

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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**Biyaheng Langit:
Jeepney Folk Art by Electrolychee**

Book Notes

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of her time in Oman, “I cannot be proud of my having worked abroad. . . . Work like this makes you no better than pigs” (125). Maryanne recalled her grueling work as a domestic in Kuwait and Paris, but in the end declared, “My work overseas put food on our table. I am content” (78). There is no single view about kinship ties, either. Hailing from Benguet, Socorro worked in Hong Kong from 1979 to 1996; she never got married, but supported her family with her earnings, only to reap conflicts with relatives. Socorro’s advice is to temper altruism: “Take care of yourself. Don’t send all your hard-earned money to family back home. . . . Otherwise you will end up like me, living alone and blind” (61). Aniceta, a beautician, decided to work overseas after her marriage ended; in Kuwait she met her second husband, marrying him in 1990. She retired in 2005 and now lives with her husband and eldest son and grandchildren in Zamboanga. She asserts, “I am proud to be an OFW. I was able to earn and bring dollars to the Philippines” (71). Each life story is unique, highlighting adversities but also and always the agency of these women.

ELECTROLYCHEE

Biyaheng Langit: Jeepney Folk Art

Quezon City: 5 Ports Publishing, 2014. 180 pages.

Bernessa Aileen T. Sim and Marcus Vito Z. Nada form Electrolychee, the graphic design and illustration studio that is behind *Biyaheng Langit: Jeepney Folk Art*. The book is a compilation of over 180 photos of jeepney vinyl decal art. It is far from being an exhaustive inventory, and the authors are the first to admit that it covers only a “tiny fraction of popular jeepney art” (9), given that in Metro Manila alone 50,000 or so jeepneys ply the streets based on 2007 data. Most of the artworks come from Metro Manila, although a significant number are from jeepneys in Lucena City, San Pablo City, Laguna, and Zambales province. As the title suggests, the book focuses on designs with religious subjects, especially those that can be classified as folk Catholic. The authors recognize the significance of syncretism in this form of pedestrian culture: “The overlapping of the colonial Catholic faith with our primal religious practices created a syncretic belief mix that is as vibrant and varied as a jeepney’s decorations. It seems strangely fitting that this chop suey faith found expression in multicolored vinyl stickers” (14).

Most of the pages appear as a catalog of representations of the Santo Niño, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Christ the King, alongside various types of Marian iconography, e.g., Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Our Lady of Manaoag. Toward the end of the book, the attention shifts from the artworks to the artists and artisans behind these works who, unfortunately, are struggling to make a living: theirs is an informal industry, with no professional organization and, worryingly, with a constantly declining revenue. Nonetheless, many jeepney artists remain optimistic, as do the authors. They regard this book as a way of calling attention to this important aspect of Philippine society, according it proper recognition and analysis as an art form, and preserving samples of it. Scholars of religion, art studies, urban studies, and Philippine studies stand to benefit from this wonderful compilation.

MARTIN JOSEPH PONCE

Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading

New York and London: New York University Press, 2012. 289 pages.

Looking at the recent boom in Filipino American literature, Martin Joseph Ponce traces the historical roots of this emerging, but still peripheral, literary genre in *Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading*. This book provides not a simple historical analysis but a “queer diasporic history” (2) to this century-old transnational movement of authors and texts. Each chapter focuses on a key historical personality whose specific contribution to the development of Filipino American literature has become a milestone: the romantic didactics of Maximo Kalaw’s nationalism in chapter one, the queer erotics of José Garcia Villa’s modernism in chapter two, the sexual politics of Carlos Bulosan’s radicalism in chapter three, and the crosscultural musics of Jessica Hagedorn’s postmodernism in chapter four. Chapter five focuses not on a specific doyen but on a particular historical period: martial law and the diasporic poetics of its queer literature. This chapter concentrates on three particular novelists: Bino Realuyo, R. Zamora Linmark, and Noël Alomit. Ponce’s concluding chapter maps the transpacific tactics of contemporary Filipino American literature by analyzing the works of M. Evelina Galang, Brian Ascalon Roley, Patrick Rosal, and Barbara Jane Reyes. Although the book analyzes the texts of these