sures and Agonies of 'Homeland' Visits" looks at how study abroad serve as sites of understanding transnational identity, community formation, and consciousness amidst settings of social inequality.

As stated earlier, the essence and aim of the book is to serve as a foundation for ruminating about Filipino Studies and to inspire future works. Overall, *Palimpsests* is successful in providing a generous overview of the field and serves interested readers best as a historical reference piece. A future iteration of the book would benefit from engagement with more contemporary examples, especially within the fields of politics, media, and social institutions. For example, Rick Bonus' chapter on study abroad may open doors for projects to focus on other Filipino experiences in schooling. Potentially, an updated set of entries to the five original parts of the book would continue the spirit of a palimpsest document. Regardless, there will always be a way for Filipino Studies to evolve and flourish.

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Circa91 by Ruby Ibarra. Beatrock Music, 2017.

To Ella[1]

My tween daughter absolutely loves Ruby Ibarra's *Circa91*. For the last couple of years, she has used "Us" as her personal hype song; she asks us to play it in the car or she listens to it on her phone before her softball games, tennis matches, and big school events like the science fair, speech festival, robotics competition, or school elections. She wanted to use "Us" to present at the district speech festival but had to "settle" on "Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover" because she was told she had to "choose something that didn't have any curse words." Since its release in 2017 (through Beatrock Music), *Circa91* has been the source of a protracted and animated conversational cipher between me and my daughter, where we ask each other questions (sometimes the same questions asked in different ways and in different contexts) that challenge, build, and feed off one another. Questions arise in the car while we are driving to school, during bedtime, after softball practice, on our commute home, during dinner, and while we're out on a walk or a hike. The conversations that *Circa91* have elicited are primarily about

1. Ruby Ibarra has stated on numerous occasions that Lauryn Hill's landmark debut solo album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, served as an inspiration for *Circa91*. I use song titles from that album (or a variation of them) as section headings in this piece. For example, this introductory section corresponds to the song, "To Zion," which is about Lauryn Hill's first child as well the uncertainty and joy of pregnancy and parenthood. Along these lines, there should be another section called "Every Ghetto, Every City" that reads Ruby Ibarra's relationship to Tacloban City and San Lorenzo, but that would be another piece altogether.

how we both negotiate our own experiences and understandings about what it means to be Filipinx, me as a 1.5-generation Filipino American who was born in the Philippines and raised in San Diego, and her as a second-generation (on my side) and third-generation (on her mom's side) Filipina American who was born and raised in Honolulu. *Circa91* has given us a space to co-construct our individual and collective Filipinx selves through an exchange of words, sounds, moves, and emotions.

Everything Is Everything

On different occasions, I have asked my daughter what she likes about *Circa91* and invariably, she matter-of-factly tells me, "Everything." I ask her to explain more what she means by "everything." She's often told me that she likes how the songs are a way to get to know Ruby Ibarra, where the album is a type of entryway into the artist's life. In this way, *Circa91* is more than just a "personal" album; it exemplifies what I have called hip-hop musical autobiography.[2]

Hip-hop musical autobiographies are self-referential life writing that go beyond text- and visual-based memoirs; they allow us to see art and creative expression as autobiography. For example, I suggest that we can see Mike "Dream" Francisco's life story inscribed in his murals. What Dream painted on the walls was also self-portraiture, composing and constituting culture, politics, and an individual and collective biography. As another example, I contend that DJ Kuttin' Kandi creates her own hip-hop musical autobiography when she self-narrates her life in the songs she chooses to mix and how she mixes them. She is story-telling through the ways she cuts, scratches, loops, and fades the music; the music is both setting and plot in her hip-hop life writing. Similarly, *Circa91* is an album-length autobiographical sample.3 Here I am deliberately using the term "sample" to indicate an important characteristic of hip-hop musical autobiography.4 Sampling is the hip-hop practice of taking slices of recorded material that are manipulated and re-produced into a re-created musical form. Autobiographical samples are a snapshot of an artist's life, a momentary re-presentation that cuts back and forth temporally, spatially, sonically, lyrically, visually, and affectively. Themes prominent in the rapper's life—immigration, women's empowerment, colonialism, colorism, racism, resistance—pop up throughout the album like samples. These recurring themes are iterative loops, choruses, and verses, revealing that her life story is not simple linearity but is cyclical, recursive, layered, unresolved, and unfinished.

Hip-hop musical autobiography involves a range of "autobi-

2. See Roderick N. Labrador, "Freaky' Asian Americans, Hip-Hop, and Musical Autobiography: An Introduction." *Biography* 41.3 (2018): 473-483.
3. See Tiongson's *Filipinos Represent* and Perillo's *Choreographing in Color* for fuller discussions of Filipinx DJs and dancers, respectively.
4. The cipher, as community building and/or competition among participants who are rapping, dancing, or co-creating in some other artistic form, is another central element of hip-hop musical autobiography.

ographical samples," from text-based rap autobiographies, like Christopher Wong Won's *My Rise 2 Fame: The Untold Stories of Fresh Kid Ice aka Chinaman* to individual songs, like Bambu's "America," to albums like Ruby Ibarra's *Circa91*.5 Ibarra's own narration of her life after migration is a story that resonates with the diverse experiences of Filipinxs and Filipinx Americans in the United States, immigrants, women, workers, and artists. Throughout the album we hear Ibarra's vulnerability, imperfection, complexity, and longing as she portrays pain, joy, disappointments, challenges, and victories. Furthermore, the songs simultaneously recognize, critique, and challenge Filipinx American assimilative impulses ("Someday," "The Other Side, Welcome," "7000 Miles"), heteropatriarchy, Spanish and US colonialism, and colorism. As Jordan Luz has suggested, through *Circa91* Ibarra claims a space to (re)articulate her Filipinx American-ness in relation to her gender, class, language, and immigrant identities.6 In this way, Ibarra's hip-hop musical autobiography is Filipinx diasporic life writing and identity-making practice. It redraws cartographies of Filipinx American identities through language use, cultural expression, and narrativization of migration and identity formation. For my daughter, the album helps her understand what it means for her to be Pinay in the diaspora, but in a setting where Filipinxs are neither invisible nor racially or ethnically misrecognized,7 but are often negatively represented as culturally and linguistically inferior immigrants. The songs urge her to claim ourselves and our histories and to narrate our lives in our own words, languages, and beats.

Lost Ones

"What's she saying?" is a constant refrain from my daughter when we listen to *Circa91*. From "Brown Out" to "Playbill$" to "Taking Names" she asks me to translate the Tagalog verses (because I tell her I don't know Ruby Ibarra's native language of Waray). My translations usually lead to more questions: "What was the Philippines like when you lived there? What was it like growing up an immigrant in San Diego? What is your relationship to the Philippines now? Why haven't you taught me enough Tagalog for me to understand what Ruby or Uncle Bam is saying? If you can speak and understand Ilokano, why can't you really speak Tagalog?" My daughter also asks me to compare my own immi-

5. For more in-depth analyses of album-length autobiographical samples, see Mark Villegas' "Redefined What is Meant to Be Divine: Prayer and Protest in *Blue Scholars*" and Ruben Campos' "The Posse Cut as Autobiographical Utterance of Place in the Night Marchers' *Three Dots*." Villegas illustrates how, through the Blue Scholars' self-titled album, the individual life narrative of the rapper, Geo, particularly his spirituality and activism, helps to infuse soul into the duo's Marxist and anti-imperialist politics. Campos uses the idea of a cipher, or collective autobiographical utterances, among the native and settler members of The Night Marchers to investigate the group's conflicted lyrical life writing and place-making in Hawai'i.

6. See Jordan Luz's *Rearticulating Filipinx American Identity*.

7. According to the latest census figures, Filipinxs, race alone and in combination, make up about one-fourth of Hawai'i's population.

gration experience to Ruby Ibarra's (although our time of arrival in the US is separated by almost fifteen years and our places and contexts of departure are different): "Did you have to go to ESL classes, too? Did your teachers mispronounce your name, too? (Did they say your last name like the dog instead of how you pronounce it?) Why don't either of you have accents like other immigrant Filipinos?" In response to all these questions, I usually tell my daughter that Ruby Ibarra and I are both 1.5-generation Filipinx American. 1.5ers are born in the Philippines, spend some time there but are raised in the US. In addition to lived memories and experiences of the homeland, I emphasize the importance of language, where 1.5ers achieve native fluency in English *and* their heritage languages (Waray and Tagalog for Ruby and Ilokano for me)—this is something that makes our experiences different from US-born Filipinx. The code switching and multilingualism we hear on *Circa91*, where the shifts in language use are seamless, reflects Ibarra's experience as a 1.5er. This multiplicity, however, can also be accompanied with feelings of loss and a search for belonging. Through the album, the rapper emphatically claims space and identity in the United States as a 1.5 generation Filipinx American, accepting the elegance of our mother tongues, heritage languages, passive bilingualism, and accented English; Ibarra's language use and knowledge of her heritage languages in her songs embodies a diasporic Filipinx American identity.

FilipinX-Factor

After one of the first times we listened to "Brown Out," my daughter asked me a series of questions: "Why is her mom saying to stay away from the sun? Is being dark really ugly? Why would they want to erase the brown? Is she talking about her skin color? But she isn't even dark (she met Ruby Ibarra in 2018)." After listening to "Taking Names," she asks me, "What is Eskinol?" After I explain skin-whitening soaps, lotions, and cleansers, she asks, "Why would people want to do that to their skin? Doesn't that hurt? Do they really want to be white?" After hearing "Us" and "Background" our conversations turn to colonialism and colorism in Filipinx communities. Is our colorism about achieving proximity to whiteness or white love? Do we run from Blackness because we fear the dark? What do we mean by "Black" and "dark"? How do ideas like colonial mentality, internalized oppression, self-hate, and internalized racism help us understand why we don't embrace Blackness and instead reach for the bottle of skin whitener? What and where are we running to and from? *Circa91* shows that in our migration to the US, we literally and figuratively move closer to whiteness, a flawed system that depends on our collective marginalization and specks of individual advancement. *Circa91* also spotlights how skin-whitening products not only slow down or halt melanogenesis but they also wash away our fresh-off-the-boat-ness, urging us to dump our linguistic and cultural baggage so that our ancestral links are set adrift in our memory bliss. In contrast, *Circa91* defiantly defies these deficit

approaches and eradication attempts. At the end of these conversations, my daughter asks me, "Is this why your favorite color is brown?"

(That Thing)

"Us" is the album's standout song for my daughter. Although she likes the anthemic call and response in many of the other songs, "Us" is her unquestionable favorite. She likes how the posse cut (featuring Ruby Ibarra, Klassy, Rocky Rivera, and Faith Santilla) is a loud and unapologetic proclamation of Filipina-ness, Peminism, Pinayism. In the song, the four artists participate in an autobiographical cipher that involves individual and collective self- and place-making in which they crossfade between the United States and Philippines, the past, and the present. They highlight the importance of knowledge of self and self-(re)definition. The artists serve as role models who are motivated by a spirit of justice, equality, and love. For my daughter, "Us" unequivocally affirms her sense of place and belonging in Filipinx America and the Filipinx diaspora.

I recently asked my daughter why she continues to listen to *Circa91* even after she's tuned out other music from three years ago. She asks me, "Why not?" Then she adds quickly, "Because it still sounds good and makes me feel good." *Circa91* tells my daughter that she matters, that her life and her family history are worth telling and retelling. The album acknowledges and values her presence as a brown girl. It encourages her to write her own stories, to have unwavering belief in her self-worth, to be unapologetically Pinay, and to embrace possibilities

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