

Kathleen DeGuzman. “‘A world of with-ing’: Archipelagic Kinship in *America Is Not the Heart*”

Elaine Castillo’s 2018 novel *America Is Not the Heart* invokes in its very title a link to the most well-known literary representation of Filipino America, Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart*. Despite this literary lineage, Castillo’s novel charts a much more expansive fictionalization of Filipinx life. This paper demonstrates how archipelagic thinking enables approaches to Filipinx literature that challenge the divides imposed by enduring academic conventions. I draw upon the important work of legal scholar Jay L. Batongbacal. Over twenty years ago, Batongbacal argued that studying the Philippines through an archipelagic framework “question[s] the very assumptions of academic disciplines and perspectives that the University itself has nurtured” (“Defining Archipelagic Studies,” 194). Within literary studies in the U.S., Filipinx literature has highlighted the shortcomings of disciplinary categorizations in the face of colonialism, migration, and imperialism; as Martin Joseph Ponce has pointed out, Filipino literature is often caught between “the Philippine postcolonial and the U.S. ethnic” (*Beyond the Nation*, 2).

By turning to Castillo’s *America Is Not the Heart* and its depiction of ecosystems linked to the San Francisco Bay and Mount Pinatubo, I show that the project of contemporary Filipinx American literature provides its own frameworks for thinking through settler colonialism and aesthetics. I argue that the novel’s attention to social relations in and through terraqueous environments points to an archipelagic kinship sustained through the mundane. Batongbacal suggested that archipelagic thinking is “not merely a theoretical construct but also a practical guide” for governance in the Philippines (“The Archipelagic Perspective as a New Approach to Governance,” 174). My archipelagic reading of *America Is Not the Heart* similarly seeks to model both a reading practice and a reconfiguration of disciplinary boundaries between Asian American and Southeast Asian literary-cultural studies.