

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Cracked Mirror

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Philippine Studies vol. 33, no. 1 (1985): 122–124

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

on the region. This struggle continues to assume many forms ranging from responses of a highly personalized or subjective character to the ideological and uncompromisingly critical" (p. vii). This collection of essays, by some of the more perspective critics of Southeast Asia, is a significant contribution to understanding both the literature and the society of the region.

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CRACKED MIRROR. By Edilberto K. Tiempo. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 219 pages.

Using the motifs of possession, search, loss and eventual rejuvenation, in this novel Edilberto Tiempo peels off the characters' outer selves to reveal their psyches. The story evolves from an overpossessive mother who dominates her daughter's actions and thinking, to make up for a repressed and lonely childhood. A brother's attempt to help his sister is frustrated by the latter's death. In spite of his business success, the memory of his sister's harrowing experience haunts him in his relationships with women. He is, however, unshackled from the psychological burden by a gradual recognition of the tragic events of the past that constitute the pieces of the cracked mirror of his life. The conflict is resolved by love, which culminates the search for inner peace.

Delfin Olivar, agri-business graduate of UP Los Baños, with a master's degree (with honors) from the Asian Institute of Management, has inherited vast tracts of land from his father, and has "adopted his father's rule never to sell any piece of land, but to add to what was already owned . . ." (p. 2). The most lucrative of the Olivar family holdings are mango plantations in San Antonio, Cotabato. Sheer business acumen and his father's business contacts enable Delfin to live comfortably and move with ease in social circles. Toshiro Marayuma, his father's business associate, becomes his partner in a multinational corporation engaged in fruit production, canning and packaging, with branches in some Asian and US Pacific cities.

On a business trip to Manila, Delfin is "startled to see a girl who looked like Araceli" (p. 1), his half-sister who died in a fall from a stairway, and had been haunted by her mother Marcela's sudden apparitions. Marcela was a well-known actress whom an unfortunate love affair with a movie actor had driven to the nunnery, which, she came to realize after some years, was not a place for refuge. She found solace in the love of Don Diego, an elderly man with whom she lived in loveless union, but in gratitude for having rescued her from the "polluted house" (p. 8). Marcela's love for Celi was "a possessive love that left a little room for her husband . . . [and tried] to

keep her [Araceli's] childhood pristine and unsullied" (p. 10). Because of this, Araceli became very imaginative, and channeled this tendency to a creative idiosyncrasy — she was a winner in declamation contests. Unfortunately, her talent grew to extremes, as she cultivated a multipersonality. All the while Delfin wanted to help her, but this ended with her untimely death.

Delfin's obsessive search for a woman with an uncanny resemblance to his sister brings him in contact with Teresa de Leon, a business student, who helps him find Ellen Zaldariaga, a "spitting image" of his sister. He becomes a family friend to the Zaldariagas, and vacations in exotic places give him the opportunity to nurture his relationship with Ellen, although he could not ascertain whether his feelings for her were for a woman with her own identity, or for her resemblance to Celi. When, on a visit to his plantation, Tessie gives herself to him, Delfin does not propose marriage, and she leaves. She eventually marries to give her child a father. Her husband visits Delfin one day, to tell him that Tessie died of cancer, and had asked him to give Delfin their child. Delfin accepts the responsibility.

To drown his sorrows, he takes a vacation to Japan, and there meets Yukiko Watanabi, who acts as his tour guide. Daughter of a Japanese writer and educated in the West, she draws on a knowledge of Japanese culture, history and arts to entertain Delfin. He feels drawn to Yukiko, but a deeper relationship is not possible because of the overwhelming and irretrievable loss of Tessie.

In Manila, he finally proposes to Ellen, but she sternly replies: "You haven't said anything about loving me" (p. 207). As a matter of fact, deep in himself, Delfin says: "You can do all the emotions, all the feigning, but it's not Tessie. You're doing this for your son . . ." (p. 207). Finally, Ellen faces him squarely to externalize his search: "If I look like your sister, how could you ever love me the way I want you to in the most physical way?" (p. 208). Delfin is confused, and tells himself about Ellen: "You're also Celi and Tessie and Yukiko" (p. 208). When Ellen asks: "Is your son the reason you're in a hurry to marry me?" (p. 212), Delfin answers: "I wouldn't want to lose my girl a second time" (p. 216). Thus, he entangles himself more deeply in the problem. Knowing his family misfortune, Ellen recalls the destructiveness of Marcela's possessiveness. She asserts: "I don't want to be owned, the way Celi was owned by your stepmother . . . I want us to wait for a while" (pp. 218-219). She also demands that for the meantime she continue her music studies abroad. Realizing the soundness of Ellen's demands, Delfin agrees to wait.

In this novel, Edilberto Tiempo's characters are the well-to-do. They move at ease in the social world with their money and influence. They like beaches and weekend vacations; are adept at foreign fashion and manners, music, cuisine, etc. The novelist entertains the reader with his knowledge of business, multinational corporations and Asian culture, while exposing problems of individuals and societies confronting contemporary realities.

Tiempo's lengthy discussions on varied topics transport the reader from

the heights of intellectualism to the plains of daily life. This may, in effect, drag the plot and make the characters melodramatic. However, the author's technique deserves due recognition. Plunging into the depths of psychoanalysis, he unwinds the kaleidoscope of events showing the fragments of a mirror that gradually form the whole image of the distressed spirit. Indeed, Tiempo presents the mirror of nature, complete with the ever-present "blind spots" that unconsciously dominate the strivings of the central character. The novel illustrates the effectiveness of art as analysis, when it is profoundly and skillfully executed.

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THE ROAD TO MAWAB AND OTHER STORIES. By Leoncio P. Deriada. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 154 pages.

Leoncio P. Deriada's first volume of stories shows his intimate knowledge of the people of his region. He captures the mannerisms, viewpoints, and aspirations of simple folk confronting the harsh realities of life. In most of the stories, his characters almost lose the fight for survival, but ultimately affirm their determination to live on in spite of seemingly insurmountable odds. If they die, they are not defeated, but by their deaths, protest deceit and injustice.

Both serious and light themes are enhanced by a skillful interplay of symbol, image and irony. "The Day of the Locusts" interweaves calamity, fanaticism and survival. Locusts swarm over a barrio at sunset, and while Asun claims that they are "God's punishment for our sins . . . to kill those creatures is to defy God's will" (p. 2), Bernardo has a more practical remedy: to gather the locusts and eat them. "A Woman in the War" depicts Ana Corita's coming to terms with a gruesome past, in which she witnessed the killing of her mother and father. She realizes, however, the urgency of the present, when as a guerilla fighter her task is to wreak vengeance on the Japanese. "Manong Paeng" utilizes a youthful narrator whose hero worship of an older brother turns to disgust when he learns that the latter has wronged, but doesn't do right by, Minyang — who yet survives, hardened and firmed by her misfortune.

The central character in "Ramonina," betrayed "long ago in Davao del Norte" (p. 52), becomes a madwoman dancing in the streets, who goes to the school campus, curses a teacher ("you destroyed me . . . Devil, Devil" p. 55), then jumps from a bridge and drowns, to signify the triumphal end to her misery and the eternal torment of the wrong-doer, who will live to