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Allegories of Resistance, by San Juan

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on the masses. The peasants' desire for economic liberation, as opposed to the elite's quest for political independence, finds very little expression in these works. The masses, because they are the heroes of history, must also be the heroes of literature, argues Martinez-Sicat. And if the masses are to imagine a nation for themselves, then they have to read novels about themselves—and in their own language, if need be.

Martinez-Sicat provides valuable insights in the use of literature for nation-building. Though she uses the language of literary criticism, the book still manages to be reader-friendly. Some of her insights can also be learned in a Philippine History course, but her analysis of novels is certainly a more enjoyable way of learning.

Aristotle Dy, S.J.

Allegories of Resistance. By E. San Juan, Jr. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995. xvi, 162 pages.

Allegories of Resistance is an avalanche of highly technical sociopolitical terminology in an attempt to situate and define the Philippines at the threshold of the twenty-first century. Not for easy reading, the book is laden with many assumptions on the reader's stock knowledge of the various views of prominent philosophers, thinkers and writers like Gramsci, Althusser, C.L.R. James, Hugh MacDiarmid, Sartre, and Habermas.

Basically, the book is a "cognitive mapping of our unsynchronized milieu for the sake of future praxis." The first two essays deal with the reality of the Filipino diaspora. San Juan believes that if there has been any real change in the last decades, it is the deployment of our overseas contract workers—which he labels "commodity fetishism incarnate." Chapters 3, 4, and 5 explore the concept of the "national-popular" (first introduced by Gramsci) operating in the domain of Philippine literature and of cultural production in general. There are also specific historical conjunctures like the debates over Rizal's stature in the national pantheon and Nick Joaquin's aristocratic nationalism, among others, to explain this concept of "national-popular."

In chapter 6, San Juan grapples with the question of survival, the life and death of millions, gender equality, sustainable growth, and ecological rationality, among others, against the predatory power of transnational corporations. Lastly in chapter 7, San Juan focuses on the parallel endeavor of the Scottish Marxist poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, to ward off the reader's wrong impression of San Juan's opposition to the hegemonic apparatus of global exchange-value by that gesture of interrogation.

What the book really shows is the fact that the Philippines is still far from attaining genuine popular democracy and national independence despite important and irreversible changes in the urban-rural configuration and the decline of U.S. economic influence with the removal of the military bases. There still lies the great task of combating the global hegemony of neoliberal metaphysics manifest in postcolonial theorizing and other postmodern readings.

The author asks: "What is to be done?" San Juan posits that it is the task of the writers and intellectuals to seize the moment, together with the working masses, and forge the cultural-ideological weapon necessary for a genuine liberation.

Roberto Archie R. Carampatan, S.J.

The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales. Edited by Valorie Slaughter Bejarano, et al. CA: PAWWA, 1995.

The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales is a collection of eighteen Asian folktales edited by four Filipino-American women writers. The folktales came from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos (Hmong), Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In the Introduction, the editors trace the sources of these stories: their "own memories, from friends and family, both young and old, and in some instances from published works." Not a few of the stories were heard from an acquaintance who also heard it from another source. Inevitably, the writing of these stories, which used to be passed on orally from one generation to the other, is not completely free from the writer's biases. Their objective is "to entertain as well as to transmit the values and wisdom of the [Asian] culture, and instill a sense of right and wrong."

Even if the book is intended for children, adult readers can also draw insights from the stories. An illustration for each story also sharpens the imagination of the reader as he goes through the story. Even the size of the type makes the collection friendly to the child. However, full-color illustrations would have made the texts more vivid.

Books like these—which build bridges across cultures separated by geography and colonialism—should be encouraged.

Roberto Archie R. Carampatan, S.J.