredible lies and it is time that this deception and conniving X X X be exposed for what it is. For what it has done not only to me but to millions of the people of the Philippines. (Garcellano 1971c, 11).

Beams never released the pubic-hair evidence to the public.

By way of drawing a contrast between Beams and Imelda Marcos, *Republic Weekly* peddled a series of "facts" about Imelda: that she "comes from a very rich family of Philippine sugar barons"; that she is "blessed with a fine figure" and was once "Miss Manila (91-58-89 cm.)"; that she had "tolerated" her husband's "weakness for women" over the past sixteen years and that the Dovie Beams affair had lasted "too long" (A. E. 1971h, 20). Of these so-called facts, the first three (that Imelda came from a rich family, that she had a fine figure,[12] and that she was a former Miss Manila) have been disputed.

The purported exposé of Beams's troubled marital, business, and sexual history was not confined to words. *Republic Weekly* splashed across its pages nude photographs (which its writer claimed were taken not by Marcos, but by one Delfin "Fred" Cueto,[13] who went on record about his alleged affair with Beams [A. E. 1971d, 6]) of Beams with her private parts blacked out. In effect, *Republic Weekly* turned itself into a porno magazine, and Beams was made a bomba star against her will, and her experience (shared by many aspiring actresses) of Hollywood's infamous and predatory casting couch would be held against her.

There is, moreover, a racial politics at work in the Dovie Beams affair. One of the articles cited a 21 August 1969 letter that Marcos wrote, belatedly

criticizing the casting of American actors in the key roles of *Maharlika*, even though Marcos had previously met (and had not posed any objections to) the members of the cast months before. Wrote Marcos in his diary entry of 21 August 1969 (cited in A. E. 1971d, 6): "The hero should not be an American because it was not so. How come the girl looks like a Hollywood cheapie? Check her background. She cannot act. Better take her out." Given Marcos's (and, more generally, Filipinos') proclivity for Filipino mestizas, preferably of Spanish ancestry, an affair with the "genuine" article, an American white woman, would not have been farfetched and his belated criticism sounded insincere, mealy mouthed, and hypocritical.[14]

Marcos already had a long-time partner named Carmen Ortega, a Spanish mestiza with whom he was involved before he married Imelda (another Spanish mestiza) and who Marcos's mother, Josefa Edralin, was said to favor over Imelda (Mijares 1986, 264–65). Ortega was even alleged to have gotten pregnant with one of four children she had with Marcos after one of Marcos's quarrels with Dovie Beams (Seagrave 1988, 215). Aside from Dovie Beams, Marcos would have affairs with many other women—from famous actresses to wives of cronies—over the years (Mijares 1986, 264–75), even as his well-known proclivity for extramarital activities in no way discounted the emotional intensity of the affairs he engaged in over the years.[15]

The decision to have American actors play Filipinos in *Maharlika* has been parsed by James Hamilton-Paterson (1998, 256–57) this way:

> It might well be wondered why Marcos was to be played by a white American actor in a film whose primary purpose was as propaganda vehicle in a Filipino election, for viewing by domestic audience. It says something about cultural confusion when an incumbent Filipino President tries to broaden his appeal by turning himself into an American onscreen. Maybe he thought that, like Hartzell Spence's original book, the film might have an image-making impact on Americans if they could *see* him—and not merely intuit him—as one of them.[16]

Such a tortured line of thinking obscures the simple and obvious fact that, like hiring American journalists to write their hagiographies, Filipino politicians like Marcos were not content to demonstrate their mastery over

the symbolic codes and prestige goods of their native country (such as getting the country's top actors to play the First Couple in the Marcos bio-pic *Iginuhit ng Tadhana*). Just as important, they sought to enhance their own status by their *perceived* access to, and affirmation by, "America." The validation offered by the "white" gaze was not intended for consumption in America (even though American interest in the movie would have been a bonus), but rather in the Philippines—a strategy, in other words, for enhancing Marcos's stature in the eyes of his fellow Filipinos by signaling his connections to the outside world and his cosmopolitan worldliness and, above all, his "world-class" standing and stature. Never mind that the Americans he hired to toot his horn were not exactly, or no longer, the best and the brightest.[17]

For a man obsessed with looking good before an admiring public, Marcos would have found the damage inflicted by the scandal on his carefully crafted public image and persona the most bitter pill to swallow. Rotea (1984, 2) exaggerated in stating that the scandal "dwarf[ed] even the Nixon Watergate and Profumo affair." But the scandal did whip away the cloak of invincibility that Marcos had carefully draped around himself. Not content to be a bar "topnotcher," he had to be a war hero, and, not only a war hero, but the most decorated war hero, the Audie Murphy of the Philippines. His sterling war record would later be exposed as fraudulent and the existence of the guerrilla unit Maharlika challenged (McCoy 1999, 167–70).

The Marcos mythology, including the Marcos romance, rested on "manufactured" pasts (Rafael 2000, 127).[18] The scandal exposed the Marcos marriage as a "sham" (palabas) of an "ideal marriage" (Ellison 1988, 104). Speaking of Imelda to a newspaper in 1969, Ferdinand had waxed poetic: "Each man has an ideal who embodies all of the graces in form, in mind and in spirit. It is not often given to a man to find that ideal . . . but I have had that fortune. How can I look for anything more?" (ibid., 111). Much has been written—including Imelda's own account (see, e.g., Joaquin 1979, 23–24)—about Ferdinand playing Pygmalion to Imelda's Galatea. Imelda famously underwent a difficult tutelage (which included a nervous breakdown) "in the game named politics" (Pedrosa 1969/1986, 189) that turned her from a "very simple, very unaffected" (ibid., 193, quoting Connie Manahan) "homebody" (ibid., 190) into a seasoned campaigner (ibid., 200) and consummate politician's wife and later First Lady.

Moviegoers who have seen *Iginuhit ng Tadhana* (1965) remember the scene in which the playboy Ferdinand (played by Luis Gonzalez) reassures

his worried mother Josefa (Rosa Mia) with these words: "Don't worry, Mother. When I find the woman I'll marry, I swear to you that I will neither look nor glance at any other women" (Huwag kang mag-alala, Inay. Sa oras na matagpuan ko ang babaeng aking pakakasalan, ipinangangako ko sa inyo, ni tingin o sulyap sa ibang babae, hindi). Ferdinand adds: "Yes, I will be a good husband and model father of the house" (Oo, ako ay magiging mabuting asawa at ulirang ama ng tahanan). The Dovie Beams scandal brutally underscores the fact that even marriage to the "ideal" Imelda, with her beauty and illustrious family name, poses no obstruction to Ferdinand's compulsive gallivanting.

Conjuring the Conjugal Dictatorship

The Dovie Beams affair immortalized in Rotea's *Marcos' Lovey Dovie* would leave one more important legacy. Other than the fact that its narrative account of the affair helped expose the "moral bankruptcy and criminal nature of the Marcos Presidency" and keep alive the opposition against the Marcos regime, the Rotea (1984, 1) bomba was also arguably instrumental in establishing and disseminating an influential thesis about the evolution of the marital and political dynamics between the First Couple and the impact of these dynamics on Philippine history and politics.

In fact, Rotea's (ibid.) argument—that the "true story of American actress Dovie Beams of Beverly Hills, California, . . . not only reveals what kind of leader Ferdinand E. Marcos is, but also heralds the rise of his wife Imelda from ceremonial First Lady to a conjugal tyrant reminiscent of Evita Peron of Argentina"—would be taken up and embellished by journalists, biographers, analysts, and pundits writing in the wake of the 1986 People Power Revolution that toppled the Marcos regime.

Stanley Karnow (1989, 379) quotes a Marcos friend as saying this about the consequences of the Dovie Beam scandal: "It was a turning point. . . . He could no longer control her, and she went crazy with power and greed."

Other accounts have sought to provide more nuance.

Carmen Pedrosa (1987) offers this telling snapshot that hints at Imelda's feelings about the affair: among the things left behind in Imelda's bedroom in Malacañang after the People Power Revolution was a dossier on Dovie Beams in which nude photos of Beams had been "furiously scribbled over with a pen" (ibid., 124). Pedrosa (ibid.) quotes "insiders" as saying that "Imelda had caught him philandering, and that weakened his hold over her":

> Marcos had been cast as a bumbling Casanova, with his lovemaking allegedly taped by a mere second-rate American actress, who claimed she had indubitable proof that her lover, "Fred," was none other than the President of the Philippines. To Imelda, who had so carefully nurtured the image of a perfect marriage—and her image of Marcos as a superhero—his public humiliation was unforgivable. Marcos squandered his side of the partnership and now the scales of power tipped in Imelda's favor.
>
> Henceforth, the Marcoses ruled separate but equal empires even as they continued to appear devoted to one another in public. The fallout from the Dovie Beams affair gave Imelda the leverage to acquire more power.

Katherine Ellison's (1988, 111–12) account stresses not just the personality changes in Imelda following the Dovie Beams scandal, but, equally important, the gifts and concessions that Imelda was able to obtain from Marcos as a form of apology or compensation (or, as the Germans call it, *Drachenfutter*, literally "dragon feed") for his relentless womanizing:

> Imelda had been changing ever since she learned of Dovie Beams. In the years leading up to the affair, she was known for her impulsive warmth and generosity, consoling friends when relatives died and giving loans when they were broke. "But she got harder and harder," said her priest. "Her personality couldn't seem to handle it: She had held onto this fairytale vision of romance, this life-long dream of hers, and now it seemed she had decided to trade in that dream for another."
>
> The other dream was power. Imelda soon learned to make the most of her husband's continuing indiscretions, winning specific concessions of money or new privileges almost every time she managed to catch Marcos "outside the mosquito net," as Filipinos called it. "It appears clear that whenever she went abroad, his movements were documented," said Francisco Tatad, then the palace press director, in a 1987 interview. On her return, Imelda would produce photographs or detailed accounts of Marcos's transgressions, and then fly off to Leyte in a rage, refusing to return until her husband proposed a peace

offering. It was in this way, said Tatad, that Imelda earned her two most important appointments, governor of Metro Manila and minister of Human Settlements.

Ellison (ibid., 108) would also state that among Marcos's most famous love (and peace) offerings to Imelda was the US$21.9 million San Juanico Bridge, which connected Samar island to Leyte province, her hometown. Ellison's point about political and economic concessions and privileges is echoed in a number of other works on the Marcoses. Sterling Seagrave (1988) claims that "Imelda would extract a heavy price from Ferdinand for his philandering—from shares in gold mines to unbridled political power" (ibid., 227), including control over the Benguet gold and copper mines (ibid., 336).

Unlike their counterparts in journalism, Philippinist scholars have been more circumspect in claiming the explanatory power of the Dovie Beams affair. Paul Hutchcroft (1991, 436–37) quotes David Wurfel's (1988, 241) observation that the relationship between Imelda and Ferdinand was one of "mutual blackmail," "a curious mixture of collaboration and conflict. Malacañang insiders often described it as a standoff between two warring camps, in which the battlegrounds were appointments, government contracts, investment opportunities, media treatment, and priority in the allocation of funds." But Hutchcroft offers no definitive take on the origins of Imelda's appointment as minister of Human Settlements; governor of Metro Manila; chair of the National Housing Corporation, National Home Mortgage Corporation, National Pollution Control Commission, and Rural Waterworks Development Corporation; and head of the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (New Society Movement, KBL) Ladies (Roces 2000, 46–47). He merely observes in a footnote that "Whatever the precise origins of her power, there is no question that at some point after 1972 she was able to establish a relatively autonomous power base within the regime. In Weber's words, the 'boundaries' of her official positions were 'frequently indeterminate,' and the positions themselves were treated 'as a *personal* right'" (Hutchcroft 1991, 436).

Closer to home, an insider-observer such as Imelda's niece Beatriz Romualdez Francia (1988, 32) confirms the "harder edge" around Imelda's character, but dates this change back to the "new person" she became and the "façade of urban sophistication" she acquired after her nervous breakdown in the early years of her marriage to Marcos. Becoming more

"regal" (ibid., 35), "[f]or a few years, Imelda did peak and achieve a kind of perfection. Between 1969 and '73, Imelda was at her magnificent velvety best. She was fabulous but still had a kind of softness about her. But by 1974 onwards, Imelda by degrees began to show an onerousness in her appetite for attention, power, and luxury" (ibid., 28). In Francia's account Imelda's appetite for "attention, power and luxury" would not become pronounced until 1974, long after the Dovie Beams scandal.

Primitivo Mijares (1986) devotes the requisite pages to the Dovie Beams affair, but his account is as interesting as Francia's because it does not single out the scandal as a turning point in the relationship between Ferdinand and Imelda. Rather, he suggests a more generalized pattern of Imelda—or her relatives, particularly younger brother Benjamin, nicknamed "Kokoy"—gaining or else extracting concessions from Marcos following bouts of two-timing (much more than two, in this case).

Mijares (ibid., 215) says he "learned from Juan Ponce Enrile that one of the tried and tested tactics being employed by the brothers and sisters of Mrs. Marcos was to get the president to 'make them presents,' granting concessions or yield in violation of established policies on certain contracts involving multi-million peso deals." Mijares (ibid.) goes on to explain the ploy:

> The brothers and sisters of Imelda (Kokoy, Alfredo, Franciping, Alita, Mrs. Edon Yap, et al) have their own corps of spies which has only one mission: to spy on Dictator Marcos to find out which woman he had taken, or plans to take, to bed. If any of them makes such a discovery, the matter is usually not immediately reported to the First Lady. The bearer of the "bad news" usually waits for such time as when he or she had a fat government deal which only the President can approve or disapprove. After breaking the "bad news" to the First Lady, the particular spying brother or sister—Kokoy is topnotch among them on such projects—asks Mrs. Marcos for the favor of having the President approve the deal in mind as quid pro quo for the vital piece of information furnished the scorned queen of the Palace by the Pasig. The First Lady then raises hell with the dictator for his latest act of infidelity, and demands that appropriate propitiation be made. In addition, would the president kindly favor a "neglected" brother or sister with the approval of this particular government contract? A cornered president then reluctantly makes his peace offering, and to get her off his back

> and to cut off her nagging, yields to her importunings in favor of the brother or sister. One such concession could be permission for her to make another trip abroad to visit some potentate in the Middle East or to New York to cavort with her jet-set crowds and display her multi-million dollar jewelry collection.[19]

Mijares (ibid.) adds that he was able to verify this "particular situation of 'terrorism'" not just with Enrile, but also with Tatad (one of the major informants of the post-EDSA books that discuss the Dovie Beams affair), Immigration Commissioner Reyes, and Airport Manager Luis Tabuena.

Nor did Imelda's bid for power sit so easily with Marcos, as it "challenged the chauvinism in Marcos" (ibid., 90), and Mijares records a particularly violent quarrel between the First Couple on this very issue on board the presidential yacht in June 1972. Mijares (ibid., 103) even raises the possibility that Marcos might consider divorcing Imelda: "The installation of a new First Lady in Malacañang, whether Imelda is still alive or not, is not inconceivable at all. After making that cowardly decision to impose martial law, Marcos will no longer surprise anybody, if he does away with Imelda—perhaps, in the dead of the night."

More, the brouhaha over the Dovie Beams affair did not prevent Marcos's eye from wandering over to other women. Two months before declaring martial law, Marcos was caught with yet another woman, and Mijares quotes Presidential Assistant Guillermo de Vega as saying "Nahuli na naman si boss!" (Boss has been caught at it again!) and Tatad answering back with "The President . . . got caught by the intelligence network of 'Puti' again!" ("Puti" here being the code name of Marcos's men for Kokoy Romualdez) (ibid., 216). Imelda is supposed to have told Teodoro Valencia to pass this message on to Marcos regarding his serial fornications: "Sabihin mo sa sir mo, at nasabi ko na rin sa kaniya ito. Kapag-hindi siya tumigil ng pagloloko, gagawan ko siya ng eskandalo na maluluma si Profumo" (ibid., 264) (Tell your Sir—and I myself have told him so—that if he doesn't stop fooling around, I will create a scandal that puts Profumo in the shade).

The problem with the cruder renditions of the Dovie-Beams-scandal-as-turning-point-for-Imelda thesis is that they rely on simplistic pop-psychological, gender-inflected analyses of love and marriage that tend to gloss over the complexities of a conjugal relationship. The pop-psychology line of thinking would have women finding consolation and compensation

for their husbands' chronic unfaithfulness in other obsessive pursuits, whether sex, shopping, or, in this case, power. A variant of this narrative is one in which a woman tolerates the affairs of—and stands by—her (faithless) husband because she herself has political ambitions and, as payback, expects the man to help her fulfill her ambitions. The generic nature of these storylines means that one name can be easily substituted for another. Erase "Imelda Marcos," for example, type in "Hillary Clinton," and the shoe still fits (Bordo 2017, 43–55), as far as critics of these women are concerned.

The point is that the dynamics of love and marriage are complex, and people do separate from, or else stay married to, each other for any number of reasons, despite—in some cases because of—the infidelity that causes pain and suffering in a spouse. Ellison's (1988, 108–9) account hints at this complexity by pointing to some sort of reconciliation between Ferdinand and Imelda after the Dovie Beams affair, even as Ferdinand continued to fool around with other women.

A major problem with the accounts of Imelda's increasing clout and influence in the Marcos government is that they rest on commonsensical assumptions about the relationship between women and power that turn out, upon closer examination, to rest on shaky ground. Accounts of Imelda's "rise" treat her career as an *exception* to the power that *ought* to accrue (or, more important, *not* accrue) to women, particularly First Ladies whose official statuses as presidential spouses grant them direct physical access to democratically elected presidents but whose unelected offices impose limits on their ability to play direct political roles in their spouses' administrations.[20]

If there are attempts at all to compare Imelda with other First Ladies, the tendency has been to lump Imelda with other "exceptional" women in power, most notably Argentina's Evita Perón (cf. Taylor 1979, 10–12). Indeed, the Imelda–Evita comparison—whatever the parallels in the personal and political circumstances of these two women (a brief comparison is made by Ellison 1988, 91 footnote)—has a long history, with Ninoy Aquino saying, in a famous speech delivered on the Senate floor in 1969, that "a president should not use his wife for politics. We're handicapped. When she's criticized, they go saying, she's a woman. Woman? Baloney . . . Ferdie is hiding behind the skirts of a woman; Ferdie uses Imelda as a shield. She is a lovely woman, but I think that if a woman indulges in politics, then she should share in the brickbats" (cited in Ellison 1988, 91).

And yet the achievements that made Imelda stand out as an "exception" among First Ladies—her energetic campaigning on behalf of her husband, her loyal Blue Ladies,[21] and her roving diplomacy—are neither unique to Imelda nor exclusive to "Dragon Ladies" of tin-pot Banana Republics or the Third World. In his study of the possibilities and limits of Imelda Marcos's First Lady diplomacy, Dean Kotlowski (2016, 328) identifies a similar pattern of First Ladies engaging in a multiplicity of tasks ranging from informal ones like "ceremonial hostess, political campaigner, presidential confidante, and independent advocate" to formal ones like "holding a government job or initiating a policy debate." The novelty of Kotlowski's analysis lies in the fact that he does not confine his comparison of Imelda's activities to those of Perón or Soong May-ling (Madame Chiang Kai Shek), but includes as well the activities of American First Ladies like Pat Nixon, Rosalynn Carter, and Hillary Clinton (ibid.).[22]

The kind of "new" First Lady that Imelda embodied has her counterpart elsewhere, most notably in America, where the role of First Lady has also evolved beyond her formal and informal duties. Eleanor Roosevelt served as her husband's "trial balloon for radical ideas" and acted as Washington's emissary to the disadvantaged sectors (Troy 2000, 6). Both Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower were popular with the voting public and important assets to their husbands' election campaigns,[23] and their high-profile appearances were deemed crucial to their spouses' "whistle-stop" campaigns (ibid., 2). Lady Bird Johnson, Imelda's near-contemporary, logged some 34,405 miles of travel by herself and 9,433 miles of travel alongside the president before the Democratic Party convention (ibid., 140). Like Imelda, Lady Bird—the first American First Lady to make an official solo trip abroad to represent her husband at the state funeral of the king of Greece (Anthony 1991, 116)—was hailed as a "political asset for the campaign that is unique in presidential history" (Troy 2000, 141). Like Imelda, she was seen as a new "secret weapon" and was aided in her campaigning by her own Southern band of Blue Ladies (ibid., 142). And like Imelda, one of her major projects as First Lady was to chair the Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol and oversee the beautification of Washington, DC (ibid., 153–54).

Pat Nixon and Rosalynn Carter's tenures were no less significant. Nixon was the first US First Lady to undertake a foreign mission, traveling to Peru in June 1970 (ibid., 188); embarking on a solo tour in August 1971 (ibid., 194); and visiting Liberia, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast in January 1972 (ibid.,

195). Carter, the first to have her own office (in the East Wing) at the White House (Brower 2016, 224), attended Cabinet meetings and was sent to Latin America to engage in "substantial bilateral meetings" with the heads of state and diplomats (Troy 2000, 254–55). On her first year alone, Carter visited eighteen countries and twenty-seven US cities, made fifteen major speeches, and held twenty-two press conferences (Brower 2016, 226). She also played a prominent role in brokering (and taking notes at) the Camp David meeting between Egypt's Anwar Al-Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin that resulted in the Camp David Accords and the 1979 Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel (Troy 2000, 264).

Women with this much access to and influence over their spouses are invariably taken to task for their "arrogance" and other so-called attitude problems. Imelda was not spared the usual opprobrium. In the heat of the election campaign in 1965, opponents of Marcos capitalized on the ambivalence aroused by Imelda's visibility as political wife and active campaigning by waging their own smear campaign against her, grafting a photograph of Imelda's head onto that of a woman's naked body and passing off the result as Imelda "in the nude" (Pedrosa 1969/1986, 219). In other words, the smear campaign turned Imelda into yet another bomba (or what Filipinos would later call "bold") star, someone no better than the vilified "Dovie Boehms" of Marcos's creation.

In her essay on American women in foreign policy, Joan Hoff-Wilson (1992, 184) makes this trenchant observation:

> Almost every woman was held to a double standard when she tried to operate inside the "old boy" network or outside of it as a critic. In all instances these women faced the possibility of being singled out for behavior unbecoming women, ***but not men***, in carrying out their foreign policy jobs, and for acting or talking outside their areas of expertise. Being held to such a double standard led to criticisms of amateurism or abrasiveness, which would not have been applied to men holding similar positions or participating in peace and antiwar movements.

The point is neither to excuse nor rationalize the bad behavior of women (whether Dovie or Imelda), but to underscore the fact that, when women behave no differently from men, they are more likely to be singled out and berated for being difficult or "arrogant."[24]

The turning point for Imelda's "rise" to power is arguably not the Dovie Beams scandal, but the declaration of martial law and the dictatorship that Marcos established in the Philippines. It is one thing to be the wife of an elected president, living in a country whose politicians are corrupt and enrich themselves at public expense,[25] but with a free press that can criticize the president's (and his wife's) policies and actions and a body of elected officials to vet or else block the president's decisions. It is another thing to be the wife of a dictator unconstrained by any institutional checks and balances, capable of putting rivals and enemies behind bars and stripping them of their assets, commanding an army to arrest anybody given the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and helping himself to the nation's funds and taking over various industries and turning them into personal expense accounts for himself, his wife and relatives, and his cronies and political allies.

Any number of explanations can be offered to account for Imelda's growing clout in the martial law government, but the most important is regime maintenance, the desire of Marcos to keep himself, his closest kin, and his most trusted people in power for as long as he could. Ferdinand's deteriorating health, the knowledge that his children were neither old nor experienced enough to "inherit" his position, the suspicion shared by all dictators that their lieutenants—especially those with strong connections to the military such as Executive Secretary Alejandro Melchor Jr. and Minister of Defense Enrile (Timberman 1991, 107, 117; and Enrile's [2012, 474–77] own account of his estrangement)—were conspiring to build their own power bases and ultimately dislodge the dictator in a coup d'état: all of these would have had salience in determining (as well as upsetting) the "balance of favor" (Hau 2017, 214) through which Marcos managed his dictatorship.

Imelda metamorphosed into the "Steel Butterfly" (Ellison 1988) because she could do so and did so from 1972 onwards: there would be no institutional mechanism to hold her decisions and actions to public accountability, and there would be no one, not even an increasingly debilitated Ferdinand, to stop her from doing what she wanted.

The Dovie Beams scandal did not create the "monster" that we now call Imelda. The American colonizers relied on scandal as an instrument to regulate Philippine politicians' behavior and colonial politics generally. In the postwar period, scandal was a potent instrument in fueling the internecine struggles among politicians and the growing criticism and militancy of activists, organizations, and sections of civil society. It was martial law that

effectively cemented the absolute power of the Marcoses, quelling dissent (through censorship, imprisonment, torture, and "salvagings"[26]), dismantling the institutional checks and balances that had hitherto served to constrain the executive power of the president and render it accountable to the public, and ultimately greasing Imelda Marcos's ascent to the commanding heights of government in partnership with her increasingly ailing, codependent husband.

Conclusion

The Dovie Beams affair is instructive in exposing the role that sex and scandal have long played in shaping Philippine politics in the postwar and martial law periods. Scandalous politics has a lineage stretching back to the American colonial era, when American officials used the intelligence arm of the Philippine Constabulary to collect scurrilous information (including rumors and gossip) on Filipino politicians' private lives, selectively wielding this information to regulate politicians' behavior on the public stage in particular and to police colonial politics in general. In the postwar period, the expansion of mass media and the highly contentious nature of electoral democracy have enabled largely the politics of scandal. An affair between an American B-movie actress and a Philippine president becomes a Benguet mine of opportunities for various key players: cronies exploit the secrecy of the affair to cement, even exploit, their close ties to the president for their own gain; political opponents play up the affair to weaken their incumbent rival; and activists and ordinary people incorporate it into their growing criticism of the president, the government, and the dismal state of Philippine politics, economy, society, and culture.

Perhaps the most crucial consequence of the scandal has been its use as a literary device by journalists and academics to account for the increasing power of Imelda Marcos as First Lady and the "conjugal dictatorship" that was forged in the wake of the declaration of martial law. These accounts have conferred explanatory power on an event that is more opaque and nuanced than is popularly supposed.

Beams would have had a number of motives for lobbing her bomba: pique and revenge against a lover who discarded her and a lover's wife who hounded her; fear for her life after being manhandled by agents of the state; money that was owed to her (by contract and by her own calculation of what she was entitled to); and free publicity that enabled her to parlay her

notoriety into a string of minor roles in B-films in the 1970s, interviews in the wake of the fall of the Marcoses in 1986, and a career in real estate that ended in bankruptcy and conviction for fraud (homemade sex videos in our time can make celebrities and moneymakers out of nobodies like the Kardashians). The scandal provoked by her revelation of her affair with President Marcos is now part of Philippine historical and collective memory. It also gave ammunition to various opposition groups (ranging from oligarchs to student activists) for their criticisms of, and actions against, the Marcos government throughout "the long 1970s" (to use Vicente Rafael's [2013] term).

As sociopolitical pornography, the affair tarnished the image of the Marcoses as individuals and as a couple whose presumed sexual excesses and psychopathologies served as symptoms of their ethico-political and moral failings. More, in postmortem accounts of the long 1970s, the affair was made to fit into a narrative charting the ascendancy of Imelda Marcos and the conjugal dictatorship that proved so disastrous for the Philippines.

Although Beams's alleged affair with Marcos lasted less than two years, its fallout has been a long-drawn process, part of several news cycles across decades. The explosive details of the Rotea book, which many consider the definitive account, is a strangely unsatisfying climax. Beams's consequent disavowal of the book has left the issue dangling (the Filipino word *bitin* is an apt expression) and begging to be retold over and over.

Beams's penchant for telling tall tales and lying (see, for example, the inconsistencies, discrepancies, and unverified claims noted by Ramos-De Leon 1986, 38–39, 42–43)[27] and history of mismanaging finances find their sad parallel—albeit of far larger magnitude, scope, and tragic consequences—in her former lover Ferdinand Marcos's own proclivity for fabulation and mendacity and history of mismanaging the politics and economy of the Philippines.

The Marcoses may have thought themselves smarter than others. Dovie Beams, knowing she would need to offer proof other than her own words, had taken pains to fix the evidence of the affair in durable media like the cassette tape, even though she could not have foreseen the great lengths to which Marcos would go to cover up his affair by getting someone else (Cueto) to admit to being "Fred" and trying to convince the public that Beams's story was not to be taken seriously because she was mentally unstable, greedy, licentious, *and* a bad mother.

Dovie Beams outlived the news of her demise in the 1990s (Hamilton-Paterson 1998, 265), dying on 30 December 2017. Like Ferdinand Marcos, Dovie Beams has become a kind of ghost, haunting the narratives of our recent past and eluding all attempts at exorcism and closure. So, too, has Imelda, even though she is still alive.[28]

Changing sexual and political mores have made the Dovie Beams affair and Marcos's ham-fisted efforts to silence his mistress in order to retain a modicum of middle-class decorum and respectability seem quaint, even old-fashioned. Presidents like Joseph Estrada and Rodrigo Duterte not only flaunt their infidelity and mistresses, but their open display of male virility, like their use of folksy, earthy language, helps burnish their popular appeal and their "populist" (supposedly anti-elite, even as they are arguably members of the Filipino elite themselves) credentials (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 64). Women, however, continue to find that what is good for the gander is not good for the goose, as slut-shaming remains in the arsenal for creating and containing scandal. Recently, allies of Duterte have weaponized allegations of a sexual relationship between Sen. Leila de Lima and her bodyguard in order to discredit one of his staunchest critics (Santos 2017).

Rather than downgrade the importance of the personal, the private, and the intimate in politics, we would be better served if we examine closely their bearing on how politics is conceived, delimited, and played out in real life. There is nothing specifically Filipino or Banana Republic about such things as nepotism, cronyism, pettifogging, and misogyny: just look at US Pres. Donald Trump.[29] Politics is always personal and can often get deeply personal. Perhaps the only sure thing that can be said about the scandal is that, in falling "in love" with Dovie Beams and playing with fire (the Filipino phrase "naglalaro ng apoy" packs more punch), Ferdinand Marcos had finally met his match.

Notes

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1 Dovie Leona Osborne was born in Nashville, Tennessee, USA, on 5 August 1932. A former piano teacher, she had minor roles in B- and C-films like *Wild Wheels* (1969), *Guns of a Stranger* (1973), and *The Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977). She married Edward Boehms and had a daughter by him. Boehms sued for divorce in 1962. After *Maharlika*, she operated a real estate agency in California and married Sergio Villagran, who would be sentenced to five years in prison for his part in defrauding banks of US$18 million.

2 In Rotea's (1984, 41) cheesy prose, Marcos at first "could not have an erection"; by contrast, Beams, who "had not made love in a long time" (ibid., 40), "unbelievably came" and "screamed with joy" (ibid., 41). Marcos had a hard time believing that Beams "came" (ibid.). Subsequent sessions apparently proved more successful, as "both came like crazy" (ibid., 46).

3 Marcos's desire to have more sons is documented in his diary (see the entries cited in Rempel 1993, 81).

4 Over the years, Beams would make other claims: that the marriage between Ferdinand and Imelda was no marriage, but a mere political partnership (Pedrosa 1987, 12); that Marcos had boasted that he was going to beat Sergio Osmeña Jr. in the 1969 presidential election by two million votes in Cebu and was upset that he had lost the election and had to "adjust" the ballots in order to declare himself winner (Ramos-De Leon 1986, 39); and that Marcos told her in April 1969 that he was planning to declare martial law (ibid.).

5 A rough cut of the film was released in Guam, but *Maharlika* was banned in the Philippines.

6 Marcos had sought to reorient Philippine foreign policy by strengthening diplomatic relations with Russia and other communist countries. Sensitive to nationalist opinion back home and aware of the need to burnish his own nationalist credentials, Marcos had also opted to "renegotiate" the agreements between the Philippines and the US, declaring that the Philippines would no longer allow itself to be treated as America's "small brother" (cited in Kotlowski 2016, 339) and, during his visit to the US in 1969, spoke to Nixon and other senior officials about "adopt[ing] a stance of independence" while remaining "close to the U.S." (ibid., 340). The language of Philippines–US relations under Marcos and Nixon shifted from one of "special relations" to that of "mutual accommodation" and "common interests" (ibid., 342). This stance, of course, did not stop progressive groups from calling Marcos a "running dog" (*tuta*) of the US and characterizing the Philippines–US relations as a neocolonial partnership.

7 I thank Ambeth Ocampo for kindly sharing with me by an email dated 6 Feb. 2018 the texts of the Marcos diary entries, in particular those of 19 Oct. 1970, 11 Mar. 1971, and 17 Apr. 1972.

8 See the excellent discussions by Rafael 2000 and Espiritu 2017, 84–115.

9 According to Teodoro F. Valencia (cited in De Manila 1970, 7), who had served on the Board of Censors just after the Second World War, "[t]he bomba business . . . dates back to 1946. They were showing bombas already, especially in the provinces. Striptease and outright French movies. We were going after them and persecuting them. And the problem of cuts being restored by exhibitors—that is old hat, too. It has been going on since 1946. And criticism of the board as well." The word "bomba" (Italian and Spanish *bomba*, "bombshell"; from the Latin *bombus* for "dull, heavy noise" and Greek *bombos* for "echoic, booming, humming") had acquired the meaning of "shattering, devastating thing or event" by 1860 and began to be used to refer to beautiful women "of startling vitality and physique, especially blonde" in 1942 (*Online Etymology Dictionary* 2017). The prototype of the "blonde bombshell" was platinum-haired and curvaceous Jean Harlow,

who appeared in the film "Bombshell" in 1933 and whose image and career inspired another sex symbol, Marilyn Monroe (Spoto 2001, 303; on Monroe as "bombshell," cf. Smith 2006, 68–95).

10 Gregg Jones (1989, 59–69) alleges that the bombing was planned by the Communist Party of the Philippines' Jose Maria Sison, who has denied his involvement.

11 "Your move, Lover Boy" (Garcellano 1971c, 11) was the concluding sentence of journalist Rosario Garcellano's three-part article on Dovie Beams's response to the smear campaign by ***Republic Weekly***. Laughter is celebrated in feminism. The French feminist Hélène Cixous (1976) uses the figure of Medusa to analyze the relationship between women, laughter, and revolution (a tribute to the important role of women in the French Revolution [Godineau 1998]). The fear of Medusa that is rooted in male anxieties about the female genitalia and power of speech (***vagina dentata***) is a recurrent symbol in counterrevolutionary rhetoric. Laughter can also be an assertion of freedom that is mindful of risk, as highlighted by distinguished Filipina feminist Sylvia Estrada Claudio (2015, 1–2) in her book on counseling abused women, which she has entitled ***And Then She Laughed***.

12 The first and third "facts" are undermined by Carmen Pedrosa's (1969/1986) biography of Imelda, which functioned as an exposé of the financial and marital troubles that dogged Imelda's immediate family and the subsequent protest that Imelda and her supporters lodged against the Miss Manila contest that led Manila mayor Arsenio Lacson to designate Imelda as "Muse of Manila." Moreover, according to Mijares (1986, 264), Marcos had dangled before Beams the prospect of becoming First Lady in place of Imelda, "who was becoming fat and obese, and an old wag."

13 Cueto called himself a businessman, but was better known as a professional thug who ran his own protection racket. He had tried to sit beside Beams and chat her up on the flight out of Manila and had evidently followed her to Hong Kong. Rumored to be Marcos's half-brother, he was killed in a shootout at a Makati hotel two years after the Dovie Beams affair (Rempel 1993, 89).

14 US Ambassador to the Philippines Henry Byroade was quoted as saying of Marcos that "He didn't have any vices at all, except for women. He didn't smoke, he didn't drink. But he liked American blondes" (Ellison 1988, 104). As noted earlier, in the "audition" for the female lead in ***Maharlika***, Marcos chose a brunette over a blonde.

15 See, e.g., Hamilton-Paterson's (1998, 255) argument in favor of the "emotional seriousness" of Marcos's affair with Beams.

16 In her biography of Imelda Marcos, Kerima Polotan (1969, 149) lists the criticisms levelled at the Spence biography by critics, who complained that Marcos was "praised not for being a 'good Filipino,' but for being 'almost like an American.'" As for Spence, he was dismissed as an "'American nobody in the Philippines had heard of, ***a writer of B-movie scripts***, with a heavy-going style, turgid and atrocious'" (ibid., italics added).

17 Paul Burke, the actor who played Marcos in ***Maharlika***, was a television star who appeared in the critically panned but commercially successful ***Valley of the Dolls*** (1967) and also had a secondary role in ***The Thomas Crown Affair*** (1968), but had had trouble landing another starring role in a hit TV series of his own after the mid-1960s. The other star, Farley Granger, had made a splash early in his career, when he appeared in two Alfred Hitchcock films (***The Rope*** [1948] and ***Strangers on a Train*** [1951]), and had some success in Broadway later on, but was never considered a major Hollywood star.

18 Cf. Espiritu's (2017, 65–83) discussion of the "Marcos romance" and its impact on the creation of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

19 In the US Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's well-known extravagance and shopping sprees had created tension in her marriages to John F. Kennedy (who had been involved in a potentially scandalous affair with a woman who was also the mistress of a Mafia boss) and billionaire Aristotle Onassis (Adler and King 1982, 119). The difference between Jackie and Imelda lies in Ferdinand's capacity to enrich himself (and indulge his wife and his family) while in office and the scale of this enrichment.

20 There have been laudable attempts to rethink the premises of women's relationship to power. See, e.g., Mina Roces's (2000, 2) argument about the need to expand the definition of "power" by deconstructing the binary between official and unofficial power and recognizing women as "vital political agents" whether or not they hold political office.

21 The Liberal Party's standard bearer in 1965, Pres. Diosdado Macapagal, relied as well on wife Eva's cohort of female supporters, collectively called "Lakambini 1965."

22 Dean Kotlowski's (2016, 330) account, however, uncritically takes the Dovie Beams turning-point thesis for granted: "For example, Imelda's 1970 visit to the United States was a side excursion from a trip to England, where she had gone to see her son settled in boarding school. That same visit was prologue to public revelations of her husband's affair with an actress. Nevertheless, Imelda used that tragedy to her own advantage by subsequently expanding her overseas travel and meeting Nixon in 1971."

23 Dwight Eisenhower considered Mamie "the best vote-getter in the family" during the 1956 election campaign, and the women's Division of Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon was able to take advantage of Mamie's popularity to argue for a bigger role for women in the campaign (Troy 2000, 86).

24 Kotlowski (2016, 329, italics added), for example, quotes the same passage from Hoff-Wilson (1992, 184), only to adopt the same stance Hoff-Wilson criticizes when he makes the pointed observation that Imelda's "diplomatic forays lifted Imelda's standing in the Philippines and paved the way for her to make official visits to other nations, gain government positions during the Marcos dictatorship, and *grow arrogant* as she pursued a 'Jet Set' lifestyle." Entire books have been written about Richard Nixon's arrogant behavior (see, e.g., Buchanan 1978), but nowhere in the essay does Kotlowski make any reference to Nixon's personality, problematic and otherwise. The same kind of grating arrogance that is denigrated in a woman is excused, even admired and celebrated, in a man (for what would Harlequin romances be without their arrogant men?).

25 A former crony of Marcos has been quoted as saying: "As far back as the 1960s, when Marcos was a congressman, he was known as a 10 percenter. Business people wanting favors turned over 10 percent of their shares to him—and they got their favors" (Seagrave 1988, 203).

26 "Salvaging" refers to summary or extrajudicial killings (EJK), as they are now popularly known.

27 Among the claims Beams made over the years were her modeling for Salvador Dali ("I'm in a lot of his paintings") and her friendship with Hollywood producer Bob Evans (Gomez 1969, 26). After the People Power Revolution in February 1986, Beams was interviewed about her connection to Marcos. She told a reporter that she had taken "political documents . . . from the presidential palace" (Hastings 1986), which she intended to use for her autobiography, and that she had knowledge of "political assassinations carried out by the Marcos regime" (ibid.). She also denied profiting from ill-gotten Marcos money, saying that she "worked very hard" at her real estate dealings, the landholdings of which were estimated at US$7.7 million (ibid.). At that time, Beams—then married to a nightclub owner named Sergio de Villagran—was petitioning a federal

bankruptcy court for permission to reorganize payment of debts amounting to US$24 million (Mathews 1986; Murphy 1987). Barely a year later, in December 1987, Beams was sentenced to eight years in prison for defrauding a number of banks of a total of US$18 million in real estate loans (Murphy 1987). Her lawyer attempted to put up an insanity defense, arguing that the actress, who claimed to have been diagnosed with AIDS, was mentally impaired from an arterial blockage caused by the virus. He also unearthed and presented—no surprise here—a physician's report from thirty years ago, similar to if not the one used by *Republic Weekly* in 1971 to take down Dovie, that had diagnosed Beams as "borderline psychotic" (ibid.). The judge promptly threw out the insanity defense, saying there "is no substantial evidence to this day of a serious psychiatric problem" (ibid.). The federal prosecutor also presented a document indicating that the results of Beams's AIDS test was negative (ibid.).

28 I thank Vince Rafael for this insight.

29 Contrary to being an exception to the rule, the US provides ample and rich illustration of the intrinsically personalistic nature of politics. American Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, outraged at not being invited by Pres. William Clinton to the front of the airplane for budget-crisis talks during a twenty-five-hour flight for the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and even more "insulted" and "appalled" at being asked to disembark off the back of the plane when it landed back in Washington, proceeded to get Republican-controlled Congress and Senate to pass a stopgap funding bill that Clinton had vetoed. Interviewed about his actions afterwards, Gingrich referred to the incidents on the plane and said: "I think it's part of why you ended up with us sending down a tougher . . . resolution. It's petty, . . . but I think it's human" (Baer 1995). Another case in point: Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver was skillful in integrating the horoscopes cast by Nancy Reagan's favorite astrologer into Pres. Ronald Reagan's schedule (Regan 1988, 73). The astrologer stated that January was a "bad month" for the president to deliver the State of the Union Address (ibid., 70) and that the president should not deliver his speech on the findings of the Iran–Contra report and hold a press conference on 9 March 1987, suggesting instead that 4 and 5 March (the date of the Reagans' wedding anniversary) were "good" (ibid., 367). The president delivered his speech on 5 March.

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