

Philippine Migration in Multicultural Australia

In 1995, in the Sunday magazine *Good Weekend*, widely circulated in Australia as a supplement to the Saturday edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, Filipino women were categorically described as disposable wives.¹ The cover illustrates a balding, heavy-set Caucasian man slouching, apparently watching television, reaching for a drink. Right next to the couch is a six-pack, not of beer, but of tiny brides in their white wedding gowns. The article features the fate of women who ended up as quadriplegic, dead, missing, abandoned and beaten up, among other forms of tragic end. In the same period, in *The Pilipino Herald*, a Sydney-based tabloid, was a front-page article ‘talking back’ to the Australian-produced magazine: ‘The over emphasis given to breakdown of marriage between a Filipino wife and an Australian husband gave way to a stereotype perception that such relationship is creating a “social problem” in Australia’.² In the same issue was an announcement promoting the play ‘Inday: Mail-order Bride’ staged in Darwin, Northern Territory, and another article on ‘Successful Filipino-Australian Marriages’.³ These are clear attempts of the community to create a dialogue, to counter the racist and sexist representations and to have a say at all. However, in the same issue was a page promoting ‘Mrs. Philippine-Australia Beauty Pageant’95’... A collage of photographs of married migrant women vying for the title: one of them would win the title for which they were collectively denigrated, a paradox that is not hard to miss.

The example above gives a clear depiction of two phenomena: first, the gendered migration and the racialised, feminised and colonialist relations that describe migration from the Philippines to Australia and second, the emergent print culture of a community in making an effort to respond to the challenges of its marginality. As a result of such migration flow, the cultural history of Filipino migrants in Australia has been unusually more gender focused and their cultural citizenship overtly sexualised than other migrant communities. The contemporary dispersion of Philippines-born nationals either as temporary labour migrants in the Middle-east and East Asia or as permanent residents in the United States, Europe, Japan, Canada and Australia is very much characterised by a feminisation of labour where women migrate as nurses, maids, carers, entertainers, sex workers, and as wives. The face of poverty in the Philippines is particularly feminised, partly due to former President Ferdinand Marcos' policy to export labour. Many of these workers are women. On top of this, many Filipino women have moved to the First-World through marriage migration. Almost half a million Filipinos are married to foreign spouses as of 2014.⁴ Although there are many possible reasons that account for marriage migration, marriage migration is a form of economic migration. This type of gendered migration from the Philippines to Australia specifically attracted negative attention in the media due to the spate of domestic violence and murders that involved Filipinos. The Centre for Philippines Concerns-Australia (CPCA) counts at least 44 Filipino women and children victimised since 1980.⁵ Moreover, the presence of introduction agencies and 'mail-order bride' catalogues that facilitate migration did not sit comfortably with Australia's history of xenophobia. The alarmist tone of *The Good Weekend* article exemplifies that alarmist logic that certain types of migrations spell trouble.

As a collective undertaking, Filipino–Australian cultural history opens up a dialogue from the two ends of the spectrum to make the connection between Philippines' and Australia's social realities as embodied by the marriage migrant. For the fora of culture through which the community's works found expression—as resistance to sexualisation—is fundamentally based on the conservatism that undergirds the success of the Australian multicultural nation. Within multiculturalism, the political is culturalised. This resulted in the dilution of meaningful resistance as mere expressions rooted in the personal. Since the growth of the Philippine migrant community in Australia is a consequence of women's reproductive labour in the global economy, and that women's voices

are significant in expressing discontent to a system that extracts such labour, this book serves to present a migrant cultural history crucial in recovering what is political in the cultural.

MIGRATION DOWN UNDER

There were 236,400 Philippines-born migrants in Australia as of June 2015, that is 1% of the entire Australian resident population.⁶ This number does not include those of Filipino ancestry who were born in Australia and New Zealand, approximately at 224,725 persons in the year 2011.⁷ Philippines–Australian community is one of the fastest-growing groups along side the Vietnamese–, Indian– and Chinese–Australians. Most Filipinos reside in the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. They prefer to live in major urban areas, although they are more demographically dispersed than other immigrant groups, a legacy of the marriage migration flows that brought Filipino women to isolated mining towns, cattle farms and in the remote outback. Filipinos in Australia, although the arrival rate in the last 30 years had been high, had had a long history dating back to the late nineteenth century.

The ‘first wave’ of Philippines-born migration was in the 1870s, a labour migration of divers in the pearling industry. Before the end of the nineteenth century, there were around 700 people in Australia from Las Islas Filipinas (not yet the Philippine nation-state).⁸ Brought to Australia as pearl divers in Western Australia and Queensland, these ‘Manilamen’ as they were called, together with Japanese and Chinese labourers, participated in the mix of races to form a small community of Filipinos. A successful *ilustrado* businessman named Heriberto Zarcal was a pioneer in the pearling industry in the Northern Territory. An *ilustrado* in Spanish Philippines—a member of the native elite class—Zarcal was even considered as the Philippines revolutionary government’s ‘diplomatic agent’ to Australia to link the new nation to its neighbouring countries.⁹ This ‘first wave’ of masculine migration integrated well with the local Aboriginal communities, marrying into and raising families; one such example are the Cubillos whose life stories are preserved in Inez Cubillo Carter’s rich narrative.¹⁰ Her family bears the name of a Filipino pearl diver who had ten children with a Larrakia–Scottish woman. These nineteenth-century migrants such as Carter’s forefather, Antonio, were male, peasant class and ‘native’: the ‘ideal’ subject position to travel overseas for work. Antonio entered Australia

in 1895 under the Indentured Labour Scheme and subsequently established a cross-cultural Filipino-Aboriginal family.¹¹ These men had been at one point racially targeted during the years of ‘white Australia’ policy, forcing them to leave the country.¹² By 1947, the number of Philippines-born in Australia dipped to a low of 141 individuals as a result of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, restricting non-white peoples from entering Australia.¹³

Following the trickle of Spanish–Filipino *mestizos* (racially mixed) who migrated in the late 1960s after the relaxation of immigration law, thousands of Filipino women started to arrive in the 1970s. Either through friendly correspondence with the intention of pursuing a relationship or a casual encounter during a visit to the Philippines, this gendered migration flow had been established. The highest percentage of arrivals was in the years 1981–1990; the increase was twice as much as that of the percentage of all overseas-born migrants.¹⁴ This proved to be the most definitive of diaspora exits from the Philippines to Australia.¹⁵ This ‘second wave’ of Philippines-born migration was to significantly expand through the family reunification policy. Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles have come and formed their own families, thus exponentially expanding Filipino settlement in Australia, which peaked in 1987–1988. One study displayed panic and anxiety regarding the influx of the so-called ‘mail-order brides’, women from the Philippines who, whether they met their husbands via a catalogue or not, were assumed to be.¹⁶ The report also offered preventive social policy strategies to mitigate the problem, which Australian authorities singularly associated with Philippines-born migrants.

When Australia’s immigration policies shifted towards skilled migration, either through professional migration or temporary labour opportunities for the most in-demand skilled workers, the profile of Filipino migrants in Australia slowly changed. This ‘third wave’ of migrants comprised educated, middle-class, English-speaking professionals who are found in finance, information technology, and health care. Migrants from the Philippines have experienced a ‘gentrification’, so to speak. In the 2011 census, 69% of Filipino migrants have higher non-school qualifications, higher than the Australian average of 56%. Moreover, Filipino participation in the labour force at 75% is higher than the Australian national average of 65%. Finally, the median weekly income of Filipinos is AU\$673. This figure is considerably higher than the AU\$538 average for all overseas-born, and the national weekly income average of AU\$577 for all Australians.¹⁷

The changing economic profile of migrants meant an increase in the number of all-Filipino families, residential concentration in metropolitan areas, the sex-ratio more balanced and a greater visibility in terms of community organisations and cultural formations. In this ‘third wave’, the flow of marriage migrants had been restricted due to legal measures such as the Serial Sponsorship Law in 1994 by the Australian Law Reform Commission.¹⁸ The Serial Sponsorship Law was the culmination of the triumphant inquiry by the Australian Law Reform Commission, through the collaboration of Filipino and Australian women activists. The law limits the possibility of any Australian sponsor to invite a partner based on his or her economic capacity, criminal record or lack thereof, and also psychological and social behaviour. The measure is set in place to curb human trafficking, slavery and the physical and psychological violence that come with such relations marked by force and inequalities. Marriage migrants continue to come via the Partner Migration Visa program. From years 1989 to 2014, there had not been 1 year when partner migration is less than a 1000 persons.¹⁹ The relative lack of sensationalised treatment of the ‘mail-order brides’ in Australia’s media today is partly due to stricter sponsorship laws, the profile of sponsors and sponsored and also the improved media practices in presenting race relations and immigration issues.

Hyperfeminised Migration

Specifically the ‘bride’ migration of Philippines-born nationals occupies a marked place in the Australian immigration history. In ‘Family Formation: Cultural Diversity in Marriages’, Filipino women marrying Australians rose ‘very sharply’ in 1978 and peaked in 1986.²⁰ From 1974 to 1998—over a period of 24 years—the figure of a migrant from the Philippines to Australia has been typically a woman who is a partner of an (white) Australian. Despite a decrease in the early 1990s, spousal migrations ‘have remained high’, says the report based on previously unpublished data from marriage registrations. Among first-generation migrants, 32% of ‘brides’ from the Philippines are married to ‘long-time Australians’ (Anglo-Celtic by ancestry), while 37% of them are married to ‘overseas-born Australians’ who could be of Southern or Eastern European, South American or Middle-eastern ancestries.²¹ This leaves 30% of Filipino women who are married to Filipino men. Most overseas-born men and women have ‘quite similar’ patterns in

marrying someone from their own birthplace, 'with one notable exception', the Philippines. The migration pattern is evidently gendered. While the 70% of the women are married to both 'long-time' and 'overseas-born' Australians, 78% of Filipino males marry within their own group. Citing these figures repeatedly in the media has cemented the reputation of Filipino women in the Australian imaginary as economic migrants who found in Australia a demand for their sexualised bodies.

The feminisation of migration through marriage is, however, not Australia-specific. From 1989 to 2014, on a worldwide scale, 436,854 Filipino women (91.5%) and only 40,980 Filipino men (8.5%) are married to foreign nationals.²² In Australia, 37,998 women are registered to be partners of Australian nationals from years 1989 to 2014.²³ The Philippines occupies the fourth place in the highest number of Partner Migration visa holders, from years 2001 to 2011.²⁴ Other major marriage migrant destinations are the USA, Japan, Canada, Germany, South Korea, UK, Taiwan, Norway and Sweden. The exodus of women from the Philippines and their eventual settlement all over Australia is coeval with and interconnected with the feminisation of migrant labour as one of the consequences of the economic difficulties faced by the developing nations in the 1970s. As Saskia Sassen suggested, 'migrations do not just happen; they are produced'.²⁵ What was meant to be a provisional solution to the ballooning national deficit and massive unemployment, proved to be an effective palliative to a suffering economy under neoliberal structuring interpreted by local technocrats as a kick off towards a more internationalist system.²⁶ In 1974, under the Philippine Labor Code during the regime of Ferdinand Marcos, the state began to facilitate the movement of labour overseas. The global economic downturn in the 1970s was followed by loans from the IMF and World Bank which meant the erosion of social services and public welfare. Moreover, the economic discontent of Filipinos was intensified by the militarised repression under Marcos, in the name of combating the red scare against mounting socialist rebellion. In a manner of speaking, labour export had been a kind of safety valve that diffused social tension with the migrant earnings pumped into the domestic economy and the new wealth enjoyed by families. For migration to prevent the collapse of the country, however, was one, but the disintegration of the family and consequences on gendered roles was another. Cynthia Enloe wrote about the historically evidenced double burden of women workers who shoulder

the more demeaning and dirtier jobs during economic downturns.²⁷ Soon after the early male labour migrants sent to the Gulf states to work in the construction industry, Filipino women followed suit, as nurses, carers, nannies, maids and other feminised jobs. The flight of women as labour export has both financial and social impacts to the host and sending countries, but also, to a great extent, personal impacts. Sassen calls this the ‘feminization of survival’.²⁸ Women migrants in global cities perform ‘wifely’ work in high-income households, but also professionals that serve public institutions such as hospitals and homes. Because of the shutdown of manufacturing in cities utilising masculine labour and the break-up of the traditional livelihood in the countryside, women must leave for personal and national survival. While Sassen’s focus on global circuits draws her to nannies and carers, women as ‘brides’ I believe are plugged into the broader network of circuits that service global suburbia with their reproductive labour. It is not surprising that the figure of the ‘mail-order bride’, the backbone of the community’s migration in Australia, is also a consequence of a regional geopolitics. US-based Filipina feminist NefertiTadiar theorised about the formation of the regional Asia Pacific in the 1980s.²⁹ The economic powerhouse of the USA, Japan and Australia had also been a strategic military partnership in the region. It is not a coincidence that the top three destinations of women marriage migrants from the Philippines are the USA, Japan and Australia, respectively.³⁰ The economic power of these countries, and the modernity they represent, is translatable to their masculine posturing, while the Philippines’ inferior role results in hyperfeminised migration embodied in the figures of the ‘mail-order bride’, the entertainer and the carer.

Sexualised Citizenship

“Filipina women are more loving” says Roy Fittler, who married a Filipino woman, in an interview for Sydney’s weekly, Good Weekend.³¹ It was a simple, positive statement with possibly damaging consequences. Such is the legendary submissiveness of Filipino women in the Australian public’s imaginary that engendered marriage migration since the 1970s. ‘They put more into a marriage than Australian women do. They don’t drink, they don’t smoke, they don’t hang around the house with a cigarette hanging out of their mouth,’ continues Fittler.³² This statement is meant to provoke reaction: first, a defensive one from Australian women,

and second, delight from Filipino women. However, without a critical view, Fittler's logic is simply a false valorisation of the Filipino woman, false demonisation of the Australian woman and a racialisation of sexual identities for both. For 'Australian women' here meant 'white Australian women'; those who embody sexual liberation and independence are neither Aboriginal Australians nor overseas-born Australians. Put differently, the Filipino woman as a sexualised citizen is in opposition to emancipated white women but also to all other women who are not as 'loving'. 'Loving', simply put, is another name for the affective work she has to fulfil. Her citizenship, moreover, is anchored on her reproductive promise to reproduce Australians. This promise is a kind of collateral for the migration she is allowed to make in the first place. Citizens who are citizens for their sex are corralled into bodily and affective functions. A Filipino woman is of much less value than the child she has given birth to or the husband she serves.

With their identity tied to being the usable sexual other, Filipinos' citizenship in Australia is premised on that negative portrayal that has captured Australia's critical attention in such a way that reveals citizenship under multiculturalism is not only as tacitly racist but also as sexist. Citizenship is necessarily sexualised. Yet, Filipinos suffer an unmatched disrepute because of their depiction as desperate economic migrants. The situation is hardly ever explained as consequences of global forces, women's position as the 'second sex', transnational desiring of the exotic or the specificities of the Philippines' postcoloniality. The problem of the 'mail-order bride' is a problem because the logic of sexism tells that there are women who are more prostitutable than others. Observations lacking critical perspective do not see the global effect of sexism with economic recession; instead, they emphasise individuals who are bound by the destiny of their nationalities. As new Australian citizens, these women carry the baggage of their history, thus, their presence impacting on Australian multicultural politics in very specific ways. The almost knee-jerk association concerning Filipino-Australian interracial marriages to perceptions is exemplified in the study 'Living Diversity: Australia's Multicultural Future'.³³ On the question whether Filipino migrants (represented by 406 respondents) should keep their 'cultural identity', only 65% agreed, lower than Somalis and the Vietnamese, both at 85%.³⁴ This, and the much higher 'intercultural social contact' (67%), was interpreted as 'may be largely due to the fact that Filipino women are more likely than other women to be in interethnic relationships'.³⁵ Although careful in its use

of language, the study nevertheless, is quick to assume that the issue is related to their feminised migration.

Marriage migration from the Philippines revealed specificities about the history of immigration in Australia, its colonialist and racist past. One of such particularities is the high rate of sponsorship between Filipino women and Australian nationals from non-English speaking backgrounds, who occupy the lower rung in the hierarchy of Australianess. Filipino women are married to men from Italian, Eastern European and Greek backgrounds who found it less easy to settle with Anglo-Australian women, given their lower socio-economic status. This reveals that non-Anglo-Australian males—their subsequent stratification as working class and racialisation as not-really-white—were drawn to find foreign partners. Called ‘wogs’, denoting inferior class and racial standing, these men have at least the basic economic means necessary to participate in bringing in foreign women transnationally. Nevertheless, the traffic of ‘brides’ that ensued is a kind of emasculation by the dominant Anglo-Australian culture. Moreover, this is telling of the serviceability of these women on a personal level to individuals, but also contributive as reproductive and economic citizens to Australia’s diversity.

More specifically, the arrival of marriage migrants underlined the sensitive race relations in Australia and the economic logic that undergirds this. The narrative of the ‘mail-order bride’ is tied to the power of white masculinity. The privilege of racial and economic right—such as to sponsor a wife from overseas—does not extend to Aboriginal Australians. When a ‘mail-order bride’ flies in by invitation of an ‘Australian’, it almost always is a racial claim, an entitlement available to white people. Indeed, in my 4-year stay in the country, I have not made the acquaintance of a Filipino woman married to an Aboriginal Australian. While I do not say that there are none, a Filipino woman married to an Aboriginal Australian is a rarity. International marriage migration as racialised privilege tacitly implies the disenfranchisement of Aboriginal Australians as a class, which inhibits them from the First-World exercise of ‘buying’ wives, at least economically. While I do not suggest that Aboriginal Australians would not harbour Asian-exoticising fantasies, it is generally believed that white males are in a position to participate in transnational exoticisation of the Asian female. This difference does point out to the unevenness in the power relations that define ‘whiteness’ (or for that matter ‘blackness’) in Australia. On the other hand, the singular choice of most Filipino women to marry ‘white’

(Anglo-Irish) and ‘wog’ Australians (non-Anglo-Irish men from immigrant backgrounds) might be a result of their own understanding of race relations in the Philippines. There are two possible explanations to this: First, the privileging of whiteness traceable to Spanish Philippines’ racial hierarchy, fetishism for whiteness and mestizonez as a legacy of the Philippines’ colonial history. One proof of this is the use of bleaching skin products prevalent among Filipino women of diverse social classes and belonging. Second, there is the inferior status of Philippine indigenous peoples in a society dominated by Malay–mixed-race Filipinos.

The stream of marriage migrants taking chances by writing letters to foreign men or by publishing personal information in catalogues and newspapers as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, continues today through the Internet and match-making by relatives. The international marriage migration that this form of intimacy leads to reflects the situation of the economic situation of the Philippines and its position as a postcolonial, peripheral nation in global geopolitics, on the one hand. On the other hand, it also reveals specificities about the history of immigration in Australia and its colonialist and racist past. The treatment that Filipino women migrants received had been an effect of xenophobia in multiculturalism, a contradiction no less. Scholars have critically evaluated the impact of official multiculturalism that sublimates racialist practices that govern the everyday lives of non-white immigrants. In particular, Ghassan Hage articulated how the failure to understand a paradigm shift of the ruling racial class to a pluralist one results in ‘white multiculturalism’.³⁶ Everyday neo-fascist expressions of white-dominant culture, especially amongst the working class, are an effect of an Edenic loss: the displacement of the legitimacy of white rule but without the rhetoric to articulate the loss.³⁷ The slipping away of power as a symptom of the ravages of neoliberalism on the white working class was exhibited in the shaping of public opinion, for example, of ‘mail-order brides’ as social menace.³⁸ Thus, the constant reminder to tolerate people indebted to the (white) Australians’ generosity: the gift of citizenship. Citizenship as gift means that those who received the ‘gift’ do not belong in Australia in the first place, thus, tolerating those who do not rightfully belong to the national body. The question of racial citizenship—to be part of the political, civic and social lives of ordinary Australians—is necessarily conditioned by the limits imposed by ‘white multiculturalism’. One’s proximity to whiteness is almost already premised on racial capital in the era of multiculturalism.

As sexualised citizens, the Filipino woman is portrayed as the sexual other of Australians, both men and women. The uproar that sexualised citizens caused was exemplified in a series of debates published in the *Australian Journal of Social Issues* from 1982 to 1983. This exchange clearly frames the debates around gender and multiculturalism. The exchanges reflect everyday opinions in letters to editors or television programmes only to a certain degree; non-academic opinions are often much less careful. The debate involved an Australian male, an Australian female, and a Filipino woman. The arguments they put forth reveal not only their own subject positions but also sectors in Australia that they represent. First, the Australian male academic initially suggested that 'Filipino brides are likely to be well educated, timid, modest and family oriented' in his defense against Filipino women's representation as desperate economic migrants.³⁹ An Australian academic Kathryn Robinson critiqued Watkins' near-sighted view of the migrant woman as 'support[ive] [of] the stereotype' was not a critical analysis of the 'mail-order bride' phenomenon.⁴⁰ Her comment focused on the class positions that Philippines-born migrants occupy, but that which is not deep enough to involve geopolitical relations to explain structural gendered violence. In a further comment, speaking from the 'authentic insider' voice as a Filipino-Australian woman, she claimed that both Watkins and Robinson 'seem to miss the point' on the two arguments.⁴¹ First, the Australian male academic failed to realise that not all Filipino women are 'mail-order brides' such as herself, and second, that the Australian female academic failed to question the brand of feminism she espoused due to her resentment that white women could have 'something to learn' from subservient Filipino women.⁴² The argument of the Filipina is another take on the asymmetry of relations within the women struggle between white and non-white women. While one view defends 'mail-order brides' as victims of structural injustices, another perceives that marriage migrants participate in their own victimisation. For one, they are characterised as desperate women who marry equally desperate, often underprivileged Australian males, a rather elitist response from white women who see marriage mostly from an economic prospect. Finally, the Australian male academic's rejoinder defended his position with a tangential 'wives have the real power' answer and stated that no woman must suffer at the hands of men.⁴³ This repartee where three subjectivities are represented—the Australian male academic married to a Filipino woman, the Filipino woman married to an Australian and the white

Australian female—exemplifies how exchanges were conducted along the limited narratives of opportunism, gender roles and cultural stereotypes while evading debate on structural inequalities.

Complications of Multiculturalism

One in five Australians was born overseas. Australia is now one of the most multicultural countries in the world like the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, Germany and France, to mention a few. The high standard of living in Australia and its liberal democratic form of government has made it one of the most attractive migration countries. In 2013, 6.4 million or 28% of Australia's resident population was born overseas.⁴⁴ As of June 2016, the total resident population of Australia was over 24 million.⁴⁵ These overseas-born mostly hailed from the UK, New Zealand, China, India, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The multicultural and multi-racial society that Australia enjoys today had been due to a series of changes that departed from its restrictive immigration policies in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, the white Australia ideal was no longer supportable due to the increasingly influential civil rights movements in the West and also in newly decolonised countries. In 1966, Australia began to accept qualified migrants, and then in 1973 under Gough Whitlam's government did Australia abandon 'white Australia' policy. This move was formally legislated in 1975 under the Racial Discrimination Act. The new policy welcomed immigrants, not simply to populate the vast island-continent, but to provide 'employment, housing, education and social services' to its new citizens.⁴⁶ Later, in 1981, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser announced its commitment to a multicultural Australia that is not only culturally diverse but also socially cohesive. Fraser claimed that Australia has 'built a nation which today, by any international standard of comparison, must be judged as a success'.⁴⁷ He was referring to the solid official policy of multiculturalism but not to the tenuous realities of Australia's social life. While multiculturalism is well-received in urban areas, specifically among educated, middle-class cosmopolites, it is not as popular to many (white) Australians who saw it as a breakdown of a way of life. The 1990s saw the rise of former fish-and-chips entrepreneur-turned Queensland MP Pauline Hanson and her One Nation party as the voice of 'disenfranchised' Anglo-Australians. Hanson was against the unmitigated migration of Asians into Australia and the full enforcement

of multiculturalism that siphoned millions of taxpayers' money to integrate newly settled immigrants.⁴⁸ For Hanson's right-wing party and its supporters, such unabated multiculturalism could only be successful at the expense of silencing the voices of long-time (white) Australians. But why is such an ideal vision of multiculturalism so difficult to reconcile with the existing one?

In a multicultural society, diverse communities are organised in such a way as to encourage cultural expression and for authorities to promote policies that accommodate differences and encourage integration and mutual respect. Key to the success of minority groups to integrate well is to place institutions that nurture diversity, celebrate plurality, yet cohesive in their attempt to weave together the newly arrived and the old settlers in a seamless fabric. But in theory, the political economy of multiculturalism is a challenge to the ethnically homogenous nation-state ideal. It is an alternative set-up for countries whose histories combine indigenous displacement, colonial settlement and mass migrations such as Australia, Canada and the USA.⁴⁹ Pluralism as the regulative mandate of multiculturalism demands that 'ethnic' communities occupy a role in maintaining the logic that regulates racial tolerance, economic equality and citizenship opportunities. The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), for example, established in 1977, was to become the initiative designed to complement the mainstream Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). The project was created to help ethnic communities with poor English skills and access to information regarding health, jobs, social security, and so on; in other words, their eventual integration to the dominant mode of life in Australia. 'SBS is one of Australia's most important cultural institutions', argues Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy, pointing out that as a public broadcaster, SBS's significance is to strengthen cultural diversity, thus, nation-building in a country like Australia.⁵⁰

Multiculturalism, however, faces strong opposition. In 2010, Germany's chancellor Angel Merkel declared that multiculturalism 'absolutely failed'.⁵¹ Not only that cultural diversity is under scrutiny, given Europe's climate of anti-Muslim, anti-immigration sentiments and the rise of the extreme right, it has suffered criticism without considering the racist regime under which multiculturalism was designed. One may be tempted to say that pronouncements that multiculturalism is dead are prophecies for a regime that does not wish it to succeed. Cultural diversity is, in the first place, a flight against deep-seated racial prejudices.

Multiculturalism in Australia, for example, must struggle against a long history of white supremacy. Like other social policies, multiculturalism follows the framework of cultural accommodation and with it a vocabulary for its propaganda, mostly to pursue political correctness. However, to achieve social cohesion despite racial, linguistic, religious and cultural differences requires more than propaganda. Critics charge that the pluralism behind multiculturalism is a sugarcoating of dominant structures that has existed since Australia's occupation of Aboriginal land.⁵² Omi and Winant allege that pluralism is the new racism.⁵³ Pluralism hides racism lurking in a predominantly white society. Multiculturalism, therefore, necessitates a fundamental withdrawal of a racist regime; otherwise, there would only be tolerance and superficially created social bonds, such as diversity in media content, national celebrations, events, among other official forms of sociality. 'Ethnics' in a liberal pluralist society offer exoticism through food culture or participate in diversity parades, but they must exhibit 'Australianness' at the same time. There must be no contradiction. Political and social citizenships are, therefore, drawn from differences and invested in the performance of being a migrant. Immigrants are, not surprisingly, often clothed literally in their ethnic/national costumes during multicultural events.

The tolerance of minority cultures is the outcome of these many complex processes. Tolerance in race relations implies power relations between the tolerating authority and the tolerated.⁵⁴ To be tolerated as non-Anglo-Australian is expressed more kindly in cultural practices than in everyday life scenario. For example, tolerance in newspaper production spells a lack of urgency: communities write and publish for the consumption of their own members which need not even cross paths with the Australian majority. Ethnic newspapers simply exist unthreateningly. Written in characters where meaning is elusive, ethnic press does not seek to offend. A newspaper in a foreign language left on the train does not invite open engagement or repressed irritation as much as people speaking their alien tongue or clothed in their 'traditional' costumes. Ethnic newspapers as a cultural production are, therefore, a medium of tolerance of the majority. Unlike in shared public spaces or a queue in a welfare office, tension is palpable due to perceptions that others are undeserving of Australian privileges. In 2013, there had been reports of racist outbursts in Sydney's crowded public transport where Asian-looking passengers were verbally attacked and, with the notorious 'go back to your country' to punctuate the insults. The torrent of abuses

in these situations—perceived to be a mark of repressed feelings—does not seem to correspond with social settings celebrating diversity and cultures, festivities that are commonplace in Australia. These celebrations extolling the successes of multiculturalism conceal the ideology of tolerance that is disguised racialism. Or, perhaps, these valorising performances are the one side of the coin, while repressed contempt for immigrants is the other side.

In sum, the racism that multiculturalism hopes to overcome is reformulated into the more subtle understandings and applications of cultural otherness. Non-white immigrants know this only too well. Cultural otherness has dislodged racial differences, the basis of colonialist expansion, to become the standard by which people are safely evaluated. People of colour are ‘different’ because of what they are (culturally) not because they are racialised. Racism in multicultural societies is not racism any longer but swept under the universality of cultures being different from each other. Valentine Moghadam points to this return to culture since the late 1980s as a movement that ‘has taken on a weight of its own, reified, even sacralised’.⁵⁵ Culture as a kind of transcendental signifier means that ethnically diverse communities in multicultural societies are in a position to deliver change, when, in fact, they are not in charge. Most Australians’ socialisation processes are centred around the lesson that all cultures are equal and beautiful, but are also tacitly taught that while this may be true in the broader scheme of things, in Australia it is almost always better to be a white Anglo-Australian.

What I have done here is to historicise the Philippines’ migration flow and to introduce the complexities traceable to their sexualised citizenship. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the research questions and methodologies I applied doing the research and also how a complicated relationship I had with Filipinos in Australia brought out nuances in my writing. This chapter offers social theories on migrant material culture, oral and archival research and reflections on cultural history.

NOTES

1. Nikki Barrowclough, “Disposable Wives: The Scandalous Story of Australia’s Serial Sponsors,” *Good Weekend*, May 6, 1995. 48.
2. *The Pilipino Herald*, July 1995.
3. Ibid.

4. Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Number of Filipino Spouses and other Partners of Foreign Nationals by Gender: 1989–2014," Accessed July 5, 2015, http://www.cfo.gov.ph/pdf/statistics/FS%20BY_SEX.pdf.
5. Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia-Brisbane, "Violent Deaths and Disappearances of Filipino Women and Children since 1980." Accessed July 19, 2011, <http://cpcbrisbane.org/CPCA/Deaths.htm>.
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Overseas born Aussies highest in over a century," Accessed <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3412.0Media%20Release12014-15>.
7. "Community Information Summary: Philippines-born", Accessed January 25, 2013, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm.summ/pdf/Philippines.pdf>.
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