

# philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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## **Beyond the Nation: Diasporic Filipino Literature and Queer Reading by Martin Joseph Ponce**

Book Notes

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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

literary figures against a transpacific backdrop, the author goes beyond the typical categorization of Filipino American literature as a mere subspecies of Asian American literature. What distinguishes the Filipino American variant from its fellow Asian “immigrant literatures” are the contingencies created by US imperialism in the emergence of a Philippine nation-state and whose effects reverberate back to the mainland. It is imperialism as well that is at the center of Ponce’s framework, which problematizes the invisibility of Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the literary and historical discourses in the US. Recovering their muted voices is thus necessary, although the author is cautious of the heteronormative tendencies even among the ideological critiques of empire, such as in dominant notions of diaspora and anti- and postcolonial nationalisms. Ponce turns to the scholarship of “queer diasporas” to address this important concern.

MARITES DAÑGUILAN VITUG AND CRISELDA YABES

## **Our Rights, Our Victories: Landmark Cases in the Supreme Court**

Quezon City: Cleverheads Publishing, 2011. 227 pages.

Written by two veteran journalists, Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Criselda Yabes, *Our Rights, Our Victories* is a highly readable account of sixteen landmark cases brought before the Supreme Court from the 1960s to 2008 that enunciated fundamental legal principles in Philippine jurisprudence. The court’s decisions on these cases either were unprecedented or they overturned unchallenged doctrines, and in the end what “they had in common was that they upheld our rights and had an impact on our lives” (11). In twelve chapters the authors tell riveting stories that bring to light the right against illegal searches, the right to know, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, indigenous people’s rights, the Writ of Amparo, individual liberty (in relation to “love motels”), the right to a balanced and healthful ecology, the battered woman’s syndrome as legal defence, the death penalty, the people’s initiative on charter change, and martial law. Each chapter presents a succinct narrative of the case or cases, the main litigants, the decision reached by the court, and a “postscript” that tracks later developments. In narrating these stories, Vitug and Yabes consulted the Supreme Court archives, interviewed key individuals familiar with these cases, and read other