

Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina

By Denise Cruz


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In this groundbreaking study, Denise Cruz investigates the importance of the figure she terms the "transpacific Filipina" to Philippine nationalism, women's suffrage, and constructions of modernity. Her analysis illuminates connections between the rise in the number of Philippine works produced in English and the emergence of new social classes of transpacific women during the early to mid-twentieth century.

Through a careful study of multiple texts produced by Filipina and Filipino writers in the Philippines and the United States—including novels and short stories, newspaper and magazine articles, conduct manuals, and editorial cartoons—Cruz provides a new archive and fresh perspectives for understanding Philippine literature and culture. She demonstrates that the modern Filipina did not emerge as a simple byproduct of American and Spanish colonial regimes, but rather was the result of political, economic, and cultural interactions among the Philippines, Spain, the United States, and Japan. Cruz shows how the complex interplay of feminism, nationalism, empire, and modernity helped to shape, and were shaped by, conceptions of the transpacific Filipina.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Offering elegantly written, provocatively framed, and meticulously analyzed historical and cultural accounts of Filipino modern feminine formations between the early twentieth century and the years immediately after the Second World War, Denise Cruz fills a gap in the scholarly literature by boldly asserting the primacy of transnational connections."

(Martin F. Manalansan IV, author of *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*)

Transpacific Femininities is really quite extraordinary. By sustained critical attention on the figure of the transpacific Filipina, Denise Cruz tells a story that not only returns deep and irreducible complexity to the women and women writers whose lives and work create a network of affiliations and intimacies across the Pacific, but that also shows us how vital gender was and is to apprehending the incredibly complicated interrelations among the histories, cultures, and politics of the Philippines, the United States, and Japan. Where many are apt to declare the significance of empire, race, nation, and gender, Cruz *shows* their linked importance. Amazingly, she does so by taking her readers through as varied grounds as the emergence of English-language literary cultures in the Philippines, to the shifting deployments and meanings of femininity across the writings of authors who are sometimes conservative, sometimes transgressive, and always illuminating, without confining the Filipina to a singular narrative. We learn a great deal about the circuits of signification, desire, and empire that constitute twentieth century histories of the Pacific."

(Kandice Chuh, author of *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*)

"Cruz's project has many strengths. . . . *Transpacific Femininities* provides a nuanced perspective to existing literature on women's history, colonialism in the Pacific, Asian American studies, and transnational studies at large."

(Joanne L. Rondilla *Journal of Asian Studies*)

"This book will be of interest to a wide range of scholars in Asian, American and Gender Studies, and across the disciplines of Sociology, Geography, History, and Anthropology. It is a rich historical account that does a lot of conceptual work with great subtlety. *Transpacific Femininities* is written to be widely accessible and could be easily used in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate classes."

(Geraldine Pratt *Pacific Affairs*)

"Cruz's analysis is challenging and often subtle, for, as she maintains, the modern woman in the Philippines was not always simply westernized but was a blended cultural hybrid. . . . Readers in the field of ethnic feminist literature will appreciate her annotations, her summaries of hard to find literary texts, and her discussion of the arguments of other scholars."

(Frederick J. Augustyn *Journal of American Culture*)

"*Transpacific Femininities* re-frames and expands the boundaries of the study of race, gender, and empire in Philippine and Filipino American studies in a compelling transnational and global context. It is essential reading for students and scholars of Philippine, Asian American, and gender and women's studies."

(Catherine Ceniza Choy *Journal of American Ethnic History*)

About the Author

Denise Cruz is Assistant Professor of English and American Studies at Indiana University. She is the editor of *Yay Panlilio's The Crucible: An Autobiography by Colonel Yay, Filipina American Guerrilla*.

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