

In Court, On Air, On Trial: The Impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Renato Corona as Social Drama

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the impeachment of Renato C. Corona, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, through the lens of Victor Turner's Social Drama Theory. Using a rhetorical analysis approach, it classifies the events of the Corona impeachment into the different elements of Social Drama Theory, namely: Breach, Crisis, Redressive Action, and Reintegration/Schism. The paper shows the importance of recognizing and analyzing various conflicting versions of a social drama as shown in the conflicting narratives of Renato Corona and former President Benigno Aquino III regarding the whole impeachment event. The Breach in the social drama was Corona's midnight appointment as Chief Justice, the Crisis involved the events drafted in the Articles for Impeachment against Corona, the Redressive Action focused on the existence of two competing versions of the whole political event present in the speeches by the senator-judges, and the Reintegration/Schism phase emphasized how aspects of a social unit may perceive the result of the Redressive Action as a healing of the breach while others perceive the result as a continuing crisis in the institution. The findings showed that the social drama of the Corona impeachment was not only about Corona's alleged subservience to former Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA) and his misdeeds as the leader of the Judiciary. It also proved that Aquino III may have also had a political agenda of his own behind the whole impeachment trial. The researcher also found that social dramas do not end in the Reintegration/Schism phase for new crises will inevitably disturb the social unit again.

Keywords: Social drama, impeachment, Renato Corona, rhetoric

INTRODUCTION

The impeachment of Renato C. Corona as Chief Justice (CJ) of the Supreme Court of the Philippines was a performance of national scope, a series of events that Filipinos were given the chance to witness firsthand. According to InterAksyon columnist Atty. Mel Sta. Maria (2012), what attracted people to the impeachment of Renato Corona was the fact that as head of the highest judicial body of the nation, he was expected to safeguard the laws of the country, but instead of being an arbiter of justice, he was accused of doing the exact opposite of his sworn duty. For Sta. Maria, even the intellectual elite rarely criticizes high-ranking public officials, “as their reputation for eruditeness and honesty seem to precede them,” but

although every office in the government service is a public trust, no position exacts a greater demand on moral righteousness and uprightness than a seat in the Judiciary. High ethical principles and a sense of propriety should be maintained, without which the faith of the people in the Judiciary so indispensable in an orderly society cannot be preserved.” (Articles of Impeachment 2011)

Because of the weight of the charges and the prominence of the parties involved in the case, the media took advantage of documenting the event and presenting it to the public. Kathryn Raymundo, a contributor for the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, said that live proceedings of the trial were covered by nearly all the country’s news channels and news websites.” These web pages also contain[ed] news reports, analyses, commentaries, timelines, profiles, videos, and feedback from the media audience. Since January 16, 2012, the live coverage of the impeachment trial last[ed] four hours and thus [had] require[d] at least two news teams to report the day’s events” (2012). The media did not just cover the trial; they also invited experts to analyze the happenings blow-by-blow and comment on the developments in real time.

The series of events that led to the trial of Corona started on December 12, 2011 when Corona himself broke his silence at the weekly flag-raising ceremony at the high tribunal’s compound in Manila. He delivered a speech about the slew of criticisms that were being hurled against him by President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III. The issue was Corona’s supposed bias for former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Marlon Ramos, a contributor for the Philippine Daily Inquirer, claimed that in his speech, Corona said that there was a “clandestine move that ha[d] been hatched to unseat [him],” despite which he announced that he would not resign.

Corona's appointment as Chief Justice was controversial. The retirement of Chief Justice Reynato Puno on May 17, 2010 left the highest seat in the Supreme Court vacant. CJ Puno's retirement was compulsory because under Philippine laws, the age limit for Justices is 70 years old. According to Repalda, "the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), even prior to the date of Puno's retirement, had submitted a recommended list to the then-President Arroyo, who in turn made a decision and announced Corona's appointment as Chief Justice on May 12, 2010 – two days after the election" (2012). This appointment was very controversial because according to Article VII, Section 15 of the Philippine Constitution of 1986, a sitting president must inhibit himself or herself from appointing people to positions of power, which includes the Judiciary, two months before the next presidential elections and up to the end of his or her term.

When Aquino III assumed office on June 30, 2010, his office published Executive Order No. 2, which recalled, withdrew, and revoked the appointments issued by the previous administration due to violations on the constitutional ban on midnight appointments. However, Repalda (2012) argued that the position of Chief Justice is not included in the executive order, for it "only covers appointments in departments, agencies, and government-owned and -controlled corporations and does not include the judiciary."

Blogger J. Domingo (2012) states that "the Supreme Court may have wrapped the said midnight appointment with all its elaborate technical legalese, but, from the perspective of the country's general consensus of what is right and wrong – based on its political experience, jurisprudence, and the intent of its Constitution – it was, at the very least, an act of grave imprudence and, at worst, a brazen attempt by a corrupt president to undermine her successor, thereby thwarting the people's will." Corona's midnight appointment sparked a debate as to whether it should be considered constitutional.

Although the trial had already concluded in 2012, the Corona impeachment still remains fresh in the memory of the Filipino people. During the protest rally against the Pork Barrel that was held in Luneta Park in August 26, 2013 which Corona attended, the former Chief Justice was reportedly "booed" by the protesters because he was also found guilty in his impeachment trial in 2012 of betrayal of public trust by failing to disclose US\$2.4 million and P80 million in bank deposits in his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth. His trial was remembered once more by the Filipino people when on April 29, 2016, the former Chief Justice passed away due to cardiac arrest.

Additionally, the Corona impeachment event is a relevant historical account during the term of Aquino III for it is one of the most powerful political moves he made as President to perform the truth and sincerity of his “*tuwid na daan*” electoral campaign. This famous slogan, an image of a straight path, symbolizes the eradication of poverty through a corrupt-free administration. This slogan might have been one of the factors that led to former President Aquino’s victory in the 2010 Presidential elections. Through this promise of journeying and leading the Filipino people through the straight path, Aquino wanted to create a character that will serve as the country’s hope, the “hero” that will save the nation from the destruction and corruption that overcame the land under Gloria Arroyo’s presidency. Arroyo’s unpopular administration and the people’s disappointments and anger towards the government during her term somehow gave Aquino’s slogan an impact of hope and optimism. President Aquino pointed out that Corona’s authority as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was one of the antagonists that he had to fight in order to keep the “*tuwid na daan*” straight and transparent.

Many people see Corona’s trial as a victory for the Aquino administration, but others do not. Even Francisco Sionil Jose (2016)’s comments on the relevance of Aquino’s term in the victory of current Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in the 2016 presidential campaign are very much in line with the fate that Corona faced during the former’s administration. “If Duterte wins the election, his victory will be brought about by millions of Filipinos fed up with corruption at all levels of our society, and frustrated that the gains of the Aquino administration do not translate into their improved welfare and safety. The Duterte vote is the voice of angry Filipinos,” F. Sionil Jose said. Aquino pointed out that Corona’s trial is his grand act of the implementation of his “*tuwid na daan*” promise, but other aspects of the whole social drama suggest otherwise. President Duterte’s campaign slogan in 2016 which says “Change is Coming” may imply that the Filipino did not feel positive changes in the Philippines from Aquino’s administration, and we still perceive corruption and poverty reigning over the nation despite having a Chief Justice impeached during the latter’s term.

Critics see the whole Corona impeachment process in 2012 as a performance. In his article titled “The Corona Impeachment: A Year After,” Bobit Avila (2013), a columnist from the Philippine Star, writes, “I already had a hunch that CJ Corona’s case was doomed from the start. The rest was mere ‘*palabas*’ or a reality show courtesy of national TV networks that showed the impeachment trial like it was just another Filipino telenovela.”

The entire impeachment trial was televised and the Filipino people were able to watch the proceedings. It was a performance with many audiences. We had 200 other spectators at the Philippine Senate as well as viewers in their homes watching the trial on television. Richard Schechner (2006) noted in *Performance Studies: An Introduction* that “high-visibility trials of famous persons, trials depicting horrendous crimes, and trials of political importance attract multiple audiences arranged in concentric circles” (211). He implies that the first circle involves the judge, the defendant, and the attorneys; and the second circle consists of “interested parties”- the relatives, friends and enemies of the defendant or the victim, and even those who “cruise courthouses for entertainment” (211). The outermost circle of spectators can sometimes be millions, and this is where mass media step in whenever they televise coverage of the special events. The concept of Court TV emerges where it:

Broadcasts a stream of trials, sensational and mundane, enhanced by legal reporting and analysis by day and trial-based dramas and programming at night. Viewers regard trials as a reality television or a kind of sports show. If a case involves a celebrity or is for other reasons of general interest, the courtroom space becomes crowded; the press acts as a surrogate audience reporting to the public who isn't able to be present in person. (Schechner, 211)

Trials shown to the public, like the Corona impeachment, are examples of show trials. Schechner further stated that “show trials’ in centuries past were designed to be shown to the public to showcase the power of the state and, sometimes, to terrify the public” (211). At present, trials like this only show that an entity –be it a “single nation, a consortium of victors, or the United Nations” – has authority and power. They also demonstrate the “viability of a society’s justice system” (212). After a guilty verdict comes the punishment. During the medieval and Renaissance period, execution comes in the form of theatrical spectacles. “Before the mounting of the scaffold, the condemned delivered orations while spectators panicked. Even Christ’s Crucifixion was poetized as theatre” (Schechner, 213).

Trials like these can be analyzed as a performance through the lens of a Social Drama Theory; an impeachment trial may fall into the category of the Redressive Action phase. According to Victor Turner (1974) in his book *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, “Social Dramas are units of a harmonic process, arising in conflict situations” (37). To solve the conflict, the conflicting entities should undergo redressive action, and in the case of an impeachment trial, must use “formal judicial and legal machinery” to arrive at either the reintegration

of the status quo that has been disturbed by the conflict or the schism that has permanently destroyed the status quo.

Guided by Victor Turner's elements of Social Drama, I thus primarily raise the question: How did the Corona impeachment take place as a social drama? I aim to (a) describe how the Corona impeachment took place based on the elements of Social Drama (Breach, Crisis, Redressive Action, Reintegration or Schism) and (b) analyze the rhetorical strategies used by the characters involved in each stage of the social drama.

This approach focuses on two conflicting sides of a social drama: the competing narratives of former President Benigno Aquino III (PNoy) and former CJ Renato Corona. The rhetoric of both sides focuses on the preservation of the person and the personality of both the major characters involved.

VICTOR TURNER'S ELEMENTS OF A SOCIAL DRAMA

In *On The Edge of the Bush: Anthropology As Experience*, Victor Turner (1985) emphasized that a social drama is much like a stage drama. "The stage drama, when it is meant to do more than entertain—though entertainment is always one of its vital aims—is a meta-commentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting, on the major social dramas of its social context (wars, revolutions, scandals, institutional changes)" (300). The message and the rhetoric of the stage drama feed back into the "latent processual structure of the social drama." Life now becomes a reflection of art, "and the living now perform their lives, for the protagonists of a social drama, a 'drama of living' have been equipped by aesthetic drama with some of their most salient opinions, imageries, tropes, and ideological perspectives. Neither mutual monitoring, life by art, art by life, is exact, for each is not a planar mirror but a matricial mirror; at each exchange something new is added and something old is lost or discarded" (301).

A social drama is composed of four elements. A Breach occurs when a particular event breaks open an incipient situation that, when activated, threatens the stability of a social unit such as the family, corporation, community, or nation. A Crisis is the widening of the Breach into increasingly open or public displays. The Redressive Action is what is done to deal with the Crisis, to resolve or heal the Breach. It ranges from personal advice, informal mediation, or arbitration, to formal judicial and legal machinery, and, to resolve certain kinds of Crises or other legitimate

forms of resolution, to the performance of a public ritual. Lastly, the Reintegration/Schism is the resolution of the original Breach in such a way that the social fabric is knit back together. Schism is the social recognition and legitimization between contesting parties (qtd. in Schechner 75).

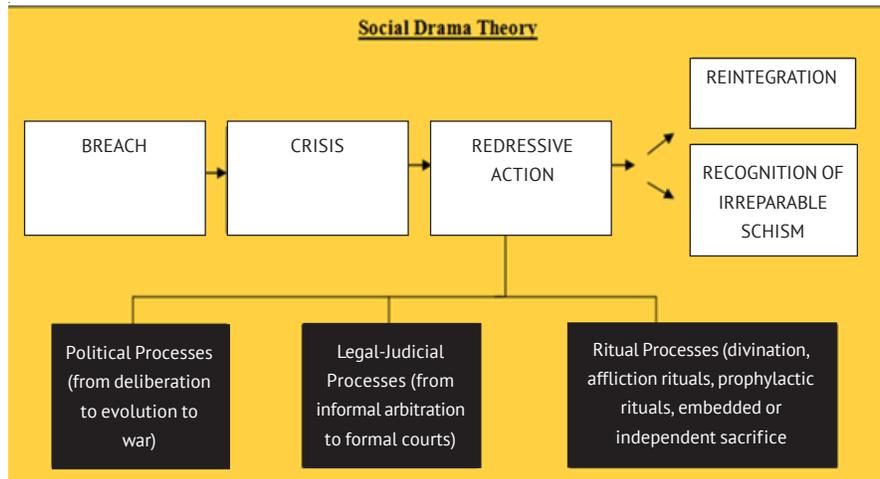


Figure 1. The elements of Social Drama. Turner, Victor. *On The Edge of the Bush: Anthropology As Experience*. University of Arizona Press, 1985.

Schechner (2006) says that in the Redressive Action phase of the social drama, people turn to political, legal-judicial, or ritual processes. Political processes deal with the Crisis through deliberation, revolution, or war; legal-judicial processes involve informal arbitration to formal courts; and ritual processes deal with the Crisis through divination, affliction rituals, prophylactic rituals, and embedded or independent sacrifice.

The fluid relationship between aesthetic processes and social processes, including aesthetic and social dramas, are prominent in Turner's theory. Turner suggests that social dramas affect aesthetic dramas and vice versa. Every action that was undergone in a social drama is shaped by aesthetic principle and performance/rhetorical devices. Reciprocally, a culture's aesthetic practices are all shaped by social interactions. "The politician, activist, lawyer, terrorist, all use techniques of performance—staging, ways of addressing various audiences, setting, etc.—to present, demonstrate, protest, or support specific social actions that may maintain, modify, or overturn the existing social order. Reciprocally, artists draw on actions performed in social

life, 'real events' not only as materials to be enacted but as themes, rhythms, models of behavior, and representation" (76). This fluid relationship between social and aesthetic drama is represented by Schechner in the diagram below.

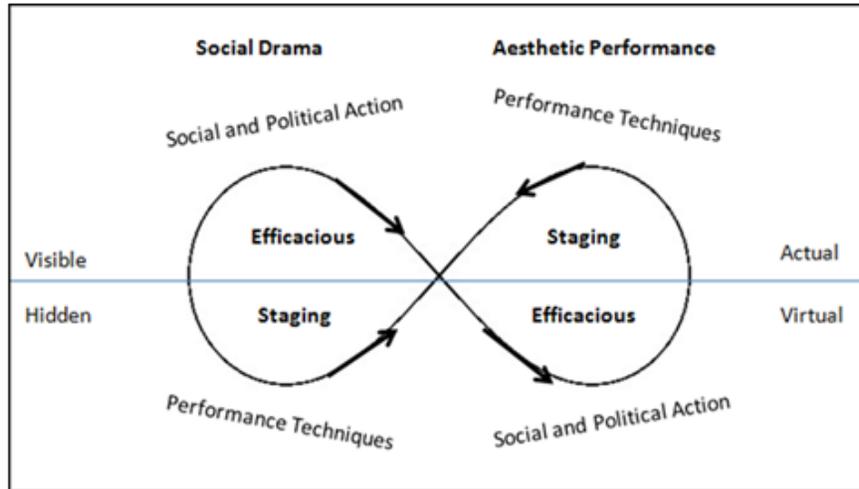


Fig. 2. Diagram of the relationship between Social Drama and Aesthetic Performance. Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2006.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The researcher aims not only to identify the elements of the social drama present in the impeachment of Renato Corona, but also to analyze the societal repercussions and issues that the event has highlighted. In analyzing the impeachment trial, the researcher uses as artifacts archival documents in print and online sources and the pulse of Filipinos in various blogs. Videos of the trial uploaded on YouTube and the official transcripts of the trial are also artifacts in the analysis of this research. The official transcripts of the trial may be found in the Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, the transparency page of the Office of the President. Furthermore, the important events of the impeachment trial that served as the main artifacts in the researcher's study are determined with the help of Atty. Dante Gatmaytan, an Associate Professor of Law at the University of the Philippines Diliman College of Law.

Phase 1: Collection of Videos, Data, and Artifacts

The first phase of data gathering involved researching for significant events of the Corona trial through videos uploaded online and artifacts posted on online blogs and news websites. The researcher went through archival documents of the Corona impeachment by gathering newspapers and online news articles from December of 2011 to May of 2012 (the span of time covered by the impeachment trial).

After finding which events in the Corona impeachment to focus on, the researcher compiled these data and artifacts for the next part of the data gathering. Videos of the impeachment trial and official transcripts were downloaded as well.

Phase 2: Consultation with a Lawyer

The second phase of data gathering involved consultations with Atty. Gatmaytan, who was knowledgeable on the topic. The researcher showed him downloaded YouTube videos and official transcripts of the impeachment trial that she found significant, and he shared his insights on what other events to include or omit in the analysis.

Phase 3: Sitting through the materials to create a typology

The third phase of data gathering involved arranging the artifacts and the opinions of Atty. Gatmaytan according to the typology of analysis. These artifacts were classified based on categories such as the Breach, Crisis, Redressive Action, and Reintegration/Schism.

DATA ANALYSIS

Breach and Crisis Phases

Newspaper articles about the different events involved in the impeachment of Renato Corona were the artifacts. Magazines and online blogs were also helpful in the gathering of information needed for the analysis.

Consultation with a lawyer helped the researcher fit data from the artifacts in the different phases of the Social Drama of the Corona Impeachment. The researcher

analyzed the Breach, the Crisis, the Redressive Action, and the Reintegration/Schism phase based on these artifacts.

The researcher used artifacts that were published during the specific time the events that were studied had happened. For the analysis of the Breach and Crisis phases, the researcher used newspaper articles written from May 2010 to January 2012. The events that reflect the Breach and Crisis phases of Corona’s impeachment happened during these times. The researcher used newspaper articles from December 2011 to May 2012 as basis for the analysis of the events within the Impeachment Trial. Lastly, the researcher used artifacts and blogs published after May of 2012 in order to analyze the events that transpired after the impeachment trial that were related to the Corona impeachment. Below is a table that reflects the timeline of the Corona impeachment and the specific dates when each of the elements of the social drama happened.

Table 1. Timeline of the Corona Impeachment

| Social Drama | Event | Time |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Breach and Crisis | Breach Renato Corona’s midnight appointment | May 2010 to January 2012 |
| | Crisis Events in the Articles for Impeachment against Corona, and Aquino’s alleged diversion of Hacienda Luisita issue | |
| Redressive Action | The Impeachment Trial of Renato Corona | December 2011 to May 2012 |
| Reintegration/Schism | After-effects of the Impeachment Trial | May 2012 to May 2013 |

Redressive Action Phase

The researcher conducted an analysis of the Impeachment Trial of Renato Corona by describing the courtroom drama and the narratives presented during the trial. Therefore, videos of GMA News from YouTube and the transcripts of the trial from the Official Gazette website of the Office of the President of the Philippines were

downloaded. The redressive action phase was analysed with the use of the transcripts and the video coverage of the impeachment trial.

Reintegration/Schism Phase

After the analysis of the impeachment trial, the researcher went to the schism/reintegration phase by going back to the data from newspaper articles, online blogs, and newscasts. The events that point to the aftermath of the trial on the Supreme Court were analyzed in this phase.

THE BREACH: THE BEGINNING OF IT ALL

Turner (1974) defines the Breach as the event that breaks into an incipient situation and threatens the stability of a social unit. An incipient situation is a situation that is “beginning to happen or develop.” The Supreme Court is believed to be the arbiter of justice in the whole land whose power abides with the Constitution of the Philippines. Therefore, the incipient situation that threatened the stability and credibility of the Supreme Court and Aquino’s “*tuwid na daan*” can be analysed as the unconstitutional act of the midnight appointment of Renato Corona as Chief Justice.

What makes the midnight appointment of Renato Corona a breach in the Supreme Court? In the article published by Philippine Daily Inquirer columnist Artemio Panganiban (2009), he wrote that “the Chief Justice is expected to lead our highest court in its critical role as the last bulwark of democracy. Beyond that, he attends to many sensitive, non-judicial leadership duties that take him to the farthest corners of the country. That is why he is more accurately addressed as the Chief Justice of the Philippines, not just Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.” Panganiban also mentioned some functions of the Chief Justice. He said that the Chief Justice is the *Primus Inter Pares*, the first among equals who presides over the sessions of the Supreme Court, controls the flow of its proceedings, shapes its agenda, summarizes the discussions, and influences the direction of the Court’s work. The second function of the CJ is to lead the entire judiciary composed of 2,000 lower judges and 26,000 judicial employees throughout the country. Another function of the CJ is to be the leader of the bar. Lastly and most importantly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should be “a role model and exemplar of public service.” Panganiban noted that in the Filipinos’ search for heroes, we look up to the Chief Justice as our choice of an upright public official.

The appointment sparked controversy and debate. This made PGMA's appointment of Corona a "midnight appointment" and therefore unconstitutional. It was not only Corona that was being criticized for his midnight appointment but also the appointing power above him: former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. But while Arroyo orchestrated the appointment, Corona still had a big part in making it possible. Corona was not a "puppet" of Arroyo, an unconscious toy that performed solely through the commands and control of its puppeteer. Corona had the choice to decline the appointment as a sign of respect to the integrity of the Supreme Court and the sacredness of the Constitution, but he still chose to be a part of the list of nominees.

On the other hand, this leads to the question of what makes the midnight appointment of Renato Corona a breach in Aquino's *tuwid na daan*. President Aquino III's electoral slogan was the very famous *tuwid na daan* that symbolized the eradication of poverty through a corrupt-free administration. This slogan might have been one of the factors that led to his victory in the 2010 Presidential elections. President Aquino wanted to create a character that would have served as the country's hope—the "hero" that would save the nation from the destruction and corruption that overcame the land under Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency. Macapagal-Arroyo's unpopular administration and the people's disappointment and anger towards the government during her term somehow gave Aquino's slogan an impact of hope and optimism.

President Aquino III legitimized the breach of Corona's midnight appointment as that of the Supreme Court's and the whole Philippine government's as well. Through his *tuwid na daan*, Aquino wanted to appear as the defender of the land from the remaining forces of corruption in the system. President Aquino pointed out that Corona's authority as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was one of the villains that he had to fight in order to keep the *tuwid na daan* transparent. He pointed out that the system of his administration should be clean and spotless, and Corona was a contaminant that had to be eradicated. In one of his speeches posted by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Aquino III (2011) stated:

We have no plan to step on its rights or humiliate the credibility of anyone. But we have to go back to the main principle of our democracy. Those of us who took an oath to serve only owe it to one: you who are our boss, the Filipino people. Now there is one public servant who owes a debt of gratitude not to the people who should be the source of our power, but to a patron who squeezed him into the position, will we rely on him to look at the interest of the people?

Corona was considered an ally of Macapagal-Arroyo and was thus part of the memory of the many years of corruption associated with her. Corona's position in the Supreme Court created a breach in the "righteous" Aquino government. He was a threat to the government and particularly to Aquino's *tuwid na daan*. Corona's position as Chief Justice equated to a position of power over Court decisions that could even have protected Macapagal-Arroyo from lawsuits and defended her allies. A chief magistrate considered biased towards the former President and whose very appointment was considered a violation of the Constitution put the stability of the Supreme Court in jeopardy and was obvious ground for mistrust among Filipino people. Corona symbolized the remains of Arroyo's tainted administration contaminating Aquino's "righteous" government, a stumbling block along his *tuwid na daan*.

In this case, we can see the use of the "protagonist-antagonist" and "person vs. personality" themes present in the Breach phase of the Social Drama. In looking at the Breach using the protagonist-antagonist analysis, we can say that Corona pointed to Aquino as the antagonist for trying to take hold of the three branches of the government. Corona presented himself as the protagonist who, as an appointee of Arroyo, was not an ally but a threat to President Aquino III. On the other hand, Aquino III still considered the midnight appointment as unconstitutional—a plot to have had Corona lead the Supreme Court as a puppet of Arroyo, making Corona the antagonist in his version of the story.

In looking at the Breach of the Social Drama using the person vs. personality approach, meanwhile, we can infer that the supposedly non-political institution that is the Supreme Court, through the personality of the Chief Justice, can be read as having been controlled by the persons of either Macapagal-Arroyo or Aquino III. On one hand, it can be said that Macapagal-Arroyo wanted power over the Supreme Court's ruling. Thus, it can be interpreted that her hold on the personality of the Chief Justice was for the accomplishment of her own motives. On the other hand, it could be said that Aquino also wanted the power of the Supreme Court, which meant that to accomplish his plans, he had to have the personality of the Chief Justice replaced.

CRISIS: A SERIES OF MORE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Schechner (2007) defined the Crisis phase of the Social Drama as "the widening of the breach into increasingly open or public displays. " He stated that "there may be several successive crises, each more public and threatening than the last" (75). The Crisis phase of the Corona impeachment is thus comprised of the series of events that served as bases for his impeachment. The midnight appointment that triggered

the instability of the integrity of the Supreme Court and the people's trust in the Chief Justice was only one of the many issues Renato Corona faced during his term as Chief Justice.

In looking at the Social Drama of Corona's impeachment trial, we can also identify the emergence of two competing narratives. Aquino's version of the Crisis involves Corona's name being put in the image of the antagonist. Aquino further stated in his speech that he vowed to protect and fight for the interest of the people. By saying that he had "no intention of violating [his] sworn oath" and "of failing the people," he put forth an image in the mold of a hero leader who was fighting for justice and for the interests of the Filipino people. His version of the Crisis, therefore, was Corona's alleged subservience to President Arroyo and Corona's corrupt deeds as the leader of the Judiciary. Both of these claims were reflected on the Articles for Impeachment against Renato Corona. In summary, here are the eight articles for the impeachment of Renato C. Corona as Chief Justice of the Philippines, with the first article serving as the Breach of the Social Drama:

ARTICLE I

Respondent betrayed the public trust through his track record marked by partiality and subservience in cases involving the Arroyo Administration from the time of his appointment as Supreme Court Justice and until his dubious appointment as a midnight Chief Justice to the present.

ARTICLE II

Respondent committed culpable violation of the Constitution and/or betrayed the public trust when he failed to disclose to the public his statement of assets, liabilities, and net worth as required under Sec. 17, Art. XI of the 1987 Constitution.

ARTICLE III

Respondent committed culpable violation of the Constitution and/or betrayed the public trust by failing to meet and observe the stringent standards under Art. VIII, Section 7 (3) of the Constitution that provides that "[a] member of the judiciary must be a person of proven competence, integrity, probity, and independence" in allowing the Supreme Court to act on mere letters filed by a counsel which caused

the issuance of flip-flopping decisions in final and executor cases; in creating an excessive entanglement with Mrs. Arroyo through her appointment of his wife to office; and in discussing with litigants regarding cases pending before the Supreme Court.

ARTICLE IV

Respondent committed culpable violation of the Constitution and/or betrayed the public trust when he blatantly disregarded the principle of separation of powers by issuing a “Status Quo Ante” order against the house of representatives in the case concerning the impeachment of then Ombudsman Merceditas Navarro-Gutierrez.

ARTICLE V

Respondent betrayed the public trust through wanton arbitrariness and partiality in consistently disregarding the principle of Res Judicata in the cases involving the 16 newly-created cities, and the promotion of Dinagat Island into a Province.

ARTICLE VI

Respondent betrayed the public trust by arrogating unto himself, and to a committee he created, the authority and jurisdiction to improperly investigate a Justice of the Supreme Court for the purpose of exculpating him. Such authority and jurisdiction is properly reposed by the Constitution in the House of Representatives via impeachment.

ARTICLE VII

Respondent betrayed the public trust through his partiality in granting a temporary restraining order (TRO) in favor of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and her husband Jose Miguel Arroyo in order to give them an opportunity to escape prosecution and to frustrate the ends of justice, and in distorting the Supreme Court decision on the effectivity of the TRO in view of a clear failure to comply with the conditions of the Supreme Court’s own TRO.

ARTICLE VIII

Respondent committed culpable violation of the Constitution and/or betrayed the public trust when he failed and refused to account for the Judiciary Development Fund (JDF) and special allowance for the Judiciary (SAJ) collections.

Most of the events in the Articles of Impeachment were not discussed in public before they were released in December 2011, and the details presented by the Prosecution were scrutinized only during the trial itself. This serves as a critique of the one-dimensional flow of the theory of Social Drama. Here in the case of a sensationalized impeachment trial, the Crisis and Redressive Action phases seem to overlap.

Although the Crisis in Corona's trial did not comprise of an exposition of issues becoming more public one after the other, it still led to a point where the Crisis was justified and a Redressive Action was needed. The Articles of Impeachment against Corona were not issues that were publicized and talked about the moment they were committed; the issues were only brought to the open when the very articles were released. Nevertheless, these issues served as a solid cry that some form of instability was happening in the Supreme Court. The Articles of Impeachment were a reflection of the crumbling judicial institution that sought for an impeachment trial to save face. The Crisis in the Social Drama of Corona's impeachment was magnified only by the prosecution team when they put into words the accusations they had against Corona through the eight Articles of Impeachment against him. These accusations could have possibly harmed the Supreme Court's integrity or threatened its stability as a judicial institution.

According to the official document of the impeachment titled "Articles of Impeachment against Renato C. Corona", "in the Supreme Court, Corona ha[d] consistently acted in a manner that protect[ed] Mrs. Arroyo, her legal maneuvers while in office, and the legal and administrative landmines she left behind, so as to impede the government's efforts to exact accountability and justice." Additionally, during Corona's term as Chief Justice, public confidence in the decision-making of the Supreme Court was lost "due to the manner in which the Court ha[d] handed down decisions, only to reconsider, overturn, and overturn again those decisions, resulting in an unprecedented state of flux in terms of the verdicts of the highest court in the land."

The same official document also reported that as Chief Justice, Corona "ha[d] been lavish in spending public funds"—an action that was against ethical expectations of

him and his family; had “intrigued and conspired” against his fellow justices of the Supreme Court; and had “behaved more like a scofflaw than a Chief Justice” as he refused to disclose his assets and liabilities to the public. Corona also allegedly used his administrative powers for “partisan political ends” in order to protect other officials put in a high position in government “for the same reason he was appointed” and was protecting former President Arroyo to ensure that she evaded accountability for the scandals of her presidency.

The framing of Aquino’s narrative points to Corona as the antagonist of the story. Renato Corona’s rhetoric, however, revolves around Aquino’s alleged diversion of the Hacienda Luisita issue and his plans to control the Judiciary.

Moreso, the crafting of the eight Articles of Impeachment had been controversial from the very beginning. In an article from World Socialist Website, Joseph Santolan (2012) said:

The impeachment of Renato Corona has from its inception been the work of President Aquino. Aquino and his advisors drafted the articles of impeachment, railroaded them through Congress in three hours, and have carried on a relentless campaign of anti-democratic machinations and populist bombast against Corona. The wellspring of Aquino’s determination to remove Corona is two-fold: Corona, at the helm of the Supreme Court, jeopardizes Aquino’s bid to consolidate political power from his rival, former President Arroyo, and has moved to redistribute the vast sugar holdings of Aquino’s family.

From this statement, we can say that Renato Corona had a story of his own. He believed that his impeachment was a diversion from the issue of Hacienda Luisita. According to Tiglao (2012), “Aquino went ballistic and launched a ‘media and political blitzkrieg’ to remove Corona as Chief Justice only after the Court issued a decision about Hacienda Luisita that the Cojuangcos should not only turn over the Hacienda to the farmer-workers, but also give them 1.3 billion pesos that the clan had pocketed selling tracts of the estate to various entities.” Calonzo (2011), in an article for GMA News Online, wrote that Corona delivered a speech at the blessing of the Justicia room of the Ateneo Law School and said that “this whole sordid affair has all been about politics from beginning to end . . . It is about Hacienda Luisita: the Php10 billion compensation which the President’s family reportedly wanted for the land that was simply lent to them by the government; the need to terrorize and instill a chilling effect on the justices of the Supreme Court to be able to bend their decisions in favor of the Malacanang tenant.”

In his speech, Corona was trying to frame Aquino as a President who wanted to control the Supreme Court, which is supposedly a nonpolitical branch of the government. The image of the antagonist was being attributed to Aquino. Corona also stated in his speech that his rights were violated by Aquino: “[T]he objective here has been to, from the very beginning, destroy me and my family without even giving us any fair chance to defend ourselves . . . I can no longer count how many of my constitutional rights have been blatantly and grossly violated.” Corona tried to build an image of himself as the protagonist, the pitiful man who was being maltreated by Aquino, the antagonist. By saying those words, Corona implied that all allegations against him were false and that everything was only a part of Aquino’s plan to control the Judiciary. He further stated that, “I want to tell you that I have nothing to gain but everything to lose in this fight. But I will have proven true to myself. I thank God for this one great opportunity of a lifetime (which does not happen often) to show that, in this world, there are still men who are willing to lose everything, including their lives, for what they believe in.” His very choice of wording point to how he was trying to bring his image to a positive light. He wanted to show the people that he was the complete opposite of all the allegations being thrown against him and that he was trying to endure the black propaganda that was allegedly being set against him by President Aquino. His speech tried to impress that he was the one on the righteous path, a “hero willing to lose everything” for what he believed was right.

While the nation was absorbed in reading front-page headlines about Corona’s impeachment, the Cojuangco clan filed a “motion for consideration and clarification” with the Supreme Court regarding the Hacienda Luisita case. No newspaper reported this (Tiglao, 2012). Aquino was able to emphasize how Corona was the antagonist, placing himself as the protagonist that initiated the fight towards a corrupt-free nation. However, it can also be viewed as a mere performance that sought to cover up many other societal issues that Aquino was incapable of facing as President. Corona’s impeachment trial could have just been a means for him to validate his fight for the “*tuwid na daan*” and at the same time save him from answering to other more important presidential responsibilities, including his own Hacienda Luisita scandal.

We can arrive at themes of personal conflict, conflict of personalities, and conflict of institutions at play in the Crisis phase of the Social Drama. The conflict between Aquino and Corona can be said to be the tension brought about by the fact that they were political enemies. Turner (1981) said that “social dramas are in large measure political processes—that is, they involve competition for scarce ends—power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity” (148). The conflict between Aquino and Corona was thus a

competition for power- the Supreme Court lost its credibility because of a Chief Justice allegedly falling under Arroyo and it thus committed a betrayal of public trust, while the Executive lost its credibility when it tried to control the Supreme Court. This was a competition for honor and dignity.

REDRESSIVE ACTION: ORDER IN THE COURT!

The Redressive Action phase in Social Drama is what is done to deal with the Crisis. An example of a process that can be considered a Redressive Action is that of the legal-judicial form. Informal arbitration to formal courts falls under the category of the legal-judicial process. If Corona's midnight appointment may be considered the Breach, the eight Articles of Impeachment and Aquino's diversion of the Hacienda Luisita issue the Crisis, then the impeachment trial can be the Redressive Action.

Atty. Marlon Tonson, a GMA News Online columnist, says that "impeachment is a political process dealing with the misconduct of specific high-ranking public officials" and that "it belongs more to people than to lawyers, more to public wisdom than to legalisms." An impeachment is a part of the check-and-balances system of the government that gives a branch of the government the power to constrain the other governmental branches from exceeding constitutional authority. Corona's impeachment trial lasted from December 2011 to May 2012. It was held at the Philippine Senate, and was televised by almost all television networks in the Philippines. The impeachment trial was thus the Redressive Act in the Social Drama of Corona's impeachment because it was what was done to deal with the Crisis and to heal the Breach. In this impeachment trial, Renato C. Corona underwent court proceedings that transpired to either prove his guilt or show his innocence.

The characters involved in the impeachment trial were the "star groupers" of the Redressive Action. In Turner's "Social Dramas and Stories about Them" (1980), the "star groupers" are those who manipulate the machinery of redress, the law courts, and the procedures of divination and ritual, and impose sanctions on those adjudged to have precipitated crisis, just as it may well be disgruntled or dissident star-groupers who lead the rebellious and provoke the initial breach (qtd. in Worthen 1160). The senator-judges attended the court proceedings to hear both the Defense's and the Prosecution's narratives, weigh the pieces of evidence and information presented, and finally arrive at a decision that would seek to reintegrate the breached social unit.

Table 2: Brief Description of Major Events in Trial

| Name of the Event | Description |
|---|---|
| Miriam Defensor Santiago's statements towards the Prosecution (February 29, 2012) | The event involved the Prosecution withdrawing five of the Articles of impeachment and declaring in public about their certainty of winning the case. This hocus-pocus in court “unhinged” Senator Judge Miriam Defensor-Santiago to perform the act of delivering a “privilege speech” reprimanding the prosecution team in Court. A social drama within the larger social drama transpired as tension was seen between the Senator and Atty. Vitaliano Aguirre who covered his ears as Sen. Defensor-Santiago reprimanded the Prosecution team. A social drama is a performance of the competition for power and prestige, and through the events within the trial, we can see the assertion of power performed by these star-groupers. |
| The three-hour long testimony and walkout of Renato Corona (May 22, 2012) | The three-hour long testimony and the walk out became Corona’s famous act. His unethical deeds further aggravated his situation. The Walkout of Renato Corona said a lot about “his” side of the debate. It is greatly focused on him and it was full of “pagpapaawa” or pathos. This was his infamous three-hour speech that seemed to be his only way to save his already tainted reputation. Walking out of the Senate room and returning in a wheelchair was very dramatic and performative, a transition from the performance of power to the performance of powerlessness, from “walking out” to “not being able to walk”. |
| Senator Juan Ponce Enrile reprimands the Defense Team (May 22, 2012) | Senator Judge Juan Ponce Enrile said that if Corona was not going to return to the court the day after his walkout, the senator would issue an order that the Court would decide to strike everything Corona said on the witness stand off the Record and consider his case submitted for decision. Enrile’s motives were obviously driven by Corona’s act of walking out of the courtroom. Through Enrile’s words, he was able to exert the power of the Court and prove that no one is above the law – even the Chief Justice himself. |

The “star-groupers” directly participating in the Redressive Action of the Social Drama can be said to be the accused Corona, the lawyers of the defense team, the lawyers of the prosecution team, the witnesses, and the senator-judges. To further describe the major events that involve the participation of star-groupers in the Redressive Action phase, below is a table that shows five main events during the impeachment trial of Corona as determined with the help of Atty. Dante Gatmaytan.

Table 2: Brief Description of Major Events in Trial (Cont'n.)

| Name of the Event | Description |
|--|---|
| Atty. Fariñas' closing statement on behalf of the Prosecution (May 28, 2012) | The researcher also noticed that Atty. Fariñas, a member of the Prosecution team, used the Chief Justice's own words to debunk the Chief Justice's statements. Fariñas' Act was effective because he used an effective agency- he used the agency of a language that can easily be understood by the common Filipino and did not beat around the bush using complicated legalese. He delivered a speech about Corona making “palusot”/ excuses. |
| The speeches regarding the decisions of the Senator-Judges | The speeches of the senator-judges justifying their vote about Corona's impeachment served as a way to summarize into legal terms the circus-like drama that transpired for five months in the impeachment trial. This was a process that was needed to be done in order to justify the “sense” of the trial. Through the agency of legal technicalities and evidence-based references, the rhetoric of equality in the Law, the Senator-Judges tried to legitimize the entire play that was the impeachment trial. |

Perhaps among the five events shown in the table above, the most interesting highlight of the trial was Corona's famous walkout and wheelchair performance. As one of the star-groupers in the trial, his presence in the court shaped the progression of the entire system of redress. Corona's three-hour privilege speech that ended with the “I, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, wishes to be excused” assertion, the walkout that transpired immediately after, and coming back on a wheelchair are all performances worth highlighting.

Corona performed the character of the helpless victim. He used his high blood pressure and low blood sugar as justification for his walkout, and this reflects his right to walk out of the Court to attend to his health needs. However, this performance put Corona in a bad light. He was compared to Arroyo who also used the “wheelchair tactic” to evade trials regarding her many scandals during her own administration and to avoid lawsuits against her. Many Filipino netizens showed their dismay towards the Chief Justice’s act. They said that the act just proved that Corona was of the same breed as his “boss” Arroyo. Corona’s allegiance to Arroyo was one issue in his midnight appointment and in some of the articles of impeachment against him, and his “wheelchair” act seemed to justify that he was in the same camp as Arroyo.

The star-groupers in the impeachment trial all had roles in the system of redress. However, it was senator-judges who had the final say on whether Corona was guilty or not. The Filipino people deserve transparency in the decisions of the senators especially on the last day of the trial. In order to perform the act of casting a vote that was bound to either convict or acquit Corona, the senators had to use an agency that showed reason and justification so as to give integrity to their position as senators and their power as Judges in the trial. Bagaouisian (2012) stated:

The senators’ speeches ranged from five minutes to half an hour. Most chose to save their verdicts for their last sentences, but some verdicts were ostensibly laid out from the outset. And as each said “guilty” or “not guilty,” cheers or boos arose from those watching at the Supreme Court and listening outside the Senate.

These instances during that time were justifications of the Impeachment as an example of a “Show Trial.” A theatrical element was present as the role of the audience was magnified. In “Redressing Oscar: Performance and the Trials of Oscar Wilde,” Schulz stated that during Oscar Wilde’s trial, “often the court would be interrupted by outbursts of laughter and applause. Justice Wills’ remark after one outburst at the close of the third trial express[ed] an antiperformance prejudice focused on the participation of the voyeuristic public which threatened to turn the trials into theatre” (44). Similarly, the audience of the Corona impeachment watched the trials as if they were theatre performances to behold. The Impeachment Trial was a performance presented to the public, and any performance, sacrificial or not, needed an audience.

In order to convict Corona, at least two-thirds of the Senate was required to vote for him to be impeached. Atty. Marlon Tonson(2012) explains:

Normally, this would mean 16 senators out of a 24-member upper chamber. However, in the 15th Congress, there [were] only 23 senators because then-Senator Benigno Aquino III did not finish his term of office after being elected President in 2010. Moreover, Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago [was] set to leave the Senate later in the year to assume her new post as Judge in the new International Criminal Court, which would further reduce the membership of the Senate to 22.

Therefore, only 15 votes were needed then to convict Corona. In order to acquit an impeached official, one needed seven or six votes.

The decision to acquit or convict Corona can also be seen as a performance of the tension between Corona and Aquino. Those who convicted Corona based their decision on Aquino's version of the Crisis of the Social Drama, the Articles of Impeachment, particularly on Article II, which talked about Corona's failure to declare his Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN). Those who acquitted Corona leaned towards the possibility of how Aquino was maneuvering the strings of politics among the three branches of government.

Aside from the performance of tension between Aquino and Corona, the trial also served as a performance that revealed the flaws and imperfections of how trials are handled in the country. The impeachment trial served as a representative of the way every trial was conducted in the Philippines, and therefore revealed the shortcomings in the Philippine judicial system.

The whole performance of the impeachment trial was justified through the quoting of legalese and the pointing out of violations of the Constitution. Regardless of their reasons for convicting or acquitting Corona, the senator-judges used laws from the Constitution and other legal basis to rationalize their decision. They did their best to justify their decisions with legalese given how the trial was not only about the judgment on Renato Corona but history's judgment on them as well. They could not have given verdicts based on personal issues with the Chief Justice because the impeachment trial was a legal-judicial process and trials work on "legal" scripts. The senator-judges were also aware of the amount of coverage following the events of the trial, thereby putting weight on how the senators were being judged by the Filipino people and history. Through the agency of legalese and evidence-based references, the senator-judges legitimized the entire drama that was the impeachment trial.

In the unfolding of the trial, some senators ended up challenging each other to disclose their own SALNs as well. The senators felt that they were also being judged by the Filipino people, particularly by the group in which Ms. Flores, the employee Corona dismissed because of her failure to disclose her SALN, belonged to. This was also a performance on the side of the senators and the members of the House of Representatives given how they were also put in the spotlight thereby pressuring them to prove how they were not guilty of the very crime they were trying Corona for.

Some senator-judges emphasized that Corona had already lost his credibility to lead the Judiciary and that public trust was also a big determinant in their decision. The trial can thus be considered a performance wherein the senators tried to show how they put the interests of the Filipino people, whom they were representing in Court, over their personal interests. This was an agency used by the senator-judges to justify their decision. They emphasized the nature of the trial as *sui generis* or class on its own, “in which the standards to be applied are circumscribed only by the Constitution and the oath under which the senators have sworn to do impartial justice” (Philippine Daily Inquirer). The senators who voted to impeach Corona supported their decision by saying that it had to be done for principles of justice and public service and respect for the law. Senator Gregorio Hosanan III, for one, emphasized the resounding theme among the speeches of the senator-judges concerning their duty to uphold principles of justice and public service. Honasan (2012) stated,

I vote to ask the Chief Justice to step down from the pedestal where he was installed by the nation and where he was supposed to preside over the highest court in the land, so he may once more walk among our people where all public officials must be judged. *Bumalik na siya dito sa atin, sa piling ng taumbayan para maranasan niya ang bunga ng kanyang pagkukulang.*

Aside from the rhetoric of upholding justice in the land, some senator-judges also took advantage of the opportunity to speak regarding very personal matters. One senator whose speech had a tinge of personal agenda was Sen. Jinggoy Estrada when he talked about redemption for his father, former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada. The latter also faced an impeachment trial during his presidency. Estrada (2012) stated, “I say redemption because this same process failed to achieve justice for my own father, former President Joseph Ejercito Estrada. It failed because, clearly, the plan was to resolve the issue in the streets and it failed sadly because the presiding officer at the trial of my father proved to be a partisan himself. Those

sordid accounts, those sordid events led this nation to nine years under the rule of a woman, “a small woman,” who was installed by the rule of the mob and the imprimatur of a Supreme Court that succumbed to the pressure of that mob.” (Official Gazette)

On the other hand, there were three senators who voted to acquit Corona: Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Joker Arroyo, and Ferdinand “Bong-Bong” Marcos Jr. They also used legalese and principles of justice and the law in justifying their decision. The Senators used legal terms to prove their claim that the Prosecution had made many mistakes in the trial and that their shortcomings were enough to acquit Corona. They claimed that there were not enough proof and evidence to convict the Chief Justice.

These senators believed that there would be no justice in convicting Corona because the whole impeachment trial was all about the politics behind the relationship among the branches of the government. They emphasized the nature of the trial as *sui generis*, where the standards in deciding the case should be circumscribed only by the Constitution and impartial justice.

These senators stated that Corona’s failure to declare his SALN was not an impeachable offense. They also hinted that the trial was all about Aquino building a dictatorship. Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago (2012) said that “The executive and legislative branches are political in nature but the judicial branch is non-political. If the Chief Justice is removed for political reasons, then that would be a signal that even the judicial branch has also become political. That would be the end of our democracy as we know it today.”

In their version of the Social Drama, it was emphasized how the executive and the legislative branches of the government were filled with elected officials who represented different parties and political agenda. However, they claimed that the judicial branch of the government served as the bulwark of justice in the nation, and it be guided by the principles of justice. The three senators recognize that Corona was not the only public official that can be put under trial because many others are guilty of the exact same deed. Defensor-Santiago (2012) stated,

Unang punto: Kung matalo ang chief justice dito, ibig sabihin pala ang mga nananalo ay mga honest na tao dahil kinondena nila dahil corrupt ang taong iyon. Palagay din natin na itong mga representante—dahil nga tayo we represent the people, is that not so? That is why we are elected officers; we are supposed to represent our constituencies. Kung

hahatulan nating may sala iyan dahil crooked siya, di ibig lang sabihin honest tayo. Ngayon, kung lahat pala tayo honest, o marami pala sa atin ay honest, why is the Philippines often, or if not all the time, why is the Philippines always ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the whole world?

The three senator-judges claimed that justice could not be attained in Corona's conviction because according to Defensor-Santiago, most of the senator-judges were also guilty of the same crime they were accusing the CJ of.

REINTEGRATION OR SCHISM: A NEVER-ENDING DRAMA

The last element in Turner's theory of Social Drama is the Reintegration/Schism phase. Turner defined this phase as the result of the Redressive Action in the specific social unit that was breached. A Redressive Action may either lead to Reintegration which is the resolution of the original breach in such a way that the social fabric is knit back together. This is the "healing" of the Breach and the eradication of the Crisis in the Social Drama. Schism, on the other hand, is the social recognition and legitimization between contesting parties. In a Schism, there becomes a permanent divide in the social unit. The Breach is not healed and the Crisis is not eradicated.

To further analyze the Reintegration/Schism phase, let us look into the Crisis of the Social Drama based on Corona's conviction. The Crisis phase of the Corona impeachment included the violation of the Constitution, Aquino pushing for the trial in order to prove the effectiveness of his *tuwid na daan*, the tension arising between the President of the Philippines and the Judiciary, and the Supreme Court losing its credibility under Corona's leadership.

The regaining of Filipinos' faith in justice in the Law

Reintegration

The people's faith in justice with the application of the Law and the honoring of the Constitution was breached by Corona's midnight appointment as Chief Justice. The Breach was widened by the Crisis in the Social Drama that highlighted many other constitutional violations committed by the highest magistrate of the land. The conviction of Renato Corona can therefore be said to have brought about the

reintegration of the people's faith in the Law and the Constitution. They saw how a powerful official was made to suffer the consequences of his crime, and how the Law was fairly applied even on a person who held a high position in the government. This can thus be said to have reinstated their faith in the Constitution and the Law thanks to the performance of equality between the poor and the rich, the powerless and the powerful.

The impeachment of Renato Corona served as a performance of the power of justice in the Philippines. The trial implied that the impeachment was not a performance that symbolized the total eradication of injustice in the country. Instead, it was a performance that made the impossible possible—that justice could still be attained in our country.

Schism

Although many people believed that justice lay in the conviction of Corona, not everyone agreed. Some Filipinos believed that the decision was not just. According to Andres Fernandez (2012), President of the Philippine Association of Court Employees in Pangasinan, in a newscast on GMA News, although the Chief Justice was convicted, he should have only been given a reprimand instead of being removed from office. He said that there was no malice in Corona's failure to disclose his assets.

More so, a portion of the Filipino people was made aware of the performances showcased by the senator-judges as a form of the advancement of their own political agenda and not from the call for public service. The way trials were conducted in the country was itself put on trial. Those who were involved in the progression of the impeachment—the three branches of the government—were also put on trial because they were the manipulators of the proceedings. This was thus a performance of the Filipino being aware of its own consciousness, critiquing the performance of the trial as a performance of how the Philippine society behaves and thinks. According to Turner, "whether judicial or ritual processes are involved against mounting crisis, the result is an increase in one might call social or plural reflexivity, the ways in which a group tries to scrutinize, portray, understand, and then act on itself" (qtd. in Worthen 1162). As long as the justice system was flawed, there could be no manifestation of justice. The trial became a performance that only helped the public scrutinize and reflect upon the process.

The effectiveness of Aquino's *tuwid na daan*

Reintegration and Schism

One of Aquino's reasons for ousting Corona was the latter's noncompliance with his promised *tuwid na daan*. Indeed, many Filipinos thought of Corona's conviction as a good start in cleaning up the corrupt Philippine government. This may have given Aquino's promise credibility. However, the reintegration of the people's faith in Aquino's *tuwid na daan* did not rely solely on Corona's conviction. Blogger Arnold Padilla (2012) states, "Aquino's claim that the conviction of Corona proved that genuine change can be achieved is exaggerating the gains of the people from the impeachment trial. The road towards real reforms that will truly benefit our people remains obstructed by the narrow and self-serving economic and political agenda of those who wield power." This was a performance of the image of the *tuwid na daan* still blocked by many other political hindrances. During Aquino's electoral campaign for his presidency, he showed two simplified kinds of roads: the crooked road of corruption and his straight road of righteousness. When the Filipinos trusted his words and he let them walk on his *tuwid na daan*, they were not warned of the obstructions along the way. The road may have been straight, but there were many obstacles and barriers along the way. These obstructions signified the imperfections and the flaws of Aquino's *tuwid na daan* and his administration.

Padilla (2012) further states that "the guilty verdict [did] not in any way automatically assure that Arroyo and her cabal will be punished for their numerous crimes against the Filipino people in the nine and a half years that they held power. It [did] not in any way mean that systemic graft and corruption in the bureaucracy that have been draining the country of much needed resources for economic development and provision of social services finally end[ed]." Padilla pinpoints how many other corrupt officials in the country remain unpunished, even maybe including Aquino himself given the Hacienda Luisita issue and its impact on the economic and civil rights of its farmers. Aquino's forced association of Corona's conviction to the eradication of corruption in the government was weak. The Breach and Crisis phases of the Social Drama that was Corona's impeachment focused on Corona's alliance with Arroyo, emphasizing the corrupt nature of the former President and its influence on the Supreme Court. However, instead of focusing on the lawsuits against Arroyo, Aquino used all his energy to impeach the Arroyos' alleged "puppet." In relation to this, Philippine Star opinion writer Carmen Pedrosa (2013) states that

Neither is it down to fighting corruption in the past government as it has been made to appear by the Aquino government. There is corruption

then and now. Unfortunately the accusations are down to personalities and not on a flawed system. The system favors the wealthy and powerful because they also hold the levers of government.

The whole tuwid na daan propaganda seemed to have become nothing less than a façade that paved way for accusing certain personalities in the government instead of eradicating corruption in the country. Many people had even pointed out that Aquino himself could be a part of the corrupt system he was promising to eradicate.

The regaining of the credibility of the Supreme Court

Reintegration

Two months after the conviction of Renato Corona, President Aquino appointed the Philippines' first female Chief Justice, Supreme Court Associate Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, as the country's 24th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. At 52 years old, she is the second youngest to be appointed Chief Justice. In 1945, Manuel Moran was 51 years old when appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court seemed to have regained its credibility based on positive feedback about Sereno's appointment. "The President is confident that Chief Justice Sereno will lead the judiciary in undertaking much-needed reforms," Presidential Spokesperson of the President Erwin Lacierda (2012) said. "We believe the judicial branch of government has a historic opportunity to restore our people's confidence in the judicial system."

Lacierda further justified Sereno's potentially long tenure as Chief Justice by saying that "the President believes that Justice Sereno would be the most able to institute reforms in the judiciary. That is the consideration of the President in appointing the next Chief Justice." It is important to note that the personality behind the position of the Chief Justice was the main source of tension between the Judiciary and the President during Corona's term. The appointment of Sereno to this position served as a bridging of the gap between the Judiciary and the President. The position of the Chief Justice and the person holding the title which was the venue of the "problem" ultimately became the venue for the "solution."

Sen. Defensor-Santiago (2012) commented that Sereno is "certain to ensure continuity in Supreme Court policy because she is very young." This served as a good sign for Sereno, because the Senator approved of her despite Senator Defensor-

Santiago's decision to acquit the former Chief Justice. This also placed Defensor-Santiago in a good light because it showed that she remained unbiased on whoever was appointed as Chief Justice.

Sen. Franklin Drilon (2012) also expressed positive feedback regarding Sereno's appointment. "It's a well-deserved appointment, this is an opportunity for her to institute real reforms in the judiciary," he said.

House Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. (2012) said, "Associate Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno is a good choice. A new face yet an insider with a reputation for competence and independence. She will prove to be an effective leader of the judiciary." The image of a "new face" in the Judiciary symbolized a new start in the Supreme Court, a fresh new beginning far removed from anything that was associated with the former Chief Justice.

The description of Sereno as being "young," "new," and "female" created a representation that she was the total and complete opposite of the characteristics of Renato Corona. She was the antithesis of Corona, just like how Aquino tried to serve as the antithesis to Arroyo.

Schism

Although most of our officials were positive about Sereno's appointment, some still perceived the situation as a Schism. Blogger Arnold Padilla (2012) states that "with Corona now out of the Supreme Court, Aquino can appoint his own choice of Chief Justice. The chilling effect of the ouster of Corona and the pending impeachment of del Castillo and other members of the High Court, particularly the appointees of Arroyo, ensures effective control by the President over the Judiciary". Many did not believe that the Supreme Court regained its credibility with the appointment of Sereno because of her alleged alliance to President Aquino. The Supreme Court may have already broken the chains that tied them to Arroyo and her camp, but the supposedly non-political institution was now shaded with the yellow color of Aquino's political motives. Padilla further states:

Meanwhile, for Aquino, the ouster of Corona is sweet revenge for the latter's role in the SC decision to dismantle the Hacienda Luisita. With the clear message sent to SC members by the removal of Corona, there is a very real risk that the High Court might soon undermine the favorable ruling obtained by the Luisita farmers and farmworkers.

This Schism could be interpreted as the possibility of the Supreme Court falling under the control of a new “puppeteer.” In Corona’s case, the puppeteer was Arroyo and the puppet was Corona. With the impeachment of Corona, Aquino can now be said to be the puppeteer and Sereno his puppet.

The Crisis that was brought up by the Social Drama of Corona’s impeachment regarding the alleged diversion of the Hacienda Luisita issue was again brought up after the trial had been concluded. This just proves that a social drama does not have a concrete conclusion. New crises arise and more conflicts demand redressive measures.

The ending of the Corona Impeachment social drama: Reintegration or Schism?

The researcher observes that on the Social Drama of Corona’s impeachment, the Reintegration or Schism phase remains relative. One could not really say that there was only Reintegration in the social unit, or there was only a Schism. After the result of the Redressive Action, there were aspects of the social unit that were reintegrated and some that produced a schism. There were also instances where the line that differentiated reintegration and schism was fluid enough to allow for two elements to overlap. An example of this is how Aquino seemed to have proved the effectiveness of his *tuwid na daan* by eliminating the corruption personified by Corona (reintegration), while at the same time remaining on the receiving end of criticisms that insisted on how he was fooling the Filipino people by creating the illusion that Corona’s conviction was equivalent to the eradication all the injustices in his administration (schism).

Aside from this observation, the researcher also notes that a social drama does not necessarily end with the concept of the “healing of the breach” or the establishment of a “permanent divide” in the social unit. A social drama may be the precipitating event of another social drama. It cannot be compared to a book that can be closed and put on the shelf. It is not over even after results are produced through Redressive Action.

An example of this would be the slew of impeachment complaints against Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno in the year 2017 that bear similarities with the case of Renato Corona. Both Corona and Sereno are hit by SALN (Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth) issues and they are both publicly called out by the current President of the Philippines at the time when they start receiving impeachment complaints. In fact, Gavilan (2017) reports that, “Sereno, has been asked various times by President Rodrigo Duterte to resign. The impeachment

complaint filed against her is also supported by Duterte, even after he previously said he will not meddle with the process". Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque also said, "I call upon Chief Justice Sereno to really consider resigning only to spare the institution from any further damage" (2017). On March 2018, CJ Sereno was removed from the position of Chief Justice when Solicitor General Jose Calida's petition for quo warranto against her won with a vote of eight for and six against. This move was condemned by law practitioners, professors, civic groups, and student activists all over the nation because of its unconstitutional nature. They say, an official must undergo an impeachment trial before they are removed in office.

History seems to repeat itself. With this in mind, there would be instances when events in a specific social drama, which we perceive has already reached reintegration, would still produce controversies in the future. A social drama could be compared to a book that would demand to be opened and examined again and again. The Corona impeachment may be seen in this context.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the narratives of the different parties involved in the trial used different rhetorical strategies. Actors in the events tended to place themselves as protagonists of the story and their nemesis as the antagonists. This is highlighted by the tension between Corona and Aquino. Their narratives were not only different but contradicting, and they both planted themselves as the heroes of their own stories with the other person as the evil character in the plot.

This research proves that the social drama of the Corona impeachment was not only about Corona's alleged subservience to Arroyo and his misdeeds as the top leader of the Judiciary. The analysis proves that Aquino may also have had a political agenda of his own behind the whole impeachment trial. There could be a bigger context behind the façade of *tuwid na daan* in action by eliminating Arroyo's midnight appointee through this highly-publicized impeachment trial.

Indeed, Corona's trial did not only convict the Chief Justice but also held trial on the President, the Legislative branch of the government, the way trials were conducted in the Philippines, and the Filipino people themselves.

Social dramas are indeed produced because of a competition for scarce ends like dignity, honor, power, prestige, money, and purity (Turner, 1980). This particular

social drama may have just been a result of the competition for the abovementioned scarce ends among the government officials involved in Corona's impeachment.

The researcher finds that the use of "pathos" has been an effective rhetorical tool as long as statements did not contradict each other. Legalese was also used in the form of a script for the impeachment trial and was used to legitimize such performances. Actors within the redressive action of the social drama performed not only for the resolution of the crisis but to put forward their own political and personal agenda. This study shows the vulnerability of human institutions to potential crises arising from every conflict and tension within each element of a social drama.

This study also challenges the constellation of pattern of the four elements of social drama. This can be seen in the overlapping of the crisis and redressive Action stages during the presentation of the eight articles of impeachment against Corona during the trial itself. The researcher sees the importance of recognizing various versions of these different elements. Certain aspects of the social unit perceive the result of the redressive action as a healing of the breach but others perceive the result as a continuing crisis in the institution.

The researcher thus points out that social dramas do not end in the reintegration/schism phase for new crises will inevitably disturb the social unit again.

Social dramas never end, and as history tries to close Corona's case, new national issues begin to surface. At present, we can relate the victory and popularity of current President Rodrigo Duterte to the Filipino people's desire for change and for a leader who is different from the rest. His victory in the nationwide presidential campaign in 2016 garnered over 16 million votes.

According to Cecilla Brainard of the *Huffington Post*, many Filipino people consider the rhetoric of Duterte as the rhetoric of a hero, but others interpret it as the rhetoric of a mass murderer. For Duterte's war against drugs campaign, which served as his own version of Aquino's "tuwid na daan" promise, it has been reported that as of March 20, 2017 there has already been 7,080 people killed in the War on Drugs – 2,555 of which are suspected drug personalities killed in police operations and 4,525 as victims of vigilante-style killings or what is commonly known as extrajudicial killings (Bueza, 2017). In January 2016, 35 members of the police force and three soldiers already lost their lives to the drug war. These figures reflect the immediate and serious implementation of Duterte's promise of eradicating the drug problem in the country.

Duterte and his supporters interpret these statistics as proof of the effectiveness of Duterte's promise to eradicate the drug problem in the Philippines. However, his critics emphasize a dilemma of a nation at war. Beyond the numbers and figures is the merciless rampancy of countless human rights violations and the brutal reality that innocent lives are being taken as collateral damage in this war.

Just like Aquino's "tuwid na daan" and Corona's impeachment trial, the social drama of Duterte's "tunay na pagbabago" has put Filipinos' competing ideologies and principles into the limelight, has brought political enemies to set each other up as scapegoats for character assassination, has highlighted all our clashing political beliefs, and has put our high leaders and the faceless Filipino on the front page of newspapers and the headlines of our TV screens.

And in every social drama of a national scope, we are all on trial.

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