



Alternative Alamat: Stories Inspired by Philippine Mythology

Paolo Chikiamco (Editor) , Timothy James Dimacali , Mo Francisco , Raissa Rivera Falgui , David Hontiveros , Celestine Trinidad , Dean Francis Alfar , Andrei Tupaz , more... Eliza Victoria , Rochita Loenen-Ruiz , Budjette Tan , Raymond G. Falgui ...less

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Philippine mythology is full of images that ignite the imagination: gods of calamity and baldness, of cosmic time and lost things; the many-layered Skyworld, and weapons that fight their own battles; a ship that is pulled to paradise by a chain, and a giant crab that controls the tides . . . Yet too few of these tales are known and read today. *Alternative Alamat* gathers stories, by contemporary authors of Philippine fantasy, which make innovative use of elements of Philippine mythology. None of these stories are straight re-tellings of the old tales: they build on those stories, or question underlying assumptions; use ancient names as catalysts, or play within the spaces where the myths are silent. What you will find in common in these eleven stories is a love for the myths, epics, and legends which reflect us, contain us, call to us-and it is our hope that, in reading our stories, you may catch a glimpse of, and develop a hunger for, those venerable tales.

Alternative Alamat also features a cover and interior illustrations by Mervin Malonzo, a short list of notable Philippine deities, tips for online and offline research, and in-depth interviews with two people who have devoted much of their careers to the study of Philippine folklore and anthropology, Professors Herminia Meñez Coben ("Explorations in Philippine Folklore" and "Verbal Arts in Philippine Indigenous Communities: Poetics, Society, and History") and Fernando N. Zialcita ("The Soul Book" and "Authentic but Not Exotic").

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From Reader Review Alternative Alamat: Stories Inspired by Philippine Mythology for online ebook

O says

"Sometimes, I feel like there's a tendency--even amongst Filipinos--to view the Philippines as a footnote on the world stage. Yet's there's so much that is unique and beautiful in Philippine culture, if only we would take the time to learn it."

This pretty much sums up my opinion about this book and Philippine culture in general. I grew up learning about and loving Greek mythology, but know so very little about my own. I could tell you who the Greek gods and goddesses are, what they represent, yet if you asked me about Philippine folklore, I'd only be able to tell you the little I know about Maria Makiling and supernatural beings like the *kapre*, *tikbalang*, etc.

Alternative Alamat: Stories Inspired by Philippine Mythology is a collection of short stories that put a twist to Philippine myths. I'm afraid I can't identify the twists in some stories, but that's given me motivation to research and learn more about our folklore. It seems so very diverse and filled with many interesting deities, and I'm looking forward to learning more about them.

I don't have a favorite story in this collection, they were all equally wondrous and enthralling to me. Stories about gods I've never heard of before, a different take on the Maria Makiling I've learned about, a supernatural twist on Lapu-Lapu's triumph against Magellan...how could I ever choose?

To be honest, this book makes me weep over the lack of cultural knowledge we have. It makes me sad to think about our very own alphabet, the *alibata*, that hardly anyone knows about, and all the things we lost when we were colonized by the Spaniards. But this book also gives me hope, because perhaps, as more and more people read it, we'll be just a little bit more aware and just a little bit more curious about our own culture, and eventually try to learn more and love our own.

This review can also be found on my blog, [Lambent Lights](#).

Sheryl says

Definitely enjoyed this selection. Epic alamats with a twist!

It struck a cord how we as Filipinos are so ignorant of our own land's stories and mythologies. It is awesome to experience initiatives such as this one that seeks to break the barrier and make Philippine mythology more known and be seen as something cool which it is!

On a side note, I find that I've been reading slow and I'm not sure if it has to do with me reading mostly short stories which prompts me to stop after each story ends before beginning a new one. Well, let's see how the next reading goes.

Tina says

Original post at One More Page

When I was a kid, I had fond memories of reading about different Filipino legends for school. These legends were really made to teach a lesson to us kids to be nice, respectful and hardworking, really, and not just tall tales for bedtime stories. Most notable was the legend of the pineapple, which tells of a girl who felt lazy to look for what her mother was asking her to find and her exasperated mom wishes for her to have many eyes so she can find it and poof, she turns into a pineapple. I cannot remember, though, of a story talking about other Filipino legends, myths and epics other than the usual kiddie stories, save for Maria Makiling (the fairy that lives in Mount Makiling, one of the well-known mountains in the Philippines) and the *Biag ni Lam-Ang* (*The Life of Lam-Ang*), which I had to know because my mom is from Ilocos. So I was one of the people who knew almost nothing about Philippine Mythology that jumped at the idea of reading *Alternative Alamat*, a collection of stories from Filipino writers edited by Paolo Chikiamco (writer of *High Society*). Since I vowed to read and review more local fiction ever since I started this blog, I know I can't miss this one.

The thing I like about anthologies is that it doesn't require as much commitment as a full length novel does. You can read one story, stop and go back to the collection after some time without feeling lost. But the thing is, I never really wanted to stop reading *Alternative Alamat* because I keep getting surprised by the stories it contained. There were times when I thought that I wouldn't like the story I was reading after a few paragraphs, and then I end up really liking it in the end because of some kind of twist. I think there's something for everyone in each story in this collection. *Ana's Little Pawnshop on Makiling St.* (Eliza Victoria) reminded me of those stories I read in our literary folio in college, with its YA-ish, magic realism charm. *Harinuo's Love Song* (Rochita Leonen-Ruiz) and *Keeper of My Sky* (Timothy James Dimacali) with their lyrical prose, were haunting and sad tales of a love that shouldn't have been and couldn't be. There were stories that gave different perspectives on some of the Filipino goddesses all bearing the same first name Maria but all with different personalities: *Conquering Makiling* (Monique Francisco) for Maria Makiling, *Beneath the Acacia* (Celestine Trinidad) for Maria Sinukuan, and *The Sorceress Queen* (Raissa Rivera Falgui) for Maria Malindig. There were stories from legends that seemed like a stranger at first but then turns into something more familiar: *Offerings to Aman Sinaya* (Andre Tupaz) deals with how we have turned from the old fishing ways to the newer ones that destroy the oceans; *Balat, Buwan, Ngalan* (David Hontiveros) seemed like meta fiction of sorts since it mentions a book of local legends that was published and launched. Then there were the fun things, like alternate histories, that picks on the two times that the Filipinos fought back from the Spanish conquerors: *The Alipin's Tale* (Raymond G. Falgui) and *A Door Opens: The Beginning of the Fall of the Ispancialo-in-Hinirang* (Dean Alfar). And if you have ever read any of the *Trese* comics, then you're in for a treat here because *The Last Full Show* (Budjette Tan) is a story that shows a side of Alexandra Trese not shown in the comics. It's hard to pick favorites among the stories because they each had something different to like about it -- the writing, the treatment of the myth, the characters, the twists. There are also illustrations in the book too (done by cover artist, Mervin Malonzo), that are also based on Philippine myths and perfectly complements the content. It's really a treasure trove of the things that make the Filipino culture so rich and colorful, and I'm pretty sure this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Alternative Alamat also contains a few appendices about notable Filipino deities, interviews with experts on the field, tips on researching Philippine myths and a glossary of terms. While it may seem that these things were included in the book for foreign readers, I think it's also for Filipinos like me who know almost nothing about Philippine mythology. I think this makes *Alternative Alamat* more accessible to readers, regardless if you're a Filipino or you've lived in the country for a while or you're just a curious reader who's

interested in the title even if you have no idea where in the world the Philippines is.

Is there anything I don't like about this? Well, I just wish that it was a little bit longer. I truly felt sad when I read that the anthology was closing with Dean Alfar's story. But having this book out in the wild now doesn't mean it has to stop there, right? After all, there is always an option for a second volume. ;) And also, a print version would be nice. So I can gift this to friends who refuse to get an e-reader. :D But other than that, there's nothing else I would nitpick on. I think all the things I wrote up there sufficiently says how much I loved *Alternative Alamat*. I've never felt more prouder to be a Filipino when I was reading this. Somehow, I felt that this book and the stories in this collection were *mine* -- mine because I am a Filipino and the stories found inside is a part of my heritage. :)

So if you're one of the people who received an e-reader for Christmas, or you've had one for a while and you're looking for something really new to read for the new year, then imagine me pushing, no, *shoving* this ebook to you. If you're going to get one new ebook before this year ends or if you're going to buy a new one as the 2012 comes in, make it *Alternative Alamat*. You won't regret it, I promise. :)

S.B. Wright says

Once, last century, I studied Filipino history for my undergraduate degree. The units were imaginatively named The History of the Philippines Part A and B. Like most things I studied, I remember little.

To be fair, it was Darwin and there was a lot of drinking.

Thankfully *Alternative Alamat* by Paolo Chikiamco is imaginative and stock full of story that I never got the chance to encounter as part of my history major. So while reading *Alternative Alamat* evokes a certain level of nostalgia, there's plenty here that is fresh and new and exciting.

Alamat roughly translates as Legend, and so we have *Alternative Legends*, a collection of stories that explore and bring to life in reader's (both International and Filipino) minds some of the richness that can be found in Philippine Mythology. After having chatted with Rochita Loenen-Ruiz and reading *Alternative Alamat* it becomes apparent to me that this is just a taster, an indication of what is possible, of what more there is to explore in Philippine mythology.

Paolo has managed to gather together an interesting group of stories and writers. There are names that are familiar to me: Eliza Victoria, Rochita Loenen-Ruiz, Dean Alfar and David Hontiveros but there's a fair amount that I haven't had the privilege of reading before.

A quick selection of the tales:

Eliza Victoria, kicks off the collection with Ana's Little Pawnshop on Makiling St. which also featured in her collection *A Bottle of Storm Clouds*. It's a very good modern rendering of Anagolay, the Philippine Goddess of lost things and a comment perhaps on the modernisation of the Philippines.

Harinuo's Love Song by Rochita Loenen-Ruiz, is a beautiful retelling of the myth of the Sky Maiden. Beautiful and horrifying at the same time. This story was pleasurable beyond the tale itself. It contains poems within the text but the whole story itself has a very powerful folktale rhythm to it.

Budjette Tan, famous for his Graphic Novel/Comic, Trese (available form Kobo), gives us the The Last Full Show, a slice of life from that world. It's a good mix of crime/mystery and the supernatural, Philippines style.

Timothy James Dimacali's Keeper of My Sky was very good and quite sad at the same time. An ancient story re-crafted in a modern setting and cleverly structured to produce a unique effect. Reminds me of some of the character re-imagining in American Gods.

Mo Francisco, takes another look at Maria Makiling in Conquering Makiling, the goddess of this tale is a little more primal, earthy in her presentation. The story was vivid and quite humorous. This is one of those stories that sits quite happily in the realms of magical realism as it does in speculative fiction or fantasy.

There are others in this collection that I will leave to surprise you. They were all good stories and showcased what can be accomplished with Philippine folk lore and mythology with a range of literary styles. Dean Alfar finishes off the fiction segment of the collection with a story told in footnotes – a short excerpt from an historical text (real or fabricated I am not sure) is footnoted* and it is these footnotes that builds the story. It's an interesting technique and it bridges nicely to the non-fiction articles and interviews that Chikiamco sourced for the collection.

You can't ask much more from a book than to be intrigued, entertained and educated. Alternative Alamat achieves all of this admirably. It's an important read not only for those wanting diversity in their speculative fiction but also I think for Filipino's wanting to explore and engage in their mythology.

It is beautifully illustrated by Mervin Malonzo who did the front cover and the interior black and white plates. At just over \$5 AUD via Kobo, this collection is a steal. If you are a fan of myth and folktale retelling, take a trip to the Philippines, I don't think you will regret it.

*A word of warning to Kobo app users – the app as you may know does a terrible job with hyperlinks (ie you can't use them) so I had to read Dean's story an another app.

Sami C says

GORRRL. Oh my bathala! This book was great!

Philippine mythology has a whole universe of its own. Greek, Norse, Roman mythology--all great. We know what they're about. But Philippine mythology is seriously underrated. I always knew it was fascinating, but I didn't fully realize the scope until I read this book of retellings.

Growing up in a largely Catholic and superstitious country made me paranoid child. I was always wary about offending spirits and supernatural creatures. The night was my enemy. I wouldn't point at trees in the dark in fear of a demon biting my finger off. When walking home at night, I would chant "*Tabi tabi po*", asking invisible dwarves to move aside so I don't step on them. I stayed away from big trees because I didn't want to anger the *kapre/agta* living there.

This book sort of reminded me of my childhood, or at least the legends I heard from old folks. The legendary *diwata* (fairy) Mariang Makiling who "haunts" Mt. Makiling was often rehashed in these pages, probably because she truly is a fascinating character. The story of creation involving Tungkung Langit and Alunsina, proudly of Visayan origin, was also retold. (That said, I kinda want to name my future daughter Alunsina. It's such a beautiful sounding name.)

If you're curious about Philippine mythology, I highly recommend this book. Granted it's not accurate (it *is* a collection of retellings), but it's a fantastic gateway nonetheless.

???? ???? #BookDiet2019 says

"Sometimes I feel like there's a tendency--even amongst Filipinos--to view the Philippines as a footnote on the world stage. Yet there's so much that is unique and beautiful in Philippine culture, if only we would take the time to learn it. Philippine mythology has much to offer the world. This anthology, we hope, has opened a doorway. We invite you to step through it."

~Paolo Chikiamco

This is an anthology that has made me even prouder of my cultural roots, particularly when it comes to a Filipino's ability and capacity for myth-making, and the eleven short stories (plus a supplement comic story) that comprise this volume are testaments to that quality. I absolutely love it when a book manages to not only pleasantly surprise me but also cast a spell on me while reading it and *Alternative Alamat* knows exactly how to weave magic in the prose of each story and how best to wield its power to entice and hypnotize anyone who reads it.

Each story in this collection is a re-imagined tale of a famous or obscure folklore/myth or figure from the Philippines and I can honestly say that the ones I'm not familiar with are the tales that captured my imagination the most and stayed with me long after I finished them. In *Alternative Alamat* we get to enjoy the modern interpretations of some of the well-known Filipino myths as explored in stories such as "Conquering Makiling" by Monique Francisco (a playful look at the most popular *diwata* Maria Makiling and the idea of her taking human lovers); Eliza Victoria's "Ana's Little Pawnshop on Makiling St." (which showed how the changing times affected the way of living among supernatural entities); and the tantalizing and enigmatic piece "Keeper of My Sky" by Timothy James Dimacali (that accentuates the poignant dichotomy found in every creation and ending present in the universe).

There are also cautionary stories about losses and gains that result from either bad decisions or an individual's sheer strength of will ("Harinuo's Love Song" by Rochita Loenen-Ruiz is quite reminiscent of Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* but with a bitter ending; whilst "The Alipin's Tale" by Raymond G. Falgui is a story that ends with an optimistic challenge in regards to our ability to free ourselves from the enslavement and confines of the status quo). We also have a story ("The Last Full Show") written by Budjette Tan, who is known mostly for his comic book series *Trese*, where he decided to reveal a softer side to the titular character of said series and is surely not to be missed by any *Trese* fan.

We also have stories that provide us with insights in the manner and inner workings of myth-making and superstition in general ("Offerings to Aman Sinaya" by Andrei Tupaz; "Balat, Buwan, Ngalan" by David Hontiveros; and "A Door Opens: The Beginning of the Fall of the Ispancialo-in-Hinirang" by Dean Alfar) but my most favourite stories of this collection have to be Raissa Rivera Falgui's "The Sorceress Queen"

that tells the unique tale of Maryam of Marinduque, a proud monarch who will not bow down to patriarchy or the men who wish to subdue her through promises of love and devotion (even if the price of denying such pleasures is loneliness and desolation), and Celestine Trinidad's "*Beneath The Acacia*" which interestingly used a folklore as a mere backdrop to tell a detective story which aims to solve a very intriguing crime.

The supplement comic story "*Upo*" by Andrew Drilon was brief yet quite endearing in its style and execution (it's a story of origin regarding a certain vegetable).

I believe that there is an online copy available so you are very much encouraged to check out this anthology. You have my word when I say that reading *Alternative Alamat* will be an amazing (and gratifying) use of your time.

RECOMMENDED: 10/10

Robin Edman says

Remember when you were a kid reading the European myths for the first time? The stories were so wild and interesting and sometimes just so clever that you would read them despite the outdated language in which those collections were always written. The language, though, makes it impossible for a grown person and developed reader to enjoy these stories if they don't get early enough exposure.

Well, now suppose that you could come back to those stories as an adult, but written in updated form and style, and written for grownups to read. Now also imagine that these stories are new to you, that you are discovering them for the first time. How wonderful would that be?

This book did precisely that for me. I know nothing of Filipino culture, and these stories were all brand new to me. And I loved them! As with all anthologies, some stories are better than others, but most of them are very good. I had a wonderful time reading them.

Kristine Muslim says

Alternative Alamat is a fine volume which showcases the contemporary retelling of Philippine myths. The first story, which I also think is the most suitable lead story, shows off Eliza Victoria's remarkable attention to details. I am also impressed by the musicality of Dimacali's "Keeper of My Sky." Another standout is the David Hontiveros piece. Although replete with distracting and unnecessary popular culture allusions, his tale is well-written and graceful in its storytelling. I also find to be incredibly ingenious and well-crafted the last story by Dean Francis Alfar. It is a story that disguises itself as a fully annotated journal article. I'm not sure, but some of the details on the footnotes look authentic. It is also possible that Alfar tailored the story to fit the annotations. But whatever it was that he did, I loved it. The five sections of appendices also add a refreshing touch to the book. All in all, *Alternative Alamat* is a marvelous attempt to gather in one volume some of the finest renditions of Philippine folklore.

Paolo Chikiamco, in his introduction, claims that "the stories we don't know are just as fascinating."

I believe they are.

Monique says

Reading *Alternative Alamat* was like hurtling through time back to high school, back when I was first introduced to Lam-ang, Bernardo Carpio, and Maria Sinukuan. Of course, stories about important creatures of Philippine folklore such as the *tikbalang*, *kapre* and *manananggal* were told to me by my older cousins at a very young age, and I've been friends with Maria Makiling ever since my family's very first trip to the nearby town of Los Banos, where Mount Makiling looms proud and majestic from a distance, and which form I always attempt to decipher as a supine woman's profile. And so to these creatures, as well as to deities and other beings of magic and enchantment, I need not be acquainted any further.

Imagine, however, reading tales about these very same creatures but in a very different context. Different, but clever. *Brilliant*.

I've always loved retellings. My favorite retelling of all is Neil Gaiman's *Snow, Glass, Apples* - you'll have to read it to find out why. :P I appreciate retellings because they offer a fresh and unique take on familiar, homegrown stories, and because I also appreciate the creativity and imagination involved in their formation. And compendiums, I *love* them, too. I love the fact that I can pick one up, flip the pages and choose a story, read it, and not at all feel obliged to finish everything, knowing that I can always go back to it whenever the mood strikes.

So. A compendium of retellings. *Filipino* retellings. Sounds good to me. ;)

But what can be expected from this particular anthology? Well, imagine the elusive Maria Makiling appearing as a chic, corporate careerwoman who totes BlackBerrys and sashays around the city with close-in security, or as a teenage temptress who lures young men into giving up and living out their fantasies. Imagine the page in Philippine history with Lapu-Lapu in the frontlines defeating the Spanish conquerors led by Magellan being altered considerably; Lapu-Lapu, whose victory is suddenly attributed not to his courage and might, but to the supposedly voluptuous *diwatas* led by none other than (obviously my favorite) Maria Makiling. Alunsina, Maria Sinukuan, Bakunawa, Amansinaya, and countless other *bathalas* and pagan deities --- they take the spotlight in this anthology of alternative tales, each retelling even better and more engaging than the last.

Much as I would love to write down my thoughts on each individual story, however, I fear that I do not have the luxury of time to do so. Suffice it to say, though, that as I went through this compendium, I was filled with wonder and fascination at the richness of Philippine folklore, and admiration, at the same time, for the geniuses who were responsible for the crafting of each story. The familiarity of the characters and settings will put you right where you should be comfortable, and while a unique twist to the original tale may surprise you somewhere along the way, you will continue feeling right at ease because you *know* that a part of the story is yours to claim.

So, would I recommend this book? Absolutely. There's a certain high to reading something you can call proudly your own, even though you had no actual part in its execution. I would love for you to share in that feeling. :)

My copy: A Christmas gift from Tina. Thank you so much! :D

Also posted here.

Anne says

All I can say is THANK YOU for such an amazing anthology. One of the best I've read and extremely appreciate. :)

Catherine Walder says

Whether you're familiar with Philippine mythology or not, you'll enjoy this diverse collection of fantastic Filipino fiction. From pre-Hispanic rule to modern-day Philippines, stories of deities, culture, legends and beliefs come together in one spectacular volume. Reading some of these is almost like coming home for me, but I must admit, the twists and turns are way better than how my late grandmother had told them.

Ana's Little Pawnshop opens the volume and was a fun read. The pawnshop reminded me of a Gaiman work called "Chivalry" about an elderly woman who finds the Holy Grail in an Oxfam thrift shop. Eliza Victoria's writing reads so different here. I like the tone, but I didn't really feel much for Ana's loss as described by the narrator. I've read a few of Eliza's stories and many of her poetry. Her grasp of emotions and ability to convey them in writing is, for someone so young, quite remarkable. I guess, this "fun" in Ana's Little Pawnshop had to sacrifice that raw emotion you get when you read her other works. Overall, the story is very engaging with its crisp, believable dialogue and a good opener to get readers involved from the start.

Whilst "Harinuo's Love Song" was well-written and showed Rochita Loenen-Ruiz's range as an author, I didn't enjoy it as much as I did her other stories, especially those published by Fantasy Magazine. I normally don't need to be familiar with characters or cultures in order to enjoy a story. "Harinuo" has that feel of that writing she did with "Hi Bagan ya Hi Kinggawan," yet it took so much for me to get used to the former. But then that's just me, I get distracted by everything and at one point couldn't help but google Antoon Postma and read about his works, too! The next story, "The Last Full Show," on the other hand, reeks of familiarity. I haven't read the Trese books, I meant the familiarity to the setting, reference to urban legends ("Robertson"), amongst others. I really enjoyed this one.

"The Alipin's Tale" is very rich both in Philippine mythology and historical characters. Endlessly fixated on Greek mythology, this is the first time that I remember encountering a Filipino story that reads like one. The tale is rich in events, rich in fantasy, rich in religion... even with the footnotes to the story that so and so was a reference to a myth, I thought that this take was still very original, also enjoyed this one.

"Keeper of My Sky." Alternate realities, a series of what could have beens, like reading Einstein's Dreams, trying not to kick up dust. This has to be my favourite in the volume. Beautiful.

"Conquering Makiling" is sharp, witty and sexy. I felt I was invited by friends for a climb up Makiling and instead of getting nervous and tired, it became a walk in the park and just that - a gathering with friends. (Damn I didn't realise Philippine myth is this hot haha).

"The Sorceress Queen" reads like a modern fairy tale with lots of twists and turns. Interestingly as I read I began relating the setting to a smaller one, such as that of a household, that is, of mine. Men, women, pride, two different kingdoms or countries, where shall we live?

"Beneath the Acacia" was also enjoyable because not only it is fantasy, there is also a lot of mystery with the characters discussing clues / red herrings. The entire story already felt like the climax / reaching for a resolution. I wanted more. Celestine could write a full-length novel based on this story. One story that deals with the kapre, Victoria and Mang Andres, surrounded by the story of Juan and Maria.

I got drawn to "Offerings to Aman Sinaya" because of the boat and water details. Fascinating. I don't know why this made me think of the film "Whale Rider." Maybe because the author lives in New Zealand?

This is the first time I've read David Hontiveros (I'm missing out, I know). I felt like I was dodging bullets. So many thoughts on a page. God that was manic - exhausting, in a good way. Reading this anthology was like a roller-coaster experience. The styles are simply so varied. I have to admit that whilst I have favourite stories in the anthology, Mr. Hontiveros' writing is the kind that I like. That thing that's said about (some) male authors expressing in a page what (some) women authors would write in 10.

Dean Alfaro's "A Door Opens: The Beginning of the Fall of the Ispancialo-in-Hinirang" ends the volume. I was prepared to be put off when I heard that this story made use of footnotes. I know it helped that the story is not as long as "Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell," which footnotes I became very impatient with. Mr. Alfaro's writing, was, as usual, excellent and very readable. Loved the part when some heroes appeared which sort of equaled the good number of women appearing in this book :)

One of the unsung heroes of this book is the amazing, breathtaking art of Mervin Malonzo. There were stories I didn't want to end but what made things better was the fact that it meant there was a Mervin Malonzo art coming up.

Browsing through the appendices gives one an idea why this took a year or so in the making. I've worked with editor and publisher Paolo Chikiamco in "Ruin and Resolve." This is the kind of editor who will stand alongside his author and dissect a story till it is in its possible best form.

As it has been repeatedly said, these gods and goddesses come in different forms across the islands. We have different names for them, we have our own stories about them. The trouble is there is not a single reference book for all these myths. You know them based on what your grandparents'/playmates' stories. But not many would really be patient to read the nonfiction stuff/related literature. This anthology is probably the only one you'll find today that brings back these stories to us and one that speaks to today's society. Roll in volume 2 :)

cecille says

"Alternative Alamat" is a collection of short stories that retell Philippine legends and folk tales. Some of the characters may be familiar to us, such as Maria Makiling and Bakunawa, but many more are new discoveries

(to me, at least). It also features haunting depictions of tribal/regional gods and goddesses made by Mervin Malonzo. Highly recommended especially if you are interested in our own mythology.

Rain says

"There is a dual beauty to Philippine Mythology: the stories that we know, and the stories that we don't."

It is my first time reading an anthology of Philippine legends written in English and added with a twist which is refreshing. I made it my duty just recently to dedicate myself to reading more literary works created by Filipinos (although I was looking forward to reading something written in Tagalog), that made me realize that I made the right choice. It also have a little bit of some surprising extras in the latter part of the book which was pretty nice.

As a fan of anything with fantasy and legends. I give this anthology an A++. I recommend this book to those unfamiliar with Philippine folklore and legends and do not read much Filipino books. I just absolutely love it!

Zeny says

I enjoyed reading "Alternative Alamat" (even though I am still squeamish with the e-book format) because it offers new perspectives on old myths and pieces of folklore. I also appreciate the intention to preserve these old stories, a part of Philippine culture, which are in the threshold of becoming lost and forgotten. The stories are also appropriate for contemporary readers to enjoy. To me, to narrate the stories the way they have been narrated for hundreds or thousands of years, to retain the form and voice makes it feel old and, unfortunately, irrelevant to contemporary readers. It is interesting to think that despite adapting the fixed form of the written word, reinventions of old myths makes the narrative fluid.

Stories which stood out for me was Timothy James Dimacali's "Keeper of my Sky" and David Hontiveros' "Balat, Buwan, Ngalan". I love the illustrations by Mervin Malonzo.

Meann says

My actual rating is a 4.5

Originally posted at The Girl Who Read and Other Stories

I love alternative takes on mythology (Rick Riordan fan here), so I thought "Alternative Alamat" would be a good place for me to start with my resolution to read more works written by Filipino authors.

I also love the idea of this compilation because it brings Philippine mythology closer to modern readers like no scholarly book of myths possibly could. I am not belittling the efforts of the authors who wrote the scholarly books, of course, for without them, we would know very little about our mythology. But younger readers and readers who are more exposed to foreign works wouldn't likely pick up an academic book on Philippine myths for their leisure reading.

There are 11 engaging re-tellings in this anthology written by many familiar names in Philippine speculative fiction. Despite sometimes dealing with similar themes or mythological figures, the treatments are delightfully diverse.

"Ana's Little Pawnshop on Makiling St." - The pawnshop reminded me a lot of the Faerie Market in Gaiman's "Stardust," where the wares that are on sale are all whimsical and magical. This poignant story has its own local flavor and charm, though, and I love how Eliza Victoria intertwined the mythology with modern issues.

"Harinuo's Love Song" - It took me a while to get used to the rhythm of this story because it reads a lot like an old folktale, and I didn't expect that kind of treatment. But this turned out to be an enjoyable read. The prose is lyrical and lush, and the plot is well-crafted.

"Last Full Show" - I've never read any of the Trese comics, and yes, you can throw all manner of objects at me, but maybe you can throw the four volumes of those comics my way instead? :p This was so much fun to read, and I love that you didn't need prior knowledge of the original comics to appreciate it.

"The Alipin's Tale" - I love alternate history stories too, so this is a real hit with me. It doesn't introduce any of the more obscure myths or personalities, but the mix of history and mythology grounds it for readers, and makes the fantasy aspect more tangible.

"Keeper of My Sky" - This story succeeds in its intention to intertwine science and mythology, this time. It's a lovely tale, but it's so sad and melancholic. I was thankful it wasn't raining when I read this or I would've sobbed in front of my computer.

"Conquering Makiling" - This particular Maria Makiling theme is quite familiar, but the story had modern sensibilities. The conservation message is well-placed.

"The Sorceress Queen" - This one reads like a great classic fairy tale and also like those local genesis stories at the same time. I had a lot of fun imagining what this would look like if it were adapted as an animated short.

"Beneath the Acacia" - In my mind, I call this the CSI: Arayat story. :p I like the portrayal of Maria Sinukuan here because she seems more human. This is probably because the more fantastical spotlight is trained on the protagonist, Juan, but it's a pleasant change. There was a little hiccup in the story that jarred me a little, though--when Mang Andres describes the supernatural characters, it sounds like he was explaining it to a foreign reader rather than to the other in-universe characters who already know what a kapre is.

"Offerings to Aman Sinaya" - I liked the story, although the point of view was a little unconventional, and therefore took some getting used to. The ending felt a little too abrupt.

"Balat, Buwan, Ngalan (A Myth for the 21st Century)" - I love how this incorporates the old tales into a modern world. I had a lot of fun spotting the pop culture references and nods to the old myths. My only problem was the POV. Because the narrative had a 'meta' feel to it like 'Interview With The Vampire,' I think this would've been more powerful had it been written from a first person POV.

"The Door Opens" - I panicked when I saw that this story had a good number of footnotes because I have a love-hate relationship with fiction that incorporates footnotes. I feel that it's very rarely done well enough that the author doesn't interrupt the flow of the main story. Dean Alfar did well, though. The main narrative

read like a complete story in itself, so I had no compulsion to immediately check the footnotes, which would've been difficult because I would've done a lot of scrolling back and forth. When I finally did read them, I found that they embellished the main narrative really well.

As an aside, I just realized how awkward it is to read stories set in the Philippines whose characters speak in English. It can't be helped, of course, but I find it jarring sometimes. If a story is well written, I do get over it, as was the case for all the stories I read.

Despite the diversity in treatment, I felt that there was a lot of underlying melancholy in all of the stories; they all seem so somber. I was looking for a bit of levity in some of the ones where that kind of tone would've been appropriate. All the old tales were already somber enough, I thought someone would actually do a much lighter alternative take. But this personal preference doesn't take away from the quality of the stories at all.

I also wish the stories each dealt with unique deities or themes, that only one story would've had Maria Makiling for a subject, for example. But maybe this also reflects how much work still needs to be done in educating everyone that there exist pantheons of deities and a deep well of other Philippine legends and myths. "Alternative Alamat" is already a great first step toward that, with the interviews and appendices included in the book providing a springboard for further study. I wish more authors and publishers will be proactive and think of other creative ways to bring this aspect of our culture closer to the popular consciousness. I'm proud of efforts like "Alternative Alamat," and hope that more Filipino readers support projects like this. I have high hopes that soon we will find our own local Rick Riordan!

One last thing: I wish they'll publish a print copy of this book so that it will reach more readers, and because the illustrations by Mervin Malonzo deserve to be seen in print.
