

philippine studies

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

Reading Popular Culture, by Reyes

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Philippine Studies vol. 41, no. 3 (1993): 384–385

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

U.S. Bases and the US-Marcos dictatorship were the most sensitive issues in Philippine society. In the 1990s, *Bulalakaw ng Pag-asa* definitely wouldn't have a similar effect. Now, anti-colonial sentiments may appear impractical as the Philippine government is keen on attracting foreign investors and on asking for foreign aid to help develop the economy. The concept of imperialism, moreover, seems to be obsolete nowadays. But *Bulalakaw ng Pag-asa* is still relevant today; there is still the great need to promote social justice and reforms—agrarian reform, workers' rights, etc.

As a novel, one may find *Bulalakaw ng Pag-asa* very predictable, simplistic and too generalized. But it does help the reader gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Philippine history and society, especially during the early twentieth century.

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Reading Popular Culture. Edited by Soledad Reyes. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1991. 224 pages.

The book is a collection of fourteen essays which discuss various aspects of Popular Culture in the Philippines. These essays are among the best products of the First National Conference on Popular Culture held in 1988 at the Ateneo de Manila University.

The authors of the essays attempt to probe into the various norms, behavior, and consciousness of the so-called "masa" by studying such common media as *komiks*, women's magazines, radio, television, film, and Filipino plays. The study of existing rituals (Guillermo Pesigan's, "Myths and Rituals And The Transference of Charismatic Leadership: The Case of Ciudad Mistica In Mt. Banahaw") and popular folk beliefs ("Visions Of The Afterworld" by Fernando Zialcita) are also included in this volume.

Ricardo Abad's "Sociological Perspectives In The Study Of Philippine Popular Culture" lays the foundation for the rest of the essays as it provides a working definition of Popular Culture. By giving the sociological perspectives through the Consensus, Conflict, and Interpretative Theories, Abad opens three doors to approach the study of Popular Culture.

Resil Mojares "Talking Politics; Political Commentaries On Cebuano Radio" is one of the more interesting essays in the collection. Radio commentary is the source of much discussion in Philippine households, especially in the provincial areas. Radio Commentary often over-simplifies political and economic issues of major importance, trivializes major arguments and sometimes distorts the truth. Resil Mojares' analysis of the *komentaryo* says that "instead of expanding political thought, it (komentaryo) binds it

within conservative limits; instead of political education, it fosters a form of political illiteracy."

Marjorie M. Evasco's essay, "Weekly Smorgasbord Of Feminine Pleasures" speaks of how women's weekly magazines tend to reinforce certain stereotypes of the role of women. Evasco's essay presents statistical facts to support her contention that women's magazines distort the image and the role of women in the Philippines.

A dominant theme of feminism and women's roles can be seen in several of the essays in this book. Aside from Ms. Evasco's essay, Ruth Elynia Mabanglo's "Mula sa Altar Nina Huli At Maria Clara: Imahen ng Babae Sa Ilang Dramang Pilipino," Rosario Lucero's "Romancing the Otherness of Woman," Soledad Reyes' "Women on Television," Benilda Santos' "Idol, Bestiary and Revolutionary: Images Of The Filipino Woman In Film (1976-1986)," and even Isagani Cruz's "Ang Kabastusan ng Mga Pilipino," underline the various roles of Filipino women, then and now, which, in the analysis of most of the authors are mandated by the patriarchal society in the Philippines.

It is also noteworthy that Ruth Mabanglo, Isagani Cruz, and Prospero Covar ("Tatlong Sanaysay: Pagkatao at Paniniwala") wrote their essays in Pilipino. Though the book is obviously published for the learned readers in academe, their effort is a sincere gesture of reaching out to the masses who are more at home with the native language, and at Filipinizing the message of the volume.

The use of various media forms in the proliferation of popular culture; the analysis of the Philippine social structures; and the theories of literary criticism used in analyzing the social structure should be of interest to communication, literature, and sociology students in their pursuit of understanding the Filipino People and Philippine Society as a whole. Hopefully, the insights that they gain from this book will inspire them to help in building a better Filipino society in the future.

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Baka Sakali. By Rofel Brion. Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1989. 80 pages.

As one reads, rereads and savors Rofel G. Brion's poems in *Baka Sakali*, he may wonder what is the best way to review the book. To interpret each poems would take reams of paper, for each poem is rich in meaning. To review the work according to some single theme is equally difficult because, though each poems brims with richness in message, the themes are many.