

SETTING THE SCENE: AN INTRODUCTION TO FILIPINEXT

JP Catungal, Lisa Davidson, Marissa Largo, Casey Mecija

Between July 13 and July 15, 2022, a group of about 60 Filipinx Canadian scholars, artists, organisers, and community members gathered at York University, located in Toronto, for a transdisciplinary workshop called FilipiNEXT. Participants came from across Canada and the United States, not only from major urban centres of Toronto and Vancouver but also from smaller cities and towns such as Halifax (Nova Scotia), Hazelton (British Columbia [BC]), Winnipeg (Manitoba), and Calgary (Alberta) as well as Honolulu, Hawaii, and Ithaca, New York. The diverse demographic geographies that characterised the workshop were thus markedly different from previous Filipinx Canadian anthologies and gatherings, which tended towards participants from Southern Ontario and Greater Vancouver. As organisers, we wanted the workshop to mirror the geographical distribution of Filipinx academics in Canada. Along with traditional academic presentations, panels, and discussions, the gathering featured the work of visual and performing artists, a graduate student-focused workshop, as well as informal modes of gathering—*chikahan*, *kwentuhan* and *tsismisan*—over food and refreshments. Among other things, those of us who gathered at FilipiNEXT had the opportunity to bear witness to and learn from the current state of scholarship about Filipinx lives, cultures, and communities in Canada; discuss what it means to be Filipinx folks navigating institutions such as academia, art worlds, and organising communities; and articulate our desires and visions for the future of Filipinx studies in Canada.

In this special issue, we continue the work of charting the contributions of Filipinx Canadian scholarship in Canada, not only to make sense of Filipinx Canadian lives and diasporic formations, but also to articulate a mode and method of critique that draws from and is informed by the historical and geopolitical specificity of theorising from and through Filipinx Canada. Far beyond the name for the demographic presence of Filipinx in Canada, what we call 'Filipinx Canada' is a socio-spatial formation that emerges from the entangled national projects of the Philippines' exportation of its population as globally mobile labour and Canada's importation of migrant bodies, especially women, to sustain its population and labour needs. As a racialized transpacific formation, Filipinx Canada is tied, but is not equivalent, to Filipinx America. Filipinx Canada is shaped by specifically Canadian formations of multiculturalism as formal national policy as well as unique immigration pathways (such as the Caregiver Program) that have been central to (gendered) Filipinx immigration to Canada. Moreover, the Filipinx Canadian histories of immigration and community formation differ from Filipinx migration to the

US, at least partly because Canada as a ‘minor empire’ in the transpacific does not have the same sustained and structured imperial linkages to the Philippines as the US.¹ Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that Filipinx Canada is not completely distinct from Filipinx America and that the formation of Filipinx Canada has benefited from American (and Spanish) imperial histories in the Philippines. Among other things, Filipinx immigration to Canada is sustained partly by broader imperial representations of migrancy to the West as a pathway towards better lives and futures. In the specific case of Canada, the framing of Filipinx as ideal migrants to Canada often draws on qualities that were primed and shaped by US imperial presence in the Philippines, including, for example, facility in English and high levels of Western-style education.² From this perspective, through the making of Filipinx Canada, Canada benefits directly from the aftermath of US imperialism in the Philippines.

This ALON special issue is Part 1 of a two-part series that we have eponymously titled FilipiNEXT. Participants in this two-part special issue series on Filipinx Canadian studies are drawn from a subsection of those in attendance at the 2022 FilipiNEXT gathering. We gather these scholars together as a way of profiling especially the work of junior scholars and thinkers whose research, writing, and artistic interventions signal the state of the field of Filipinx Canadian studies and thus provide a sense of the future for the field. This is, we admit, something of a brazen claim. As organisers of the FilipiNEXT gathering at York, we emphasised the NEXT in FilipiNEXT (including in grant funding applications) not only to elevate the work of up-and-coming scholars and artists, but also to note that they not only anticipate but also actively chart a path for the future of Filipinx Canadian scholarship. We retain our title here partly because it is our hope that this two-part special issue series also participates in the work of articulating future directions for Filipinx Canadian studies, as well as documenting and archiving a snapshot of Filipinx Canadian studies in this present moment.

The NEXT in FilipiNEXT is also recognition that other efforts to create and sustain Filipinx Canadian studies have come before us. As organisers of the 2022 gathering and editors of this special double issue, we are particularly mindful of, indebted to, and build on two such predecessors: the edited collections *Filipinos in Canada: Disturbing Invisibility* (2012) and *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries* (2017), along with the conferences and gatherings that were key to their genesis. As agenda setting works, these two edited collections have come to be foundational to Filipinx Canadian scholarship in the last ten to fifteen years. The NEXT in FilipiNEXT is thus a small attempt to locate ourselves genealogically: the ‘next’ signals a throughline between our efforts and those of others before us whose goals were similarly to elevate efforts by Filipinx Canadian scholars to articulate, in our own words and through our own research, the focus, scope, and politics of Filipinx Canadian studies. Indeed, some of us embody the very genealogies

1. Christine Kim and Helen Hok-Sze Leung, “The Minor Transpacific: A Roundtable Discussion,” *BC Studies*, no. 198 (Summer 2018): 13–26.

2. Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, “Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration,” in *Filipino Studies: Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora*, edited by Martin F. Manalansan IV and Augusto F. Espiritu (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 33–55.

between our current efforts with FilipiNEXT and previous efforts we have mentioned: editors JP Catungal and Lisa Davidson were also co-editors of *Filipinos in Canada*; Marissa Largo was co-editor of *Diasporic Intimacies*; and Catungal, Davidson, Largo, and Mecija were chapter contributors to at least one of these two edited collections.

In the rest of this introduction, we identify some key themes that energized conversations at FilipiNEXT. These key themes are also echoed in the content of our two-part special issue series. Of significance, in particular, is the force of overlapping histories and systems of racialization, imperialism, and nation-building in shaping Filipinx lives in Canada and the global mobilities and circulations that are productive of diasporas more broadly. As we note, racialization, imperialism, and nation-building have been key concerns of Filipinx Canadian studies prior to FilipiNEXT. That they remain necessary to deal with testifies to their durability. The focus in the next section on racialization, imperialism, and nation-building also enables us to identify, in the following section, how they manifest for Filipinx in Canada in the form of labour segmentation and class inequality. As responses to these issues, critical race and feminist analyses, we note, remain central approaches to Filipinx studies scholarship in Canada.

In the ensuing section, we articulate some of the affective and political commitments and goals that motivated our organising of the FilipiNEXT workshop and of our work as editors of this two-part special issue series. We organise our thoughts on four action words: commune, conspire, complain, and care. We sought to enact these action words at the workshop as part of our work of producing Filipinx Canadian intellectual collectivity. We invoke them here at least partly to continue this work in the written pages of this journal.

Race, Empire and Nation: Situating Filipinx in Canada

In organising the FilipiNEXT gathering at York University, we and other fellow organisers were mindful of the ongoing force of imperialism, nation-building, and racialization upon Filipinx in Canada. We conceived, planned, and arrived at the FilipiNEXT gathering at York University in the midst of the reorganising of social life spurred by the global pandemic. COVID-19's threat to public health revealed—and continues to reveal—the continued disposability and replaceability of racialized and migrant people who are mercilessly jettisoned from Canadian borders, partly through the exhaustion of their labour. We were also keenly aware of the ways that Filipinx migrants came to be key to global responses to COVID-19, particularly in their roles as essential workers in the caregiving, health, and food service industries. One result of this is the disproportionate number of Filipinx labourers, nurses, and caregivers that contracted the virus because of inadequate workplace and policy protections.³ Indeed, in some cases, Filipinx workers in Canada have been unduly blamed for the circulation of the virus, resulting from their supposedly cultural propensities for multi-family living and commuting arrangements and

3. John Paul Catungal, "Essential Workers and the Cultural Politics of Appreciation: Sonic, Visual and Mediated Geographies of Public Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19," *Cultural Geographies* 28, no. 2 (2021): 403-408.

unwillingness to take days off while ill.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that the current crisis of health and labour experienced by Filipinx people in the Philippines and its diasporas are indelibly shaped by global mobilities engendered by ongoing histories of empire, nation-building, and racialization. That is, the historical and ongoing reliance on mobile and migrant Filipinx labour in and beyond Canada, especially in the overlapping fields of health and care, is tightly connected to the very issues of racial and migrant disposability that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the surface. Not surprisingly, the politics of care labour and activism has occupied a central role within Filipinx Canadian studies and it continues to surface as a key theme within this special issue and in the FilipiNEXT gathering.⁵

Attentiveness to the nexus of racialization, imperialism and nation-building, May Farrales has argued, compels us to trace how Filipinx Canada is also entangled with other Filipinx diasporic locales globally, not least because projects of empire and nation-building have led to the global distribution, even arguably forced mobility in some cases, of Filipinx folks across the world.⁶ It is thus no surprise that Filipinx Studies in Canada continues to offer critical commentaries on the ongoing legacies of imperial power and how they manifest in localised and embodied ways in the lives, cultures, and communities of Filipinxs in Canada. Various contributors to FilipiNEXT in this special issue take up this task and do so with unwavering attention to the specific historical, cultural, and political contours as well as the national and global processes that shape Filipinx lives in Canada.

Our chosen cover image is illustrative of our focus on these themes in this special issue. Collapsing site-specificity with the global movements of Filipinx, the organising committee selected Saudi-born, Toronto-based Filipina Ella Gonzales' *Light Gathers* (2022) as the emblem for our conference. In this work of art, Gonzales renders entryways, thresholds, and hallways--all architectures of transitional space--on the diaphanous material of piña, a fabric that indexes the transpacific trade of pineapple between Spanish colonies. Mounted on a wooden dowel, suspended, and draped like a curtain, the work sways with the movements of viewers. Not only does it serve as a metaphor for Filipinx diasporic experience in Canada, but also, as an abstraction, it complicates the tropes of visibility that Filipinx are often subjected to. These artistic representations refuse neoliberal readings of Filipinx in Canada and instead capture diasporic affect and allude to colonial histories embodied in its very construction. Moreover, with its visualisation of architectures of mobility, *Light Gathers* attends, as FilipiNEXT does, to the spatial transits that situate Filipinx in Canada both locally and globally. As importantly, both also hint at what remains hidden from view just around the corner, including the possible openings, throughways, and turning points that emerge as we consider where to go from where we are in the current moment.

Just as we are interested in collectively thinking about the futures

4. Ethel Tungohan, "How COVID-19 Exposed Canada's Treatment of Migrant Workers," *Open Democracy*, September 30, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/pandemic-border/how-covid-19-exposed-canadas-treatment-of-migrant-workers/>.

5. Ethel Tungohan, *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building and Communities of Care* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2023).

6. May Farrales, "Repurposing Beauty Pageants: The Colonial Geographies of Filipina Pageants in Canada," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 1 (2019): 46-64.

of Filipinx Canadian studies, we are also attuned to its history and to the intellectual labour that is foundational to our thinking at this moment. As we mentioned above, the first edited collection on Filipinx in Canada, titled *Filipinos in Canada: Disturbing Invisibility*, was released over a decade ago.⁷ A subsequent edited volume, *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries*, expanded on existing scholarship to include an examination of the contributions of queer Filipinos to the Canadian cultural landscape.⁸ Building upon the landmark contributions of these two edited collections, *FilipiNEXT* addresses the shifting temporalities of Filipinx Studies, now, some twelve years after the first collection was released. Much of the existing research on Filipinx diaspora in Canada from the past decade has focused on the dominant labour economies of Filipinx immigrants and their impact on transnational kinship and diasporic subject formation.⁹ The release of *Diasporic Intimacies* signalled an important shift in Filipino Canadian Studies that dislodged an emphasis on issues of Filipinx invisibility and put forward queer Filipino Canadian sexualities as a framework for engaging with the creative and affective interventions of Filipinx diasporic life.¹⁰ We recognize that our efforts in this special issue are indebted to the epistemological terrain laid out by these anthologies and their legacies stimulate our examination of Filipinx Studies in contemporary times. For example, the politics of Filipinx Canadian sexual, trans, and queer formations remain key to the work of emerging junior scholars and artists, including Ariel dela Cruz, JP Catungal, Marissa Largo, and Casey Mecija (all contributors to this special issue), as well as those by Allen Baylosis, May Farrales, Excel Garay, Drexler Ortiz, Fritz Pino, and Mel Racho. Together, and each in their own way, they extend existing scholarship on the sexual, trans, and queer politics of Filipinx Canada (including by more senior scholars such as Glenda Bonifacio, Roland Sintos Coloma, and Robert Diaz) by attending to issues of kinship, gender and sexual subjectivity, and the politics of intimacies as means of drawing important attention to the affective, corporeal, and intimate contours of Filipinx lives in the Canadian context.

Other key themes re-emerge in these volumes that were also key to the intellectual agenda of the previous volumes. Among them are: labour segmentation and its racial, gender, and sexual politics; the violence of family separations; and creative and cultural production as forms of critique and knowledge production. That these issues remain central to the field speaks to the durability of racialized labour conditions and migrant inequalities as structural conditions that shape Filipinx Canadians' lives in the contemporary moment, as they did even before these two volumes. Indeed, in some ways, it can be argued that Filipinx Canadians' experiences of racialized labour and migration regimes have intensified even more recently, buoyed by the continuing aggressiveness of the Philippine state's labour export policy and by the Canadian state's reliance on older labour migration programs that supply disproportionately Filipinx caregivers to Canada as well as newer programs

7. Roland Sintos Coloma et al., *Filipinos in Canada: Disturbing Invisibility* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

8. Robert Diaz, Marissa Largo and Fritz Pino, eds., *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

9. Kelly, Philip F. "Filipino migration and the spatialities of labour market subordination." In *Handbook of Employment and Society* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2010); Ethel Tungohan, *Care Activism*.

10. Diaz, Largo, Pino, *Diasporic Intimacies*.

that bring Filipinx migrants into food, retail, and hospitality services as temporary workers. It is also worth noting that Filipinx Canadian practices of creative and cultural production, as well as community organising, continue to be important venues for ground-level analyses and articulations of their racialized experiences as well as their practices of world-making resistance through which they survive, thrive, or otherwise live in Canada.

As previous gatherings before us did, FilipiNEXT also included programming that profiled knowledge from community organisers and artists. We featured a plenary panel that brought Conely de Leon of Toronto Metropolitan University in dialogue with long-time community activist Martha Ocampo. Their conversation drew from de Leon's and Ocampo's experiences and histories of community leadership and organising to shed light on the role of activism for Filipinx Canadian politics, emphasising in particular the central role of Filipinas and of practices of care in these community efforts. In addition, we sought to feature public programming centred on Filipinx Canadian creative and cultural production. Marissa Largo curated the art exhibit 'X Marks the Spot' at the Gales Gallery as part of the programming for FilipiNEXT. The exhibit featured artists whose respective creative practices constitute, as Largo notes in her curatorial essay in this volume, important articulations of 'aesthetic futurities' as forms of 'emancipatory practice.' Further expanding on the aesthetic interventions of Filipinx diaspora, Casey Mecija and JP Catungal organised Diasporic Sonic Aspirations in the City, an event about Filipinx participation in urban worlds of music that centred the TV show *Topline*, which tells the story of a young Filipina from Scarborough who is discovered on social media and who subsequently becomes a highly sought-after songwriter despite her father's wishes. By focusing on Filipinx participation in urban worlds of music, the event opened discussion about the musical lineages and aspirations of Filipinx musicians making and playing music in the city and about the larger place of Filipinx creative practitioners in urban Canada. At the event, episodes of the show were screened, and *Topline*'s creator Romeo Candido and lead actor Cyrena Fiel performed songs written by Candido for the show. Students from the Filipino Students' Association at York (FSAY) also played music.

Altogether, both the contributors to this special issue and most of the participants in FilipiNEXT illustrate that feminist and critical race approaches to Filipinx Canadian studies continue to be important to analyses in Filipinx Canadian studies, due largely to their attentiveness to the structural production and organisation of racial, gender, and sexual inequalities. This is not surprising, given the central place of these critical theories as frameworks underpinning key foundational texts in these fields, including not just the two volumes above, but also the works of Geraldine Pratt, Abigail Bakan and Davia Stasiulis, and Pura Velasco, among others.¹¹ Centre, Gabriela, and other Filipinx feminist community organisations have been key to the production of community-based analyses of the lives and experiences of Filipinx in Canada,

11. Geraldine Pratt, *Working Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Davia Stasiulis and Abigail B. Bakan, "Negotiating Citizenship: The Case of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada," *Feminist Review*, no. 57 (Autumn 1997): 112-139 and *Negotiating Citizenship: Migrant Women in Canada and the Global System* (Hampshire, UK: Basingstoke Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); and Pura Velasco, "Filipino Migrant Workers Amidst Globalization," *Canadian Woman Studies Les Cahiers De La Femme* 21, no. 4 (2002): 131-135.

and that, we argue, the spirit of their interventions continue to animate not just scholarship, but also creative work and community activism in the present moment.¹² That today's cohort of junior scholars in Filipinx Canadian studies continues to reiterate and extend their interventions speaks both to the long-term impacts of these early feminist and critical race academic and community-based analyses to the field.

FilipiNEXT as Community Building

The FilipiNEXT gathering at York University provided an opportunity for junior scholars in Filipinx and Filipinx Canadian studies to come together, meet each other, and to learn about and from each other's work. As organisers, we wanted the gathering to serve as a space for junior scholars not only to share their research, but also to form communities of peer support. Most of us, as graduate students, benefitted from friendships with colleagues from different disciplines and universities who share at least some of our personal histories and academic interests. We suspected that today's graduate students, and even those of us who are in junior faculty positions, specifically of Filipinx descent, still deal with the challenges of being racialized in historically White Canadian universities. It was our hope that FilipiNEXT would enable us to surface these challenges and to provide mentorship and support for each other as we navigate what it means for us to be Filipinx in the academy. Over the course of three days, it became clear to us that the gathering allowed us to do several things, among them what JP Catungal, in his opening address at FilipiNEXT, identified as the four C's—commune, conspire, complain and care:

Commune

Deliberate gatherings of Filipinx studies scholars from across Canadian universities are rare. As organisers, we wanted to channel the energies of previous Filipinx Canadian studies gatherings, including “Disturbing Invisibilities” in 2009 at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto and “Diasporic Intimacies” in 2015 at The Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University. Both gatherings were productive, not only in generating conversations and networks among scholars, but also in catalysing the two edited collections that have since become key texts in Filipinx Canadian studies. Our hope in bringing scholars together at York University was to recognize the presence of the current critical mass of graduate students and junior faculty members from across the arts, social sciences, and humanities, and to foster a sense of community, even in the temporary space of our gathering.

As importantly, we wanted echoes of the excitement and joy that many of us felt when we attended previous gatherings as well as other events. We sought to ensure that we gathered in deliberately Filipinx ways at the conference, including through breakfast and merienda foodstuffs that marked our gathering spaces at York University as indelibly ours. At our organising meetings, some of us remembered how exciting it was that *Cheez Wiz* and *pan*

12. McElhinny et al., *Filipinos in Canada*.

de sal, among other foods, were served at the Palimpsests 2 conference in San Diego in 2017. We decided to follow suit in an attempt to echo the gustatory affects of Palimpsests 2, but also to craft FilipiNEXT as a familiar cultural space, even if momentarily. At the workshop, laughter and *tsismis* (more on the latter below) were mainstays of our socialising practice. Our lunches and breaks enabled opportunities for attendees who are spread across universities and cities across Canada and the US to get to know each other, to share experiences together, and to provide support and resources where available. We were keenly aware of how isolating it can be for Filipinx scholars, especially in fields, universities, towns, and cities with few Filipinx graduate students or Filipinx diaspora studies scholars. These relatively unprogrammed interstitial spaces of the FilipiNEXT gathering thus became as important as the formalised program of panels and presentations that we curated for the gathering.

‘Community’ is, of course, a difficult and fraught concept, and building it, even temporarily, requires work and sustenance. Communing under the sign of ‘Filipinx’ was strategic, but we also all knew, as feminist, queer, and critical race scholars, that it has its limitations, and that we require intersectional analyses as well as critical attunement to classed, regional, linguistic, gendered, and sexual differentiations within ‘Filipinx’. So, while ‘Filipinx’ (and Filipinx studies) provided a starting point, our work together also enabled us to reckon with the presence and politics of diversities and differences within the category. Indeed, in highly productive ways, the gathering surfaced regional and linguistic differences and inequalities within Filipinx communities, as well as divergent commitments and relationships to religion and sexual politics that necessarily remain as flashpoints for ongoing conversation and disagreement. It is important for us that Filipinx studies in Canada—at FilipiNEXT, in this special issue, and in the future—continue to be attentive to a politics of difference that eschews a singularized conceptualization of ‘Filipinx’ as category.

Conspire

Along with being at York University together for those three days, we also—admittedly, ambitiously—imagined FilipiNEXT as a launching pad for the future for Filipinx studies in Canada. After all, we gathered junior scholars precisely to get a collective sense of the current state of the field, as well to bring together thinkers and artists whose work expands the scale and scope of Filipinx Canadian studies. ‘Conspire’ was our playful descriptor for the kind of imaginative, future-oriented, and agenda-setting work that we hoped FilipiNEXT would allow us to do collectively. ‘Conspire’ calls up the act of breathing in collectivity (‘con’, as in together and ‘-spire’, as in respiration). Its semantic cousin, ‘inspire’ (etymologically, to breathe into) also activates a companionate sense of thinking together, intimately and in proximity, and bringing an intellectual future into being through relational practice and exchange.

In addition, the word ‘conspire’ also calls up for us the kind of shadowy and fugitive character of the work of strategizing together in community. As racialized and often intersectionally marginalised junior scholars thinking collectively and relationally about our place and survival in a historically

violent institution, we elevate the important and necessary work of thinking from the margins and strategizing in out-of-the-way spaces, often outside of institutional visibility and legibility. In organising a space for coming together, we also conspired to make spaces deliberately for and by ourselves. In this sense, we draw political inspiration and energy from Fred Moten's and Stefano Harney's articulation of an undercommons within the university as a necessary space for survival, care, and possibility.¹³

Complain

A central way that we came together at FilipiNEXT was by sharing experiences and thus building collective analyses. A lot of this work took the form of complaints about our lives as Filipinx scholars navigating academic worlds and other sites (like art worlds) that have historically not been meant for us. Among other things, these complaints registered at the conference, the still precarious and uneasy place of Filipinx scholars and scholarship in many Canadian universities. In general, complaints enabled us to produce a collective examination of academic institutions as complex sites that we both desire even a momentary place in and also experience as violent and displacing. As Sara Ahmed (2021) argues, marginalised people's complaints are powerful forms of vernacular critique, insofar as they articulate how the way things are pose barriers and make life challenging for marginalised people.¹⁴ Complaints draw from experience and embodiment, key sites where structural issues manifest intimately in people's lives. We organised FilipiNEXT in part because we remain keenly aware of how durable White supremacy is in the Canadian academy, as it is in other facets of Canadian society. At the same time, we were also curious about how the current batch of graduate students understand and navigate the systems that they are embedded in as junior academics, and how these differ from our experiences as junior faculty members.

Complaint at FilipiNEXT came in the form of storytelling, at times in the mode of 'tsismis' and other times in the form of advice seeking. Both graduate students and faculty members shared their racialized, classed, and gendered experiences with gatekeeping as well as horror stories involving less than friendly and even outright hostile classmates, advisors, and colleagues. Precarious funding situations especially for graduate students, along with experiences of exploitation and overwork, were also themes that came up during the conference. Sharing complaints enabled attendees to commiserate and hear each other out; share strategies for dealing with challenges; and identify who and what to watch out for as one navigates the academy. Complaint, viewed in this way, is a strategy of survival, both individual and collective. Sharing complaints can thus be a feminist mode of caring, and can also signal the development, even momentarily, of relationships of trust and camaraderie among the attendees.¹⁵

13. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The university and the undercommons: Seven theses." *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 101-115.

14. Sara Ahmed, *Complaint!* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

15. *Ibid.*

Care

The politics of care is one of the most studied themes in the field of Filipinx Canadian studies, owing in part to the outsized role of various care-related labour migration programs (e.g., the former Live-In Caregiver Program, replaced in 2014 by the Caregiver Program) and gendered labour segmentation into care-related fields (e.g., nursing, child, and elder care) in shaping Filipinx Canadian lives in Canada.¹⁶ How Filipinx in Canada care for each other has received less of a focus in scholarship, though work on community organising and activist spaces as sites of community care provide important insight into the ways that Filipinx in Canada show up for each other, especially in the absence of adequate formal supports from the state.¹⁷ In organising FilipiNEXT, we imagined collective care as a key task of bringing Filipinx thinkers together. We did so, knowing that past gatherings had functioned as spaces of affirmation and care for us. Some of us drew on memories and sought to channel the spirit of the Kritikal Kolektibo, an informal group of Filipinx scholars primarily at the University of Toronto, that existed for about a decade between the mid-2000s and the mid-2010s. For some of us former members, the Kritikal Kolektibo provided a reference point for a space of gathering and care where we, as junior scholars, read together, presented our scholarship to each other, and generally hung out and became friends and colleagues. The Kritikal Kolektibo also functioned as a space of mentorship and a site for sharing intellectual and practical resources.

At FilipiNEXT, we witnessed the active crafting of care among participants in the ways that they formed friendships, engaged in conversations with each other, and generally created a supportive and constructive, while still critical, site for scholarly engagement. Along with profiling the current state of scholarship, the FilipiNEXT gathering at York University also provided us with an opportunity for mentorship as a form of intergenerational and peer support praxis. We organised the graduate student workshop specifically to create a space for those of us who are relatively more senior (e.g., faculty members, advanced PhD candidates) to share our survival strategies with those who are relatively more junior in their career progression. We did so not primarily in terms of professionalising advice (e.g., how to advance one's career through publications), though there was inevitably some of this! Instead, care and support came in the form of listening, telling stories, and being there for each other. We are also happy to note that attendees, especially graduate students, seem to have continued to keep in touch with each other after FilipiNEXT, and have created writing and study groups that enable them to continue their relationships with each other.

The Special Issue at a Glance and a Glimpse of What's Ahead

Our special issue is only a sample of the Filipinx diasporic intellectual rigour and vibrancy that is emerging from the Canadian context at this juncture. We are pleased in this first of two FilipiNEXT special issues to feature works that

16. Coloma et al., *Filipinos in Canada*.

17. Tungohan, *Care Activism*.

think, individually and together, with and through creativity as a method of Filipinx Canadian critique and knowledge production. Most of our contributors examine dance, theatre, performance, and visual arts for the ways that they make space for Filipinx diasporic articulations of memory, imagination, activism, community, and repair as critical responses to various crises.

Turning attention to Filipinx performative and aesthetic possibilities, Liza Constantino examines dance as a response to the 2022 Philippine Elections. Drawing attention to the relationship between kinesthetic and civic movement in the Philippines and its diasporas, Constantino suggests that 'election dances' offer critical 'kinesthetic interventions' that engage collective forms of remembering and activism. By foregrounding Philippine dance as replete with political intention and tradition, Constantino reads dance choreography and performance as sites that prompt new and creative forms of political participation and imagining. Focusing on applied theatre's potential to address the challenges of climate change, Dennis Gupa suggests that community-based theatre is a vital resource for political debate and dialogue among Filipinx communities in Canada and the Philippines. In its potential leverage of local, Indigenous, and other marginalised perspectives often erased in discussions of climate justice, particularly in the wake of Super Typhoon Yolanda, Gupa insists that community-based theatre can foster 'empathic criticality' and convene collective action towards ecological sustainability. Drawing on similar provocations about the political possibilities of theatrical work, Ariel De La Cruz reads Lani Montreal's *My Grandmother and I* for what he describes as 'ingatan', an ethic of care that refuses the containment of neoliberal citizenship and is deployed as a circular and everyday practice between family members. Cruz argues that it is through these mundane exchanges of care that the narratives of loss and mourning often associated with the AIDS crisis are reframed and tended to in loving and caring ways.

In addition to the above scholarly articles, our special issue includes diasporic Filipinx visual art and performance in the Canadian context and of CanadaResearch Chair Ethel Tungohan's new book *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building, and Communities of Care*. Architect, curator, and art critic Bianca Weeko Martin provides a lush reading of Leeroy New's artistic intervention in Toronto's The Benway, *Balete Bulate Bituka* (2023). Using found objects, bamboo, and recyclables, New constructs a tentacular sculpture that envelops city infrastructure in a way that defamiliarizes the built environment, or in the words of Martin, 'the waste material cloaking the creature's bamboo skeleton...reminds us that the highway sheltering it sits on earth that is not natural, but rather human-made—infill comprised of household and construction waste dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Though this Balete looks alien, it is actually not too different from the firmament we take for granted below'.¹⁸ Martin bookends her review with a sensuous beachside memory in La Union while another of New's sculptures looms on the horizon as a speculative vision of what could be in the midst of the global movements of Filipino workers and the ecological crisis in late

18. Bianca Weeko Martin, "Leeroy New's Balete Bulate Bituka at The Bentway" *Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies*, 3 no. 2 (2023): 211.

capitalism. Communications scholar Rey Rosales provides a glowing review of Carmen Leilani De Jesus and Romeo Candido's *Prison Dancers: The Musical*. What started as a group activity for the inmates of a maximum-security prison in Cebu, turned viral YouTube sensation, is now a Filipino Canadian stage production. Rosales provides an intersectional analysis of the performance's queer character of Lola whose creative credit is stolen by the warden. Rosales speculates queer themes of *Prison Dancers* may have contributed to the cool reception by social media run by Filipinos in Edmonton, where heteronormativity and conservatism may linger.

Kad Mariano carefully reviews activist scholar Ethel Tungohan's *Care Activism*, which investigates Filipino advocacy work among careworker rights organizations in Canada. Activism work is not only about policy engagement and reform, Tungohan theorizes, but it is also the ways in which those involved in the movement demonstrate forms of care for each other. Mariano suggests that this book is a useful text for political science courses that want to infuse their curricula with non-traditional scholarship that emerges from grassroots organizing.

In the Lesse Street Studio section, diasporic Filipinx art scholar and curator Marissa Largo contextualizes the contemporary art practices of early- and mid-career Filipinx visual artists in Canada. For Largo, the "X" in *X Marks the Spot*, the name of the exhibition which accompanied the FilipiNEXT conference, points to a particular cultural, temporal, and geographic moment in which Filipinx artists and scholars in Canada are building a creative and scholarly community for and by ourselves. In a context in which Filipinx legibility is still so closely connected with neoliberal forms of labour capitalism, the visual futurities of artists such as Patrick Cruz, Ella Gonzales, Julius Ponclet Manapul, and their mentees offer alternative readings of Filipinx-ness that are embedded in ancestral spirituality, aesthetic vocabularies of migrant liminality, and exuberant queer recuperations.

Taken together, this special issue of ALON is also marking an 'X' – the imbrication of a site specificity and a temporal demarcation of academic politicization. This simultaneous formation of a critical mass and a critical consciousness is built on the work of visionary leaders that have come before us. Inspired by them, this X seeks to shape the NEXT in Filipinx diasporic studies.

We would like to end by gesturing to the next step for FilipiNEXT: a future second special issue that will allow us to profile even more emerging scholars in Filipinx Canadian studies. While we are still finalising the line-up for the second special issue, we are excited to note that future participants will expand even further the intellectual and political ambit of Filipinx Canadian scholarship, including to develop analyses of issues that still require further examination in this field. These include, among other themes, religion, settler colonialism, and the politics of sound and the sensorial.

A Note on Style

As a legacy of British settler colonialism in Canada, English has been imposed as the dominant language in many spheres of life, including education,

governance, and employment. In spite of Canadian multicultural values of tolerance and welcome, the social and institutional enforcement of British English was, and still is, used to assimilate and dispossess Indigenous languages and cultures, and to marginalise Filipinx (and other racialized groups), despite the legacy of American colonisation and American English education in the Philippines.

British English proficiency is often a requirement for accessing opportunities and resources in Canadian society. This linguistic requirement can be seen as a form of linguistic imperialism, where English is privileged over other languages, including those spoken by many Filipinx in Canada. Indeed, Filipinx who have lived in Canada for several decades (and continue to do so) still face employment barriers, economic disparities, and other forms of racism, due to an accented English. Moreover, the relationship between written British English for Filipinx in Canada is complex and multifaceted, encompassing issues of language, power, and access to resources.

In the following papers, we use Canadian spelling conventions. While British and American English share many similarities, there are notable differences. For instance, British English often uses different spellings for certain words compared to American English, such as: 'colour' (British) vs. 'color' (American); 'centre' (British) vs. 'center' (American), and 'marginalise' (British) vs. 'marginalize' (American).

As Filipinx in Canada, we find ourselves caught between American English conventions that operate in most publishing venues, including being the default for ALON, and the linguistic hangover of a British imperialism that endows Canadian English proximity to British English. We are grateful to the ALON team for giving us the space to make what we recognize to be an imperfect choice.