

The EDSA People Power Revolution As Canonized in Philippine Children's Picture Books

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Abstract

The 1986 EDSA Philippine People Power Revolution is often remembered as the “miraculous”, “peaceful”, and “bloodless” mass protest that ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos and inspired other nations such as South Korea and Germany to organize their own democratic protests. However, the revolution’s memory and impact are still contested in the 21st century: Marcos is buried in the national Heroes’ Cemetery, his surviving family hold government posts, and President Rodrigo Duterte has called on the Philippines to “move on from celebrating” the People Power Revolution. On the other hand, the event also has been key to the power of the Aquino family dynasty (Marcos’ and Duterte’s political rivals), who have formed a public brand strongly associated with the revolution through constant references of its narrative and imagery in electoral campaigns, speeches, and interviews.

This has created a struggle between “remembering” the revolution and “moving on” that has seeped into Tagalog-language children’s picture books, with the EDSA People Power Commission partnering with publishing press Adarna House to produce *Isang Harding Papel (A Paper Garden)*, a fiction book by Augie Rivera and illustrated by Rommel Joson; and *Edsa*, a counting book written by Russell Molina and illustrated Sergio Bumatay III. Given the EDSA People Power Commission’s explicitly stated desire to create stories about EDSA that will be passed onto Filipino “children and grandchildren” (2014: 30), this study will therefore examine how the text and illustrations of both picture books function as tools for the revolution’s continuing canonization (Assman 2015), and as instruments for the maintenance of hegemony (particularly that of the middle and upper classes of Metro Manila, and the liberal and democratic politics associated with the revolution). This study will also assess how *A Paper Garden* and *Edsa* construct their imagined child audience as memory vessels and future carriers of the “truth” of history. Ultimately, this study will interrogate what “truths” about the EDSA People Power Revolution both books perpetuate and omit for their readers in the name of canonization.