

philippine studies

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

**In the Wake of Terror: Class, Race, Nation,
Ethnicity in the Postmodern World
by E. San Juan Jr.**

Review Author: Erwin S. Fernandez

Philippine Studies vol. 56, no. 4 (2008): 502—504

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In the Wake of Terror: Class, Race, Nation, Ethnicity in the Postmodern World

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007. xxvii + 203 pages.

An apologia for Marxism would be an interesting and provocative read not only for practitioners of postcolonialism in the Philippines but also for those who want to know more about cultural politics in the United States.

E. San Juan Jr. does this as he continually challenges the apparently innocuous presumptions of postcolonialism and its glib theoreticians. His latest work, *In the Wake of Terror: Class, Race, Nation, Ethnicity in the Postmodern World*, demonstrates a remarkable continuity with and commitment to his thesis developed in his earlier works—that intellectuals should be wary of the pitfalls of postcolonialism and that a historical-materialist optic offers the only viable tactic of interrogation in a world dominated and ran by ruthless monopoly capital. The publication of the book is San Juan's affirmation of his firm convictions on postcolonialism's overt inadequacies, inadequacies confirmed by the passage of the USA Patriot Act, which raised the specter of imperialism in the guise of a suspect defenseless "homeland."

A Filipino intellectual living in the "belly of the beast," San Juan in this book continues to contest orthodoxies by unmasking the pretenses of multiculturalism in the United States. Multiculturalism arose from the search for a middle ground that could bridge two contrasting positions to the problem of cultural ethos in the midst of post-1989 economic downturn and urban crisis. The first claims the importance of a "common culture" to unify and consolidate the commonality among citizens and, the second, the foundational racism of the United States. One view of multiculturalism comes from Manning Marable who articulates that beneath the differences lie the ideals and values that constitute American identity. Another, in contrast, is that of Fred Siegel who betrays his own fear about it and reduces it to mere "politics of identity" (5). Revising the canon either of pluralist or monopolist varieties, according to San Juan, transforms culture into "fetishized knowledge sealed off from contingencies dictated by state power and commercial exigencies" (6). To remedy this, San Juan proposes understanding culture within the larger matrix of a society's totality, including the contradictions inherent in the struggle among sectors and forces.

San Juan faults multiculturalism for displacing "race" and "class" as social categories for critical analysis by ethnicity-based paradigms. Tracing this condition to the aversion to the cold war and the civil rights movements in the 1960s, which upheld identity politics, San Juan writes that class today is studied as it intersects race and gender, a situation that reduces class, race, and gender "to nominal aspects of personal identity without any clear historical or materialist grounding" (25). Returning to Marx's notion of class, San Juan looks at class as a "relational (to the means of production) and processual category" (31), making it different from the Weberian categories of status group or stratum, which are nowadays equated with class. In the capitalist mode of production, however, race becomes a marker in the exploitation of labor, and class exploitation is the condition of possibility for racism.

Meanwhile, San Juan sees the beginnings of an ethnicity-based framework, arising from ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, as "a new method of pacification" of the free enterprise system that gave birth to Fredrik Barth's theory of ethnic identity and that was carried on by Werner Sollors (61). He exposes the spurious claims of ethnicity theory and points out its weaknesses as an investigative prism ("aside from tending to reify ethnic groups as corporate entities, it cannot distinguish the ethnic from the racial; consequently it ignores the power imbalances since racism occurs in situations of domination and subordination" [64]).

While accepting the role of Critical Race Theory in supplying the deficiencies of intersectionality of gender, race, and class by attacking predatory capitalism and its legal armature, San Juan contends that it is confined to reformism. Uncovering the emancipatory possibility of "class," San Juan suggests viewing it "as an antagonistic relation between labor and capital" and analyzing "how the determinant of 'race' is played out historically in the class-conflicted structure of capitalism and its political/ideological processes of class rule" (101), all these framed within the landscape of a crisis-laden corporate globalization. He does not end there because he argues for the reinstitution of class struggle as a means to attaining a socialist revolution that will abolish racism.

One mobilizing for revolution should contend with the charge that innate in the concepts of nation/state and nationalism is violence. Against the backdrop of postmodernist demonization of nation/state and nationalism, San Juan identifies the complicity of the modern capitalist state in the formation of the nation as an historical artifice. Using Pierre Bourdieu's con-

cept of meta-capital, he writes that postcolonial claims on the artificiality of the nation cannot distinguish the nation from the notion of the state where the dominant class in a struggle for power imposes control over economic and symbolic capital. Violence then is committed by one of the competing social classes able to take hold of the state, not by the nation-state per se.

Always rejecting postcolonial assertions, San Juan agrees nonetheless with Frantz Fanon, for whom engagement with revolutionary violence against the dehumanizing impositions of imperialism is the only alternative to a “profit-motivated state violence” (132). Although critical of the multiculturalist project as the “latest reincarnation of assimilationist drive to pacify unruly subaltern groups” (136) in a racial polity that is the United States, San Juan urges a “heretical, oppositional, even utopian multiculturalism” (151) that would embody ideals and means of realizing justice for a broad socialist agenda. Fredric Jameson’s approach to globalization is problematic because it elides the role of the working class in his (Jameson’s) strategy of resistance. San Juan also chides the postcolonial obsession with the survival of identity in an age of globalization. To illustrate how postmodern techniques yield absurdities, he cites an ethnographic study on the Abu Sayyaf by Charles O. Frake, who found them as identity-seeking terrorists neglecting completely the relations of production where they came from.

Overall, San Juan wants to revivify Marxist concepts such as class considered to be passé in the academe now dominated by a lot of posts—post-modernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. While rightly pointing out the obsessive preoccupation with race, identity, and ethnicity by other scholars, he in turn consciously valorizes the centrality of “class” in explaining social realities. For him, the “nation”—alive and far from obsolete—continues to be a fertile field in the articulation of national-democratic causes.

Beyond the typos, sometimes poor editing, and missing authors and their works in the list of references, *In the Wake of Terror* establishes the no nonsense radicalism of San Juan, his advocacy of a critical and militant praxis, which is a clear departure from the politics of the rest of his tribe.

Erwin S. Fernandez

Department of History
University of the Philippines
<win1tree@yahoo.com>