

## Revolutionary Romanticism in Chinese and Philippine Fiction: A Comparative Typology

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Filipino literary scholars have recently begun to acknowledge and explore the existence of a “Chinese-Philippine literary relationship.” In “The Chinese Margin in Philippine Literature,” Lily Rose Tope argues that the Maoist form of Marxism has “proven most influential in the production of contemporary protest literature”(77). She adds, “Nowhere is the influence felt more than in the protest plays written in the ‘70s, most especially street theater. The plotline, character development, themes, mime and gestures, in particular the clinched fist and tableaux endings, are direct borrowings from the Beijing revolutionary opera”(78).

More recently, Priscelina Patajo-Legasto’s article “Days of Disquiet; Nights of Rage: The Revolutionary Theater, 1969-1972” further explored the relations between Philippine theater and the Beijing revolutionary opera. Legasto notes that like the Beijing revolutionary opera “many Filipino revolutionary plays utilized a standard plot, merely varying characters and situations.” The plays, according to Legasto, open with an “oppressive situation,” after which “the worker, peasant, student, or soldier is pitted against a combined force of the bureaucrat-capitalist, the landlord, the military, and the clerico-fascist.” The experience of humiliation under the ruling classes leads the oppressed to a new consciousness, a consciousness that is now aware of the structural and class oppressiveness of the semi-colonial, semi-feudal system. This consciousness leads the oppressed to forge “an alliance with other oppressed members of the society.” Then, a decisive confrontation between the antagonistic forces occurs whereby the revolutionary/oppressed classes triumph towards the end of the play (178).

These two pioneering articles of Tope and Legasto have undoubtedly established the existence of a literary relationship between China and the Philippines. They opened the way for other scholars to explore such a rich and yet unthreaded subject.

This paper, in one sense, continues the explorations previously done by Tope and Legasto. However, instead of dwelling on the relations between the Beijing opera and protest plays, this study will focus more on the relationship between contemporary (Maoist) Chinese fiction and Philippine fiction, particularly underground and revolutionary fiction. This important literary relationship has not yet been fully explored and discussed; remains unnoticed. A preliminary discussion of this topic is needed because any reader familiar with Chinese fiction from Lu Xun to the writers of the Cultural Revolution as well as Philippine revolutionary fiction of the National Democratic Movement would immediately recognize a great similarity between the character types and plotlines of the two literatures.

This study, however, as its title suggests, would only dwell on the typology of characters in Chinese and Philippine fiction. By “typology”, one simply means the study of character types or characters that represent a “general trait” of a class, people or nation. Hence, this paper is primarily a study of character types in Chinese fiction (1930s to 1976) and Philippine fiction (1969 to present). This paper will enumerate and analyze a number of character types that can be observed in both literatures. However, this study of character types is not merely a formal method which will be used in the exposition of the text, but it is rather a dialectical materialist typology which relates the type of character to a type of situation or condition.

In his famous letter to Margaret Harkness, Friedrich Engels stated his dialectical materialist conception of realism. He says, “Realism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances”(218). This means that character types do not fall from the heavens and