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The Philippines is in the Heart

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according to Cyril, especially pronounced in the case of Julian because he had known the truth and then apostatized from it. He accuses Julian not primarily of ignorance but of moral weakness and bad faith.

As the concluding chapter of the book, the author gathers together the elements of Cyril's portrait of the Christian wise man in contrast to Julian's portrait of the Hellenic wise man.

Since our knowledge of the *CG* comes mainly from the fragments of it that are contained in Cyril's *CJ*, the author had to fill out the thought content and to situate these fragments in a broader context by comparing the language of the fragments with identical or similar expressions and words in Julian's other works. The book shows abundant evidence of a careful, meticulous research into the various writings of Julian. The author's competent and comprehensive knowledge of the ideas of Julian and Cyril as found in the original writings of these two protagonists is clearly manifest in the abundant scholarly apparatus of this book.

The research and writing of this volume was done under the direction of Rev. Antonio Orbe, S.J. of the Gregorian University who is one of the leading patrologists of the Catholic world. It now comes to us as a volume in the series of the internationally-known *Analecta Gregoriana*. These two facts alone are indication of the high quality of the scholarly work that can be found in this book.

Pedro C. Sevilla, S.J.

THE PHILIPPINES IS IN THE HEART. By Carlos Bulosan. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1978. 192 pages.

Early in 1944, Carlos Bulosan published *The Laughter of My Father* in New York, and was hailed by American literary critics as a "charming" writer of "riotous tales." The book was labeled "a Filipino version of *Life with Father*". Shortly thereafter, in a personal letter to a friend, Bulosan said that he had been "angry as hell" when he wrote the stories, and in his essay "I Am Not a Laughing Man," he reiterates the fact that even his comic fiction has the more serious underlying purpose of social criticism. This purpose has, however, often been missed, by critics in Bulosan's land of birth as well as those in his land of exile. In fact one of the central problems of Bulosan criticism is just how seriously to take the comic stories.

In his introduction to this new collection of Bulosan stories, *The Philippines is in the Heart*, Epifanio San Juan Jr., foremost Bulosan authority, makes his own position clear:

Bulosan refused to be stereotyped as a purveyor of cartoons. He sought to repudiate the one-sided and biased prejudice against him as a Filipino writer handling Filipino materials. Like Chaucer or Boccaccio, though under different conditions, Bulosan cherished and translated into practice

a serious commitment: the trenchant exposure of folly and vice through various comic and satiric stratagems. Through the oblique modes of irony, allegory, and other symbolic devices, Bulosan denounced oppression and exploitation. His narrative style involved mainly a criticism of social classes through the discriminating portrayal of concrete types (not stereotypes) that reflect the dynamic and diverse trends of history. (pp. vii-viii)

The casual reader of *The Laughter of My Father*, and of the new collection, may well find San Juan's perception of Bulosan as a radical writer a bit forced. However, in the context of *all* of Bulosan's writing (and Bulosan was a very prolific writer indeed, publishing six books, five essays, ten collections of poetry, and twenty-two short stories during his very short life, and leaving behind reams of unpublished work), San Juan is no doubt correct: Bulosan was a writer with a serious political purpose. Despite its sentimental title, *America Is in the Heart* was hard-hitting social criticism, a narration of the racism and fascism directed against Asian immigrants in depression-time USA. It is related to the more humorous stories in the same way that Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* is related to the stories of *Tortilla Flat*. That is to say, in the context of the author's complete writing, it seems considerably less forced to discover in the comic a deeper satirical purpose.

And indeed in this new collection the satire is more obvious than in the *Laughter of My Father*. For instance in "The Bandit and the Tax Collector," one of the stories in the opening group, the title characters are explicitly compared as "collectors of items, mostly money, from unwilling donors." "But," says the tax collector,

"I've the authority to collect, you might say,"

"Maybe my uncle [the bandit] also has the authority to collect," [answers the child-narrator]. "What do you represent?"

"Our government, son."

"Maybe my uncle also represents another government."

"There is only one government in our land, son," he explained.

"If you say so."

The central group of stories in this new book are the Uncle stories, put together by San Juan under the title "No More Laughter." They are, of course, still humorous, but instead of affirming the strength of the peasant folk culture as some of the stories in *The Laughter of My Father* do, these stories show the complete disintegration of the values of that culture under the onslaught of an exploitative, capitalistic governmental system. Uncle Sator is rich but stingy; Uncle Sergio is a gambler; and Uncle Soyoc is a thief. Money is the obsession of all three: "It takes a man with plenty of money," says Uncle Sator, "to appreciate the value of money." When Uncle Sator approaches his brother Soyoc to get him to rob his other brother, Sergio, the child-narrator comments:

It was very educational and inspiring also to watch two men of the world outwit each other and trying, of course, to take advantage of each other. In that bizarre world where I grew up, where cheating was a virtue, where lying was another virtue, the play and interplay of chicaneries made me doubt the value of the other virtues, those that were preached in the school and churches.

When Soyoc hears the proposition, he whispers to the narrator, "I didn't known my brother was so low!" The child answers, "That is how he became rich."

Corruption starts young in this society. When Uncle Sergio worries about the children in his gambling hall, the child narrator reminds him, "I started at five — gambling, among other things." Then in a perfect turn-about of what seemed to be a moral consideration on Sergio's part, he says yes, but what he is worried about is the fact that the children's eyes are so much sharper, and their reflexes so much quicker, than his, that they will soon begin to win money from him!

In another scene in the same story, Uncle Sergio has given the narrator a peso in five-centavo pieces, and he goes off and throws them into the schoolyard to watch the children scramble for them — until the teachers chase them away so they can get a share — and then the principal chases *them* away to get his own share. Corruption extends to all levels.

In these stories the outside forces have all but overpowered the peasants. Sator of course started out as a peasant, but he has put all that behind him and gone completely over to the other side. He wins. His relatives may be indignant — they may pass occasional moral judgments, as when the narrator admonishes him to remember Soyoc, "your bandit brother. The one you have double-crossed for a mess of pottage." But Uncle Sator always wins. Social criticism is not direct in these stories, and there is no Marxist analysis, but in underlying spirit they are actually a rather brutal attack on the basic problems of the capitalist system: greed for money and intense individualism.

Even the most fanciful story, "The Angel in Santo Domingo," is tinged with satire of the political-economic system. Here the peasant Vitte is so deeply in debt to his landlord that there seems to be no way out — until his son Panchito discovers an angel in the forest, and this angel volunteers herself as a money-making attraction. This angel comes and goes in a puff of smoke, wears brilliant white wings for public appearances because "people believe that angels always wear wings," and manages to see into people's pockets to suggest what their donations should be. But the mayor of the town is instantly there for a percentage, and soon the landlord comes and announces that since the angel was found on his property, it is then *his*, and the priest comes to say that she must belong to the church. The angel finally disappears in self-defense.

Dr. San Juan was largely responsible for the 1977 publication of Bulosan's "The Power of the People" (*Alive Magazine*, Ontario), a fascinating story of a group of Huks journeying through Central Luzon, each member of the band visiting in turn his own hometown. And San Juan promises that the present collection is only one of a series. There are yet more unpublished stories of the comic-satiric genre, and some really excellent, more direct stories of immigrant life in America ("As long as the Grass Shall Grow" and "Be American" come to mind immediately.) Carlos Bulosan *has* been neglected, perhaps more in the Philippines than in the US, and it *is* time that we rediscover him. San Juan has put together an interesting collection, and we can only hope that other such collections will follow.

Susan Evangelista