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**Elections for Sale: The Causes and
Consequences of Vote Buying**
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Book Notes

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PIMENTEL, BENJAMIN

Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007. 231 pages.

Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street is a poignant novel set in the cold streets and damp apartment buildings of San Francisco. It tells the stories of Fidel, Ciriaco, Ruben, Badong, and Major who fought, in their youthful years, for the country's freedom as soldiers during the Second World War. Now that they are old and gray, they risk their lives once more for another mission across the seas. The book gives life to the silent tragedy endured by the war veterans almost as soon as they land in the United States. Having survived the atrocities of the previous world war, and hoping to provide a better life for their families as the struggle for a better society continues, the veterans brave the cold, hunger, and loneliness in San Francisco's Powell Street and thereabouts, as they wait, sometimes cheerfully, often despairingly, for what is due them. Seemingly being met with frustration at every turn in this new battle for veterans' benefits, only their bittersweet memories of home, unbreakable bonds with their fellow *gerilya*, never-say-die sense of humor, and the tenacious dream of one day being able to finally go back to their beloved homeland sustain them. This is the first novel of Pimentel, a journalist and documentary filmmaker. It features the work of well-regarded photographer Rick Rocamora on the cover. It won the 2007 National Book Award for Fiction, given by the Manila Critics Circle and the National Book Development Board, and the Juan C. Laya Award for Fiction in Filipino.

SCHAFFER, FREDERIC CHARLES, ED.

Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007. 226 pages.

Different methods are applied in this systematic study of vote buying in various parts of the world, including the Philippines. The book has four main areas: the significance and nature of vote buying; its causes and logistics; its consequences in terms of shaping political and economic outcomes;

and possible remedies through institutional reforms and civic education. The various chapters raise the following points: Not a simple economic exchange, vote buying carries a range of meanings in different cultural contexts. Vote buying emerges when it is a cost-effective strategy and politicians can ensure voter compliance. It is comparatively advantageous only when certain conditions prevail, such as poverty, traditions of gift giving, and access to government largesse. Buying votes requires a complex multilayered organization that relies on classic strategies of surveillance, regulation, and incentive schemes, as well as the mobilization of networks of trust, judicial protection, and managers with in-depth local knowledge. Vote buying distorts democratic policy making as well as the economy, with the value of those whose votes are bought being discounted, even as the affluent (whose votes are not bought) are offered public goods. “Supply-side” remedies seek to alter the institutional incentives to engage in vote buying, e.g., electoral rules that strengthen political parties and programmatic campaigning, and effective enforcement of prohibitions. However, voter education as a “demand-side” remedy is ineffective as campaigns are often based on misguided assumptions about the meaning of vote buying to poor voters. A final chapter presents the main lessons learned.

VENTURA, REY

Into the Country of Standing Men

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007. 324 pages.

Into the Country of Standing Men delves closer into the lives of the men Ventura wrote about in his first book *Underground in Japan*, first published in 1992 and reprinted in 2006 by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. In Japan the “unauthorized” migrant laborers are known as *tachinbo*, literally standing men, because they have to stand in line while a company foreman sizes them up and chooses the most able ones for the job for the day. According to Our Own Voice, a U.S.-based literary group that has given recognition to this work, “this term originally referred to prostitutes soliciting favors in the street. But post-war Japan’s rapid reconstruction and industrialization created a new breed of workers: the day laborers. These workers were mostly rural migrants. They stood on the corners and waited for labor recruiters to offer them jobs. They stood and waited like prostitutes.” In *Underground in*