

# Home Making

It is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the [contemporary] age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

We [Filipinos] are now a quasi-wandering people, pilgrims or prospectors staking our lives and futures all over the world—in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North and South America, Australia and all of Asia; in every nook and cranny of this seemingly godforsaken earth.

E. San Juan, Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*

The relationship between the Philippines and the United States has its origins in a history of conquest, occupation, and exploitation. A study of Filipino migration to the United States must begin with this history. Without starting here, we risk reducing Filipino migration to just another immigrant stream. Extending Michael Omi and Howard Winant's notion that "racial formation" is the changing product of the negotiations between social movements and the U.S. state, this book contends that Filipino American racial formation is determined not only by the social, economic, and political forces in the United States but also by U.S. (neo)colonialism in the Philippines and capital investment in Asia. The Filipino case thus foregrounds the ways in which immigrants<sup>1</sup> from previously colonized nations are not exclusively formed as racialized minorities within the United States but also as colonized nationals while in their "homeland"—one that is deeply affected by U.S. influences and modes of social organization.<sup>2</sup> Placing the study of immigration within

an “agency-oriented theoretical perspective,”<sup>3</sup> I examine in this book how Filipino women and men—as simultaneously colonized national, immigrant, and racialized minority—are transformed through the experience of colonialism and migration and how they in turn transform and remake the social world around them.

Attentive to both the local and global structures of inequality, I argue that Filipino Americans confront U.S. domestic racism and the global racial order by leading lives stretched across borders—shaped as much by memories of and ties to the Philippines as by the social, economic, and political contexts in their new home in the United States.

Focusing on the experiences of Filipinos in San Diego, California, I maintain that the process of migration is not only about arrival and settlement but, crucially, also about home orientation and return. In focusing on the power and appeal of both “here” and “there,” I hope to show that immigrants—in this age of transnational flow of labor, capital, and cultural forms—are both spatially mobile and spatially bounded. Immigrants are mobile in that they can physically live across (unequal) borders or return home through the imagination. At the same time, they are bounded by force of law, economic and political power, and regulating and regularizing institutions in the site(s) in which they find themselves. Given that immigrants are multiply located and placed, this book is about how home is both an *imagined* and an *actual* geography; or more specifically, it is about how home is both connected to and disconnected from the physical space in which one lives. Home is defined here both as a private domestic space and as a larger geographic place where one belongs, such as one’s community, village, city, and country.<sup>4</sup> I am especially interested in understanding how immigrants use memory of homeland to construct their new lives in the country to which they have migrated.

To explain better the conceptual relations between home as an imagined and home as an actual geography, I will focus on *home making*—the processes by which diverse subjects imagine and make themselves at home in various geographic locations. Because home making is most often a way of establishing difference and a means of jostling for power, homes are as much about inclusions and open doors as they are about exclusions and closed borders.<sup>5</sup> At the interpersonal level, homes are simultaneously places of nurturing and sites of conflict between family members who occupy different positions of power.<sup>6</sup> At the national communal level, homes are places carved out of repressive state, labor, and cultural practices designed to keep outsiders—in this case, Filipinos—from becoming “rooted.” Amid this enforced “homelessness,” many im-

migrants articulate their sense of home by overemphasizing ties of biology and geography and/or by building political coalitions across class, regional, national, and racial boundaries. I will pay particular attention to the problematic relationship that women have to home—as immigrant wives, as second-generation daughters, and as women of color in a white patriarchal society. In so doing, I heed Grewal and Kaplan’s call to be attentive to “scattered hegemonies”—to the multiple, overlapping, and intersecting sources of power—as opposed to hegemonic power.<sup>7</sup>

#### TOWARD A CRITICAL TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The globalization of labor, capital, and culture, the restructuring of world politics, and the expansion of new technologies of communication and transportation: all have driven people and products across the globe at a dizzying pace. In the last decade, reflecting the current saliency of transnational processes, scholars have shifted from the dualism inherent in the classic models of migration—the assumption that migrants move through bipolar spaces in a progressive time frame—to nonbinary theoretical perspectives that are not predicated on modernist assumptions about space and time.<sup>8</sup> Recent writings on “transnational sociocultural system,” “the transnational community,” “transmigrants,” the “deterritorialized nation-state,” and “transnational grassroots politics” have challenged our notions of *place*, reminding us to think about places not only as specific geographic and physical sites but also as circuits and networks. These writings also have contradicted localized and bounded social science concepts such as community and culture, calling attention instead to the transnational relations and linkages among overseas communities and between them and their homeland.<sup>9</sup>

Transnational migration studies form a highly fragmented field; there continues to be much disagreement about the scope of the field and the outcome of the transnational processes under observation.<sup>10</sup> I engage transnationalism in this book not because I expect that transnational lifestyles—the back-and-forth flow of people, ideas, material resources, and multisited projects—will become the rule in the near future. Indeed, I suspect that the literature on transnationalism has overemphasized transnational circuits and understated the permanency of immigrant settlement. Like Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila and others, I believe that most immigrants in the United States are here to stay, regardless of their initial intentions and their continuing involvement in the

political, social, and economic lives of their countries of origin.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, it is precisely because of the “permanent” status of Filipino immigrants in the United States that I find their ongoing social and emotional connections to the Philippines most surprising and thus in need of study. I am interested in understanding not only how but also why Filipino immigrants who have settled permanently in the United States would continue to maintain transnational families, social networks, and communities.

From an epistemological stance, I find transnationalism to be a valuable *conceptual* tool, one that disrupts the narrow emphasis on “modes of incorporation” characteristic of much of the published work in the field of U.S. immigration studies.<sup>12</sup> While no longer bound by a simplistic assimilationist paradigm, the field has remained “America-centric,” with an overwhelming emphasis on the process of “becoming American.”<sup>13</sup> The concept of transnationalism, used as a heuristic device, highlights instead the range and depth of migrants’ lived experience in multinational social fields.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that transnational activities are not new. As early as 1916, Randolph Bourne, in his classic essay “Transnational America,” argued that the nation might have to accept “dual citizenship” and “free and mobile passage of the immigrant between America and his native land.”<sup>15</sup> Given the notoriety of Bourne’s essay, we must ask why the concept of transnationalism never really did enter the lexicon of political and scholarly debates on immigration. Instead, *pluralism*, *melting pot*, and *assimilation*—terms that presumed (and prescribed) unidirectional migration flows—dominated our discussion. Following Barry Goldberg,<sup>16</sup> I contend that scholars and policy experts cast aside the idea of transnationalism because it poses too much of a challenge to the “mythistory” of the United States—one that valorizes the linear narratives of immigration, assimilation, and nationhood. Going against these linear narratives, this book (re)presents Filipino migration as multifaceted movements across borders.

A critical transnational perspective also provokes us to think beyond the limits of the nation-state, that is, to be attentive to the global relations that set the context for immigration and immigrant life. In this age of increasing worldwide interconnection, the boundaries of the nation-state seldom correspond to the transnational social, cultural, economic, and political spaces of daily life.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, today’s global world is not just some glorious hybrid, complex, mixity; it is systematically divided.<sup>18</sup> As Doreen Massey reminds us, these deep ruptures and inequalities are not mere “geographical differences” but are produced and

maintained within the very process of globalization.<sup>19</sup> A vision of the world as an unstructured and free unbounded space obscures the asymmetrical links between First and Third World nations forged by colonization, decolonization, and the globalization of late capitalism.<sup>20</sup> Calling attention to global structures of inequality, recent social theorists have linked migration processes with the global penetration of Western economic systems, technological infrastructures, and popular cultures into non-Western countries.<sup>21</sup> Although the details vary, these works posit that the internationalization of capitalistic economic system to Third World countries has produced imbalances in their internal social and economic structures and subsequently has spurred emigration.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, all the nation-states from which the largest number of U.S. immigrants originate—Mexico, China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong), the Philippines, El Salvador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, South Korea, Guatemala, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—have had sustained and sometimes intimate social, political, and economic relations with the United States.

A transnational approach that stresses the global structures of inequality is critical for understanding Asian immigration and Asian American lives in the United States. Linking global economic development with global histories of colonialism, Edna Bonacich and Lucie Cheng argue that the pre-World War II immigration of Asians to the United States has to be understood within the context of the development of capitalism in Europe and the United States and the emergence of imperialism, especially in relation to Asia.<sup>23</sup> From World War II onward, as the world economy has become much more globally integrated, Asia has been a site of U.S. expansion. As a result, contemporary immigrants from the Philippines, South Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, and Laos come from countries that have been deeply disrupted by U.S. colonialism, war, and neocolonial capitalism.<sup>24</sup> Since contemporary immigration and modern imperialism are “two sides of a single global phenomenon,”<sup>25</sup> contemporary Asian immigration to the United States can be better understood as “the ‘return’ of Asian immigrants to the imperial center.”<sup>26</sup> In this sense, contemporary Asian immigration erodes the spatial structure of colonialism by interspersing the “colonial self” and the “colonized other” in interpenetrating spaces.<sup>27</sup>

The history of U.S. imperialism in Asia suggests that Asian American “racial formation” has been determined not exclusively by events in the United States but also by U.S. colonialism and neocolonialism in Asia.<sup>28</sup> But the process of Asian American racial formation has been neither sin-

gular nor unified. Owing to the multiple contexts of colonialism and its various extensions into the development of global capitalism, Asians in the United States have experienced different processes of racialization specific to each group's historical and material conditions.<sup>29</sup> In the case of Filipinos, who come from a homeland that was a U.S. colony for more than half a century and that continues to persist as “virtually an appendage of the U.S. corporate power elite,”<sup>30</sup> their formation as a racialized minority does not begin in the United States but rather in the homeland already affected by U.S. economic, social, and cultural influences. The prior flow of population, armies, goods, capital, and culture—moving primarily from the United States to the Philippines—profoundly dislocated many Filipinos from their home and subsequently spurred their migration to the United States and elsewhere.

The history of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines reminds us that immigrant lives are shaped not only by the social location of their group within the host country but also by the position of their home country within the global racial order.<sup>31</sup> Writing on the marginal status of immigrants of color in North American society, M. G. Vassanji proposes that “the marginalization of the non-European immigrant is concomitant to the marginalization of the world he or she comes from—a country and culture viewed as alien, backward, poor, and unhappy.”<sup>32</sup> With “civilization” constructed as implicitly white, nation-states such as the Philippines continue to be subordinated and defined as racially different and hence inferior and without history or culture. As such, U.S. racism against Filipino immigrants—misrepresented variously as the little brown brothers, the monkeys, the prostitutes, the mail-order brides—is not only a contemporary backlash against the influx of recent Filipino immigrants but is also part of a continuum that goes back to U.S. racism in and colonialization of the Philippines. It is the convergence of these multiple historical trajectories—their location in the United States, in the Philippines, and in the space between—that is the focus of this book.

#### ABOUT MYTHS: IMMIGRANT SUCCESS AND IMMIGRANT MENACE STORIES

The abundant literature on immigration—both popular and academic—tends to begin with the premise that immigrants are a “problem.” It is striking how this literature locates the problem *not* in the political and economic oppression or violence that produces massive displacements and movements of people, but within the bodies and minds of the migrants

themselves.<sup>33</sup> Developed during the peak years of mass immigration from Europe, the sociology of immigration, particularly that of the Chicago School, approached the study of immigrants and their absorption into U.S. society as a social problem requiring specialized correctives and interventions.<sup>34</sup> Today, when more than 80 percent of the “newer” immigrants are from Asia and Latin America, immigration is regularly presented in public debates and popular images as a problem to be solved and a flow to be stopped.<sup>35</sup> Contemporary research on immigration has likewise produced numerous cost-benefit analyses of immigrants’ impact on the economy, on the labor market, and on local, state, and federal treasuries.<sup>36</sup>

Among all contemporary U.S. immigrants, Mexicans are singled out as especially problematic.<sup>37</sup> According to Leo Chavez, the media have consistently represented Mexican immigration using alarmist imagery. In his provocative study of magazine covers on immigration since 1965, Chavez finds that “Mexicans are imaged as low-income, low-skilled people whose threat of ‘invasion’ derives from their numbers, reproductive capacities, and competition for jobs with low-educated, low-skilled U.S. citizens.”<sup>38</sup> Along the same line, Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that in the early 1990s, with the Proposition 187 campaign in California, the dominant anti-Mexican immigration narrative characterized Mexican immigrants and their children as a growing underclass class who drained the government treasuries fed by U.S. citizen-taxpayers.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, media images of and stories about Asian immigrants generally celebrate their purported economic assimilation, pronouncing that many Asian immigrants “do not fit the stereotype of the huddled masses” and that “they are educated and middle class, ready and eager to prosper in America.”<sup>40</sup> Many scholars have disputed this claim, emphasizing instead the economic diversity among Asian Americans, especially the persistent poverty experienced by Southeast Asian refugees.<sup>41</sup> Even so, the socioeconomic status of certain Asian groups exceeded that of whites, fueling the characterization of Asian Americans as the model minority. Overall, the post-1965 Filipino immigrants constitute a relatively affluent group: in 1990, more than half joined the ranks of managers and professionals; their median household income exceeded that of all Americans and even that of whites; and their percentage of college graduates was twice that of all Americans.<sup>42</sup>

Given the relative occupational, educational, and class advantages of Filipinos in the United States, the story of Filipino migration is often recounted as an immigrant success story—one that validates the myth of the United States as the land of opportunity. Because groups in the

United States are racialized relatively to yet differently from one another,<sup>43</sup> the immigrant success story works as an effective foil to the immigrant menace myth: Filipino and other Asian immigrants succeed because they have the right cultural values, while Mexican and other Latino/a immigrants fail because they do not. Other researchers have called attention to the class diversity within both the Filipino and the Mexican communities.<sup>44</sup> Here I am more interested in the ways in which the “immigrant success” and the “immigrant menace” stories work in tandem to “obscur[e] the operation of racial power, protecting it from challenge, and permitting ongoing racialization via racially coded methods.”<sup>45</sup> Embedded in the language of liberal individualism, these “color-blind” myths promote cultural beliefs in innate racial difference, preventing us from seeking structural explanations for social inequality.<sup>46</sup>

From an America-centric perspective, the stories of Filipino and Mexican migration begin when the immigrants arrive on U.S. soil. Thus told, the differences in their socioeconomic profiles become “interiorized”; that is, they become differences in natural abilities, unmediated by global politics and power.<sup>47</sup> But when recounted from a critical transnational perspective, the stories of Filipino and Mexican migration must begin with U.S. military, economic, and market intervention in the Philippines and Mexico, respectively. It is this history of the U.S. exercise of global power in Asia and Latin America—and not of the immigrants’ abilities and values—that shapes the terms on which these groups enter and become integrated into the United States. As Hondagneu-Sotelo and others have argued, Mexican migration—and the number, low average education, and working-class status of the migrants—has its historical origins in U.S. geopolitical and economic expansion in Mexico, and in deliberate, active, and continuous recruitment of low-wage workers to fill labor demands in agriculture and other U.S. service industries.<sup>48</sup> In the Filipino case, as I document in this book, the different cohorts of Filipino immigrants—the pre-World War II agricultural laborers, the pre-1970 Filipino sailors in the U.S. Navy, and the post-1965 medical professionals—have their roots in early-twentieth-century U.S. imperialism and colonization of the Philippines and in U.S. changing labor needs. By telling the story this way—that is, by indicating that the socioeconomic profiles of Filipino and Mexican immigrants reflect U.S. global interests and needs for different types and sources of labor—I disrupt the immigrant success/menace binary and call attention instead to shared histories and lives.

A few more words about the fictionality of success. Scholars, the me-

dia, and the public often herald the “remarkable success” of Filipino and other Asian immigrants as evidence of the “declining significance of race” in the United States. But economic success—and its converse, economic hardship—provides but one index of racial violations. I am less interested here in debating the economic status of Filipino immigrants, not because I don’t consider it important, but because I am haunted more by what Avery Gordon terms “the subtleties of domination.”<sup>49</sup> In her highly original and provocative call for scholars to imagine alternative stories about the relationship among power, knowledge, and experience, Gordon urges us not to settle for “narrower and narrower evidence for the harms and indignities” that people experience, but to be as vigilant about the more “subtle violations” that are often unseen and denied:

[T]he sublimating insecurities and the exorbitant taxes for our unquestioned behavior; the wear and tear of long years of struggling to survive; the exhausting anger and shame at patiently and repetitively explaining or irritably shouting about what can certainly be known but is treated as an unfathomable mystery; the deep pain of always having to compete in a contest you did not have any part in designing for what most matters and merits; the sinking demoralization and forlorn craziness of exchanging everything with the invisible hands of a voracious market; the quiet stranglehold of a full-time alertness to benevolent rule; and the virtually unspeakable loss of control, the abnegation, over what is possible.<sup>50</sup>

It is these subtler violations—the sublimating insecurities, the exhausting anger and shame, the deep pain, the sinking demoralization and forlorn craziness, and the unspeakable loss—that I am most compelled to document in this book about Filipino lives.

#### HOME AND ABROAD: RETHINKING COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND PLACE

I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry “home” on my back.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*

For some time now, scholars have been concerned with how global flows of people, capital, and cultural forms have altered the processes of identity formation. Recent empirical research indicates that amid this transnational flow, many immigrants anchor themselves by carrying “home” on their backs. This practice is most apparent in the case of immigrants, refugees, and exiles who continue to invest in “back-home”

lives and ties even as they establish social, economic, and political relations in their new country.<sup>51</sup> Postwar Asian America is populated with transnational migrants—the nonresident Indians, the Chinese “astronauts,” the *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese), the *balikbayans* (Filipino returnees or homecomers)—whose households, activities, networks, ideologies, and identities transcend the boundaries of the nation-states between which the migrants move.<sup>52</sup> The existence of these trans-Pacific lives establishes that the lines separating Asian and Asian American, “so crucial to identity formations in the past, are increasingly blurred.”<sup>53</sup> Reflecting the prominence of Asian American transnational lives, many Asian American writers have addressed the theme of exile in their stories and poems, with the strength of the exile’s ties to the homeland a constant in much of the literature.<sup>54</sup> In an essay on diasporic politics in South Asian American literature, Ketu Katrak argues that this blurring of the “here” and “there” challenges the linearity of time and the specificity of space “by juxtaposing the immigrants’ here and now, with their past histories and geographies.”<sup>55</sup>

Cognizant of the lives that are lived in the “space between,”<sup>56</sup> in this book I document the languages and social practices that go into remembering and constructing the homeland—particularly the ways in which Filipino families, identities, and resources cross national boundaries and connect the Philippines with the United States. Living between the old and the new, between homes, and between languages, immigrants do not merely insert or incorporate themselves into existing spaces in the United States; they also transform these spaces and create new ones, such as the “space between.” This transnational space, then, is a productive site from which to study immigration because it articulates the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions characteristic of immigrant lives. Most of the Filipinos whom I interviewed, regardless of their regional and class origins, have kept ties with family, friends, and colleagues in the Philippines through occasional visits, telephone calls, remittances, and medical and other humanitarian missions. In so doing, they have created and maintained fluid and multiple identities that link them simultaneously to both countries. These transnational connections underscore the multiplicity of Filipino lives and work against definitions that would fix them in one identity or one place.

It is important to note, however, that home is not only a physical place that immigrants return to for temporary and intermittent visits but also a concept and a desire—a place that immigrants visit through the imagination.<sup>57</sup> Hamid Naficy defines home in the following way: “*Home* is

anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination.”<sup>58</sup> While it is true that affluent immigrants have greater access than do the working poor to transnational practices, I would argue that all immigrants—regardless of class—can and do “return home” through the imagination. As Bienvenido Santos poignantly reminds us: “All exiles want to go home. Although many of them never return, in their imagination they make their journey a thousand times.”<sup>59</sup> Ketu Katrak has described this return through the imagination—or through memory and written and visual texts—as the “simultaneity of geography, . . . the possibility of living here in body and elsewhere in mind and imagination.”<sup>60</sup> People who relocate carry with them not only their physical belongings but also their memories. As Anton Shammas puts it, “We don’t ever leave home. We simply drag it behind us wherever we go, walls, roof, and all.”<sup>61</sup> In focusing on both actual transnational activities (in the form of home visits, kinship ties, and remittances) and imagined returns to one’s native home (through memory and cultural rediscovery), I hope to show that the process of migration encompasses both a *literal* and a *symbolic* transnationalism.

The practice of symbolic transnationalism is most evident—and most poignant—in the lives of U.S.-born Filipinos. How do young Filipinos who have never been “home” imagine the “homeland”? And how do they recall that which is somewhere else, that which was perhaps never known?<sup>62</sup> Largely unacquainted with their home country, U.S.-born children depend on their parents’ tutelage to craft and affirm their ethnic self, and thus they are particularly vulnerable to charges of cultural ignorance.<sup>63</sup> In an important article on the “transnational struggles” of second-generation Filipino Americans, Diane Wolf suggests that Filipino youth experience “emotional transnationalism,” which situates them between different generational and locational points of reference, their parents’, sometimes also their grandparents’, and their own.<sup>64</sup> Focusing on these “transnational struggles,” I will explore the ways in which immigrant parents, as self-appointed guardians of “authentic” cultural memory and representatives of “home,” can opt to regulate their children’s, especially their daughters’, independent choices by linking them to cultural betrayal.

While it is important to document the transnational aspects of immigrant lives, it is equally important to recognize that immigrants—even as transnationals—remain structured by the national politics and national culture of their host country. Calling attention to the deterritorialization of identity formation in the global age, Arjun Appadurai has advised us

to stop thinking solely in terms of physical spaces and to imagine instead a “post-national geography” of “global ethnoscapes.”<sup>65</sup> While Appadurai’s framework enables us to think about the ways in which ethnic identities extend beyond national borders, it undervalues the enduring importance of local spaces, memories, and practices; underestimates the continuing power of the nation-state; and implies a formation that is not structured by domestic and global power relations or is not shaped by differences in culture, class, gender, race, and national origin.<sup>66</sup> Even as transnational migrants live literally or symbolically across borders, they are not deterritorialized, free-floating people.<sup>67</sup> Instead, they continue to exist, interact, construct their identities, and exercise their rights within nation-states that monopolize power and impose categories of identity on local residents. That is, identities, while constantly in flux, are not free-floating, because the shifting terrain of identities is positioned in histories, cultures, languages, classes, localities, communities, and politics. In a comparative study of rich and poor Asian immigrants to the United States, Aihwa Ong argues that immigrant groups are bound by the “cultural inscription of state power and other forms of regulation that define the different modalities of belonging.”<sup>68</sup> As such, the strategies that immigrants use to fashion themselves in the world are not all a matter of choice but are profoundly influenced by who or what the immigrants can be in the *physical spaces*—the local contexts—in which they find themselves. As Guarzino and Smith maintain, “The social construction of ‘place’ is still a process of local meaning-making, territorial specificity, juridical control, and economic development, however complexly articulated these localities become in transnational economic, political, and cultural flows.”<sup>69</sup>

In sum, this book is attentive to the dialectic between the powers of the state to circumscribe life chances and to impose categories of identity on immigrants and on the ability of these immigrants—through their various constructions of home—to contest, resist, or deflect these impositions on their self-constructions. In other words, the process of “subjectification” is a dual process of self-making and being made in relation to nation-states and the wider world.<sup>70</sup>

#### THE POLITICS OF LOCATION AND HOME(S)

Those with an anthropological concept of culture have often assumed that a natural identity exists between people and places, and that discrete

peoples belong to specific, bounded territories, which frame their distinct cultures and local identities. Working against this fixed concept of culture, I explore in this book the politics of location—how immigrants use literal or symbolic ties to the homeland as a form of resistance to places and practices in the host country that are patently “not home.”<sup>71</sup> As colonized and racially marked immigrants in the United States, Filipinos have been distanced from the “national” or “America,” blocked from full political and economic participation, and alienated from cultural Americanness, which was founded on whiteness. In the context of U.S. (neo)colonial subjugation of the Philippines, globalized capitalism, and racialized and feminized international division of labor, Filipino American lives challenge the myth of a welcoming America—the land of opportunity and fair play—and call attention instead to an exclusionary U.S. national identity that has been built historically by distancing the body politic from the racially different other.<sup>72</sup>

In a stunning indictment of the possessive investment in whiteness, George Lipsitz demonstrates that the construction of the “American people” as white—in the realm of public policy, politics, and culture—has served to maintain white privilege and justify and perpetuate the subordination of people of color.<sup>73</sup> Alexander Saxton points out that U.S. society has been racially exclusive from the very beginning:

Already in the days of Jefferson and the ‘sainted Jackson’ . . . the nation had assumed the form of a racially exclusive democracy—democratic in the sense that it sought to provide equal opportunities for the pursuit of whiteness by its white citizens through the enslavement of Afro-Americans, extermination of Indians, and territorial expansion largely at the expense of Mexicans and Indians.<sup>74</sup>

The investment in whiteness has also been made explicit in the imperial ambitions of the United States in Asia. When the Philippines were forcibly turned into a U.S. colony at the turn of the twentieth century, Filipinos joined Africans, Mexicans, and Native Americans in being the “white man’s burden,” the object of “domestic racial imperialism” carried out through brutal racial violence by the U.S. military and by co-optative patronage.<sup>75</sup> In the United States, the investment in whiteness has been institutionalized in federal, state, and local laws that prevented Asians from immigrating to the United States and forbade those already there to become naturalized citizens, to own land, and to participate in the primary labor force and in the court cases that upheld these laws.<sup>76</sup> Until the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, Filipinos occupied the am-

biguous and stigmatized status of “U.S. nationals”—desired as cheap and unprotected labor but excluded from legal and cultural citizenship.

The assumption of whiteness as a diacritic of citizenship has also been made explicit in the social and cultural construction of Asian Americans, even as citizens, as the inassimilable aliens who “are alleged to be self-disqualified from full American membership by materialistic motives, questionable political allegiance, and, above all, outlandish, overripe, ‘Oriental’ cultures.”<sup>77</sup> This cultural discrimination brands all Asians as perpetual foreigners—a status that marks them simultaneously as marginal and as threatening. Although Filipinos have been in the United States since the middle of the 1700s and Americans have been in the Philippines since at least the late 1900s, U.S. Filipinos—as racialized nationals, immigrants, and citizens—“are still practically an invisible and silent minority.”<sup>78</sup> Lamenting the neglect of Filipino Americans in the existing literature on U.S. immigration, ethnicity, and communities, Filipino American critics have declared that Filipinos are the “forgotten Asian Americans”; that “not much is known about them”; and that on this group there is “no history. No published literature. No nothing.”<sup>79</sup> Certainly, the institutional invisibility of Filipino Americans is a testament to their ambiguous status as the “foreigner within.” However, this invisibility is also connected to the historical amnesia and self-erasure regarding the U.S. colonization of the Philippines in particular and U.S. imperialism in general. Finally, in a country that defines its nationalism in terms of whiteness and patriarchy, Filipino immigrant women in particular are clearly “not home,” because they are not white and male.

Responding to this enforced “homelessness,” many Filipino immigrants have articulated a sense of home by memorializing the homeland and by building on familial and communal ties. Focusing on the everyday imagining of home and country among Filipino immigrants, I hope to show that homes are not neutral places and that “imagining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation.”<sup>80</sup> Memory of place is significant because it helps to locate the individual in a community, to bind family members together, and to shape personal identity.<sup>81</sup> In immigrant communities, the remembered homeland takes on a special significance: not only does it form a lifeline to the home country and a basis for group identity in a new and often alien and oppressive context, but it is also a base on which immigrants construct community and home life and on which they stake their political and sociocultural claims on their adoptive country.<sup>82</sup> Ethnographies of migrants, exiles, and refugees increas-

ingly find that the “there” of deterritorialized peoples is in part at least an “imagined community,” invented “to make present felt absences in their lives.”<sup>83</sup>

The idealization of the home country, however, becomes problematic when it elicits a nostalgia for a glorious past that never was, a nostalgia that elides exclusion, power relations, and difference or when it elicits a desire to replicate these inequities as a means to buttress lost status and identities in the adopted country. I am particularly interested in the tensions between the patriarchal control, in the name of culture and nationalism, of immigrant women, especially of second-generation daughters, and the efforts of these women to contest and negotiate these expressions of nationalism through their roles as mothers, daughters, workers, organizers, and lovers. I will pay particular attention to the patriarchal call for cultural “authenticity,” rendering immigrant women and second-generation daughters emblematic of the community’s cultural survival and obliterating contradictions and intricacies in the process. In so doing, I challenge the depoliticized version of multiculturalism that unproblematically celebrates the survival and reinvention of “ethnic” practices. Instead, I highlight the gendered differentials embedded in these ethnic traditions and show that identities forged from below are often no less essentialized than the hegemonic identities imposed from above.<sup>84</sup>

Dorinne Kondo has argued that for many people on the margins, home, however problematic and provisional, “is that which we cannot not want.”<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, in an inhospitable world, home stands for a safe place, for community. On the other, because the construct of home (and culture) is inseparable from power relations, home can simultaneously be an unsafe, violent, and oppressive site for people on the margins such as women and children. As Rosemary George argues, home is both a place of violence and nurturing, a place to escape to as well as escape from, and a place that is established as the exclusive domain of a few.<sup>86</sup> It is this tension—between the necessity and inevitability of a desire for “home” and the accompanying dangers of that desire—that this book explores. In calling attention to the gap between the realities and the idealization of “home,” in this book I seek to politicize geography, to argue against the notion of an unproblematic geographic location of home, and to reassess our understanding of belonging and origin—which are not always the same thing.<sup>87</sup> The challenge, then, is to find ways of conceptualizing community and home differently without dismissing its appeal and importance in immigrant lives.

## BUILDING ALLIANCES: COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE

Migration is significant in the reconstitution of identities because it allows migrants partially to escape from subject identity(ies) constructed and contained by the laws and cultures of any single nation-state.<sup>88</sup> As a multiply constituted people, Filipino American identities and lives are formed and informed by different notions of “home,” by the struggles to be “at home” in multiple locations, and by overlapping and competing loyalties to various causes in all these homes. The stresses of migration—the struggles against xenophobia, cultural racism, and economic discrimination—have intensified considerably Filipino immigrants’ identification with their place of origin. At the same time, they have also firmly rooted Filipinos in joined struggles with each other and with other kin communities to define and claim *their* place in the United States. In their struggles for a place to be, Filipino immigrants have shifted between multiple and dynamic identities, simultaneously narrowing and enlarging their scope of affiliations. For example, those who do not think of themselves as Filipinos before migration become Filipinos in the United States and/or reinforce narrower regional and linguistic identities. I am particularly interested in documenting the ways in which Filipino American identities are constructed among dialect and regional groups, between immigrant and U.S.-born Filipinos, and among Filipinos of different class background.

To understand the complexities of Filipino American lives, we also need to be attentive to the Filipino community’s interaction with other local communities. Throughout the first half or more of the twentieth century, for all immigrant groups coming into California, dominant white American society served as the primary point of reference for their construction of identities as immigrants. However, for most contemporary immigrants in California, the white American receiving culture, while still prominent, is no longer the only or even the primary frame of reference within which immigrant identities are constructed.<sup>89</sup> In Los Angeles, for example, growing numbers of Asian and Latino immigrants have changed the complexion of race relations, producing a multipolar frame of reference within which both accommodation and differentiation occur. As they have become each other’s neighbors, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos in Los Angeles (and elsewhere) have often collided as they competed with one another for scarce resources.<sup>90</sup> Yet these communities have also coalesced, united by shared interests and by similar experiences as racialized subjects and oppressed class of