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archipelago of care: filipino migrants and global networks

Deidre McKay, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2016, 196pp., ISBN: 978-0-2530-2467-1, £73.00 (Hbk)/ ISBN: 978-0-2530-2483-1, £22.81 (Pbk)

Few migrant populations have been the subject of such volume of research as the Filipino care diaspora. Research on Filipino migrants—largely female, often leaving children behind and working in domestic, commercial care and state health settings—forms the backbone of scholarly literatures on gender and migration, transnational families and migrant domestic and care work. As such, one challenge in constructing a book on the topic must be to provide a novel analysis. This is a challenge to which Deirdre McKay's *An Archipelago of Care: Filipino Migrants and Global Networks* certainly rises.

On the face of it, care is hardly a novel trope in this field. The 'international division of reproductive labour' (Parrenas, 2000), for example, was memorably expressed as 'global care chains' (Hochschild, 2000) involving the reliance of women in richer countries on migrant nannies, who themselves rely on others to care for children left behind. But in exploring the concept of 'care' in the ethnographic context of Kankanaey Filipino migrants in London and in their global social networks, McKay employs both emic and etic perspectives. Care is understood as constituted by affect. 'To care', declares a priest and care worker in the book's opening scene, 'you have to CARE ... When we are cared for, we then can care for others' (p. 1). The subjects of the book emerge as often skilful emotional agents, managing networks of mutual support in order to sustain not just families and investments in the Philippines, but also their own emotional ability to care for their employers and charges. This is underpinned by *inayan*, a Kankanaey principle described as akin to karma, 'a deep sense of self, and one's futures, bound up in one's ability to care for others and to have care refracted back across all one's personal relationships' (p. 37). McKay traces these flows in London, at church, on Facebook, in a community centre, in houses, 'back home' and in transit. These sites form both the structure of the book, each represented in a separate chapter, and also (along with the Philippines itself) constitute the 'archipelago of care' of the book's title. The end result is a distinctive perspective on global processes, and a valuable addition to the growing literature incorporating emotion into understandings of motivations for and experiences of migration.

This book also critically contributes to discussions of migrant vulnerabilities and the complication of the citizen/migrant binary. McKay's respondents are vulnerable—their economic insecurities at global and local levels are often compounded by insecure (or simply irregular) immigration statuses. Their experiences of negotiating the city, relationships, employment, accommodation and transnational connections to manage threats of deportation, day-to-day sustenance and longer-term financial projects provide fascinating insight into life in the global 'shatter zone'—a term denoting areas where people 'took refuge from, avoided, deferred, and

repressed the projects of making a nation-state' (pp. 10–12). Some of the arguments here will be contentious: that, for some migrants, irregularity may have attractions over tax-paying citizenship; or that two-way relationships of care with employers can be sustaining in migrant domestic work (these relationships are often presented as inherently exploitative). But McKay is careful to recognise not only vulnerabilities but also the particular policy and demographic contexts in which these complicated statuses and relationships arise. Hence we hear of a professional woman deciding to give up her secure employment visa to become an irregular domestic/care worker, having been unable to earn enough as a nurse to qualify for citizenship under regulations which, McKay argues, are designed to keep such crucial migrant workers temporary and to encourage circular migration. At the heart of the situation described in the book is the paradox of the contemporary care-immigration nexus in the United Kingdom. Care work (for both the young and the elderly) underpins the economy, but is undervalued and poorly paid to the extent that only migrants who are not attempting to sustain their own family life in London can afford to undertake this work. Irregularity, in this account, directly supports the economy, but irregular migrants are also increasingly targeted by government measures requiring employers and landlords to check that those they employ or to whom they rent have the right to work and live in the UK. Care, for McKay, is what sustains the women with whom she has worked, as they negotiate these social, economic and legal vulnerabilities.

This book will be of interest to scholars concerned with issues of gender and migration, care work and irregular migration. As an accessible ethnographic text, it would also work well in teaching, as it is likely to stimulate debate if paired with contrasting approaches to migrant care work.

references

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- Parrenas, R.**, 2000. Migrant Filipina domestic workers and the international division of reproductive labor. *Gender and Society*, 14(4), pp. 560–580.

Katharine Charsley
University of Bristol

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