

Things Fall Away

Philippine Historical Experience

and the Makings of Globalization



NEFERTI X. M. TADIAR

Things Fall Away

Post-Contemporary Interventions

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Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction Loosed Upon the World i

PART I. Feminization

One Prostituted Filipinas and the Crisis of Philippine Culture 25

Two Women Alone 59

Three Poetics of Filipina Export 103

PART II. Urbanization

Four Modern Refuse in the “City of Man” 143

Five Petty Adventures in (the Nation’s) Capital 183

Six Metropolitan Debris 217

PART III. Revolution

Seven Revolutionary Imagination and the Masses 265

Eight Guerilla Passion and the Unfinished Cultural Revolution 299

Nine The Sorrows of People 333

Notes 379

Bibliography 445

Index 469

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Loosed upon the World

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*

— W. B. YEATS

*For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own
concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.*

— WALTER BENJAMIN

*As this century with its bloodstained record draws to a close, the nineteenth-century
dream of one world has re-emerged, this time as a nightmare.*

— ASHIS NANDY

In 1958, a young Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, published his first novel. An important work in the movement of literary decolonization sweeping West Africa and, more generally, the third world, this novel, *Things Fall Apart*, depicted the disastrous moment of colonization through the historical experience of the Igbo people. Achebe took his title from a poem by the Irish writer W. B. Yeats called “The Second Coming,” which decades earlier had depicted a modern world besieged by turmoil and a sense of impending doom, to convey the sense of anarchy and drowned innocence that imbued the lives of his Igbo characters in the face of the historical destruction of their previous world.¹ A sense of

colonialism's apocalyptic destruction of the life-worlds of entire peoples stoked the imaginations of anti-imperialist national liberation struggles all over the third world. Entwined with this modern sensibility of violent chaos and catastrophic change was a prophetic will to freedom of new nations from the imposed destiny of their conquerors.

Today, fifty years later, the world is proclaimed to be in a similar moment of tremendous, rapid, and unprecedented change, an epochal moment widely understood as globalization. Once again "The Second Coming" comes to mind. For Jean and John Comaroff, anthropologists of South Africa, a "messianic, millennial capitalism" is what is "slouching towards Bethlehem," waiting to be born: "a capitalism that [despite being universally destructive] presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered."²² At the turn of the millennium, globalization appears to threaten with dissolution all the familiar structures and relations of an older modern world, an apocalyptic vision that not paradoxically also bears promises of universal redemption. Now we witness the uncanny return but also transmutation of an older, imperial, some would say totalitarian politics. And it would seem that the world has yielded the "rough beast, its hour come round at last."

In the Philippines, which finds itself both in the midst of and at the edges of this maelstrom, things are indeed falling apart. In the face of the ostensible features of accelerated processes of late modernization and globalization—namely, the feminization of labor and the worldwide movements of this labor, rapid urbanization and the explosion of a surplus floating population, the decimation of the rural peasantry, and the waging and putative defeat of a revolutionary people's war—older cultural forms and social ties, not to mention countless lives, seem to be on the brink of permanent ruin. Crisis becomes common currency for understanding the conditions of contemporary Philippine life.

What in the moment of decolonization was a radicalizing historical insight—Achebe's intimation that colonialism is the foundational crisis that lies at the heart of the felt anarchy and anxiety of Yeats's modern world—has been the shared truth of postindependence countries of the former colonial world in the past forty years. It is perhaps no longer a matter of rare political insight to recognize that the permanent crisis of the third world, as well as of the fourth and second worlds, or more generally the global south, has been the very motor of development of (and ever-immanent menace to) the capitalist first world or

the global north. In the Philippines, crisis has served as the cause of efforts by both the state and radical social movements to steer the course of history in a moment when the world would appear to be in the hands of forces beyond anyone's control. Since the popular deposing of the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, itself a permanent state of emergency built on the worsening economic, social, and political crisis from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, one crisis situation after another has obtained. From attempted military coups to murdered overseas domestic workers, from the crisis of the Philippine Left to the crisis of the new Asian economy, from the kidnappings of Chinese-Filipinos by parapolice criminal networks to the slayings and bombings in Mindanao by paramilitary criminal groups — each crisis claimed as the basis of progressive as well as reactionary actions. Crisis launches both forces: liberatory social movements and state repression. People Power 2, the progressive popular uprising in 2001 that unseated the corrupt presidential regime of Joseph Estrada, is closely followed by Balikatan 02-1, the joint U.S.–Philippine military exercises in the ongoing global war on terrorism. While the first aspired to achieve a new moral social order (civil democracy), the second pretends to protect that same moral social order on behalf of which it wages yet another, now seemingly endless war.

In the meantime, as more and more resources are channeled into this widening gyre of crisis, in grave efforts to keep things together and hold on to familiar and determinate paths of becoming, more and more things fall away from the privileged and ever narrower worlds that remain. Refurbished as well as unreconstructed nationalisms and transnationalisms, battles for state power and civil liberties, identity-based claims to political and economic enfranchisement, liberal-democratic ideals of civil society — such are the familiar trajectories of world-historical agency in these times, trajectories from which all other manner of human and parahuman lives, pasts, presents, and futures, cultural imaginations, and virtual realities are jettisoned. These things fall away, and their barely apprehended importance to our worlds is lost to us, who seek different holds on our immanent futures.

Decolonizing Struggles

Faced with the signs of vanishing everywhere that point to the seemingly inexorable vortex of destruction and disappearance that characterizes our global history, how are we to continue the struggle for freedom against the new fate of these

millennial capitalist times? It seems to me that, in this particular and latest moment of world crisis, we, who live and work in some form of opposition to the orders and imperatives of global hegemonic powers, are in need of a supplement to the decolonizing truth *Things Fall Apart*. *Things Fall Away* is an attempt to provide one such supplementary theory and practice that at once takes after and departs from the decolonizing struggles in which Achebe's literary practice took part, and, more modestly, to offer by means of this analytical method a differently politicized interpretation of the recent history of the Philippines. Recasting some common notions, "the Philippines," "literature," and "historical experience," to this end, this book develops a theory and method of reading experience as living labor that I hope will aid in our collective efforts to come to a new understanding of politics in the contemporary global moment. Indeed, the interpretation of late twentieth-century Philippine transformations that I arrive at through this theoretical perspective provides grounds for the reconceptualization of feminized labor and migration, modern authoritarianism, crony capitalism, civil society, and the cultural practice and political ontology of revolution.

As a key instrument of national liberation movements throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America, third world literatures sought to restore the historical experiences of peoples struggling against the destructive regimes of colonialism and neocolonialism, thereby bringing into being what Dolores Feria has called "the new humanism of the dispossessed."³ Third world literatures were part and parcel of the movement of decolonization to the extent that they sought to unearth and represent these experiences as the enabling means of reclaiming subjective agency and sovereignty in the face of subjugation, dependency, and marginalization on the world stage of history. The emergent culture of struggle of the colonized would consist of this process of freeing into expressivity the whole range of social life that colonialism impeded, if not obliterated. Culture was this very process of creative restitution and expressive action that Frantz Fanon argued was commensurate with the concrete, practical struggle "to bring into existence the history of the nation — the history of decolonization."

This book contends that the task of creating empowered historical subjects through the representation of submerged historical experiences was and continues to be of the utmost necessity. As E. San Juan Jr. argues, "These heterogeneous projects of resistance and revolt, inscribed in poems, stories, *testimonios*, and other performances of those formerly silenced and made invisible, are what ultimately reproduce the 'Third World' as a permanent political-cultural agency

of global transformation . . . these performances can be used to fashion emancipatory constituent subjects who are equipped with ‘a memory of the future,’ a recollection of hopes and dreams from which the future is extrapolated.”⁴ And yet, as important as the task of creating emancipatory subjects remains, equally vital is the task of putting into language modes of experiential practice that fall short of received proper forms of historical subjectivity and social experience and yet serve as crucial means of everyday life struggles. Tangential to the aims of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic forms of political agency, these seemingly obsolescent modes of experience propel and shape the production of the very conditions of life around which organized politics revolve, as they are the inventions of people struggling with those conditions. Putting these diminished experiential practices into language thus becomes a way to contemplate the creative political potentials and alternative social resources that they might spell, potentials and resources that are instead quickly jettisoned in attempts to wrest control of a world gone awry. As crisis abounds and things fall apart, rather than mere anarchy, it is the tangential aims and *poiesis* (the poetic creations) of people’s experiences that are “loosed upon the world,” turning into mere fodder for the making of new universal forms of social being and aspiration—indeed, for the makings of our present globality.

To reconsider the politics of such makings, I tell a Philippine story of world transformation from the perspective of historical experiences that “fall away” from global capitalist and nation-state narratives of development as well as from social movement narratives of liberation. I look at feminist, urban protest, and revolutionary literatures from the 1960s to the 1990s and examine their renderings of oppressive contemporary social conditions of authoritarian rule, feminized labor exploitation, rural peasant tenant relations, and militarism. What I find is that in order to construct proper political subjects capable of transforming history, social movement literatures draw on supplementary modes of experience that serve as vital supports for the material conditions of social life and struggle. However, to the extent that they exceed the valorized forms of political subjectivity defined by feminism, urban activism, and the revolutionary movement, these vital modes of experience are necessarily eschewed by the very political subjects they help to constitute. In rechanneling this experiential labor for the constitution of a proper historical subject, progressive and radical literary works tend to subsume the alterity of those experiential practices into universal forms of subjectivity and agency, which are meaningful within the dominant field of

politics. The clearest example of this can be found in literary articulations in the period after the Second World War of a unitary sovereign nationalist subject as the proper historical agent of an anti-imperialist movement. Much work has been accomplished by historians in subaltern studies in deconstructing this unitary nationalist subject constructed by the elite classes of newly independent former colonies and, further, in uncovering the cultural strategies of resistance of “the people” whom such a nationalist subject purportedly represents (but, as Enrique Dussel says of Eurocentric history in relation to indigenous history, effectively “covers over”). My own work is a continuation and critical extension of this subaltern studies project in relation to nonhegemonic, dissident national subjects in the contemporary period, and as articulated not in historiography but in literature.

Literature and Political Community

*They took away the language of my blood,
Giving me one “more widely understood.”
More widely understood! Now Lips can never
Never with the Soul-of-Me commune
Moments there are I strain, but futile ever
To flute my feelings through some Native Tune.*

— TRINIDAD TARROSA-SUBIDO

Literature is here not to be taken as a representation of the lived experiences of particular people. Works of postcolonial literature are rather to be viewed as experiments in broader social projects, indeed, in the very imagining of modern political communities, most evidently of the nation but not exclusively so. Insofar as postindependent national literature is actively involved in projects that construct new social relations where these would seem to be impeded by the retarding forces of a continuing colonialism, literary works will necessarily draw on subjective practices and experiential modes that exceed the very projects whose aims they are called upon to further.

A brief episode in what is considered the foundational novel of the Philippine nation, José Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*, limns a mode of experience that will be recognized, a hundred years later, as the mode of the “other politics” at work in nationalism. In this episode, the grotesque Doña Consolacion, the native

woman whose outrageous pretensions to Spanish identity include the denial that she can understand Tagalog, orders the tragic native mother, Sisa, to sing for her. As Sisa sings the plaintive melody of the *kundiman*, a melancholy love song form which in the listening soldiers “awakened memories of times when they were still uncorrupted,” Doña Consolacion’s mocking laughter turns to pensive thought: “The voice, the meaning of the words and the song itself, impressed her. That arid and dried-up heart was perhaps thirsty for rain. She understood the song well: ‘The sadness, the cold and the moisture falling from heaven wrapped in night’s mantle,’ according to the *kundiman*, seemed to descend on her heart as well.” In perfect Tagalog, she orders Sisa to stop singing. Suddenly aware that her emotional and linguistic response has betrayed her to her native servant and feeling ashamed, she throws herself into a violent dancing frenzy, trying to force Sisa to join in her exorcist ritual by whipping at the poor woman’s feet.

Doña Consolacion’s denied affective sensibility in this episode depicts a cultural mode of experience that Reynaldo Ileto famously interprets as forms of *awa* (mercy/pity) and *damay* (empathetic grief), which figure prominently in peasant millenarian movements against Spanish and U.S. colonialisms in the early twentieth century. In Ileto’s own subalternist argument, *awa* and *damay* were experiential modes that significantly animated and shaped Philippine nationalism, even as they could be viewed by bourgeois nationalist history only as backward, atavistic practices that needed to be brought in line with more rationalist conceptions of nationalist politics. While Rizal himself propagated a modern, Enlightenment vision of nationalist subjectivity, his literary works nevertheless invoked such cultural practices of grief and pity in order to construct the proper *ilustrado* nationalism embodied in his central character, Crisostomo Ibarra. The visceral power of Sisa’s singing of the *kundiman* — the expressive force of what Tarrosa-Subido, writing under U.S. colonialism, grasped as “some Native Tune” — can thus be understood as a figuration of a mode of experience that is otherwise excised from the representation of the proper historical subject of nationalism, even as it is a motivating force of nationalism’s construction.

In postcolonial theory, subalternity is identifiable only as traces or fade-out points of realities that, in their radical alterity and absolute incommensurability to notions of agency and subjectivity within an imperial episteme, can never be recovered or restored. In contrast to this notion of subalternity, the subjective practices and experiential modes that I argue fall away from the representations

of proper political subjects in social movement literatures are figured and enacted in those literatures out of the very materials of concrete reality they ethnographically render. It is precisely as this figural enactment that I write of “experience.” As figural enactments, such experiences take on the consistency and status of things known and acted upon, apprehensible realities factored into the conduct of life. Placed in expressible form, they have worldly effects on actual social relations (though it should be said that literary renderings do not exhaust the experiences they depict).

If I have therefore depended on the powerful conceptual premise of the foreclosure accomplished by narrative and representation that has undergirded some of the most important critiques of feminist, antiracist, postcolonial, and queer scholarship in the past few decades, I have at the same time importantly heeded a few of these critiques’ attempts, beyond the careful tracking of the operations of foreclosure, to seek in the fragments and debris that mark the limits of hegemonic narratives and representations the expressible elements of unrecognized and overlooked modes of viable life. On this view, one of my main objectives in this book has been to carefully attend to the varied, creative potential of subjective practices that socially oriented and social movement literatures attempt to figuratively capture and yet tend to diminish in the fabulation of proper historical subjects. Often viewed as atavistic and mystified habits and therefore as forms of weakness and self-oppression that need to be overcome, these devalued, supplemental experiential practices nevertheless importantly create and transform the very material, social structures in which feminists, urban activists, and revolutionary forces actively seek to intervene. Very importantly, such diminished experiences have helped to bring about broad social changes in ways that these groups could not foresee. Under the dominant sway of capitalist imperatives, supplementary modes of experience have wrought the transformed conditions of the national “prostitution” economy, the diaspora of domestic labor, the explosion of the urban informal economy, the rise of crony capitalism, the metropolitanist restructuring of the nation’s capital, the deracination of the peasantry, the modernization of social relations in the countryside, the democratization of the nation, and the emergence of a permanent political state of emergency. These fallout experiences articulated in contemporary Philippine literatures can therefore serve as devices for tracking the dynamics of political and economic transformation, which they invisibly mediate.

In this book, “the Philippines” serves as one important theoretical place from

which to view and understand the larger world within which it is situated. On the margins of the new industrializing economy of the Asia Pacific, as a principal source of undervalued labor both for the region and for the world at large, as home to one of the few living revolutionary communist movements in the world, and as a key geopolitical base for cold war and post-cold-war U.S. global politics, the Philippines is the site of heightened dynamics and social contradictions in the universalizing processes that shaped the last few decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. The Philippines therefore affords a view of local social conditions that underwrite the nation's own participation in the transnational processes that have resulted in, for example, the establishment of a new international division of labor, the emergence of an urban-based transnational finance economy, and the political democratization and neoliberalist restructuring of formerly authoritarian nation-states. This peripheral story of Philippine life brings into focus the liminal makings of globalization, its endgame, and its present afterlives. By attending to the experiential predicaments and subjective hopes of those relegated to the global undersides, this story speaks broadly to the concerns of other emergent disenfranchised social groups and the similar predicaments they find themselves in, in shared contexts of global capitalism. If, after all, the contradictions of global capitalism first appear in the peripheries (by which I do not principally refer to geopolitically fixed territories or essentially defined social bodies, but to zones of subaltern activity that are to be found also in the centers of capital), then it is also there that we can find both the creative capacities of people struggling to surpass the limits of the life to which they are condemned and the apparatuses of capture minted by capital and state powers to appropriate those creative capacities and their political potential.

Historical Experience

Examining Philippine literary depictions of contemporary social problems, I ask, what is the role of specific historical experiences in bringing about and shaping the large-scale transformation of the political and socioeconomic organization of Philippine life in the last thirty years of the twentieth century? The aim of this inquiry is to attend to the political seeds of an alternative future, which already exist in the form of devalued social modes of experience. As Fredric Jameson writes, "The seeds of the future already exist within the pres-

ent and must be conceptually disengaged from it, both through analysis and through political praxis (the workers of the Paris Commune, Marx once remarked in a striking phrase, ‘*have no ideals to make*’; they merely sought to disengage emergent forms of new relations from the older capitalist social relations in which the former had already begun to stir).⁵ My own analytical method follows this insight. It consists of conceptually disengaging emergent modes of social experience from older forms of politically valorized subjectivity. These emergent modes of social experience are seeds of the future to the extent that they are the means by which people extricate themselves from and thereby impel the transformation of dominant social relations. Although in contrast to Jameson I would argue that the temporality of social relations is not so straightforward. Emergent modes may well consist of older forms, which the progressive forms of (modern) experience may have supplanted or at least pushed into the recesses of “backward,” “developing” social subjects, just as older modes emerge as the fallout of the new. Thus, the seeds of the future may have long incubated in the everyday practical memories we carry with us and invoke in our literature.

By “historical experience” I do not mean only people’s collective responses to the objective social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. I also mean the collective subjective practices they engage in that help to produce and remake those objective conditions. Experience consists of this human *activity* of mediation between self and social reality, that is to say, the cognitive, semiotic, affective, visceral, and social practices of relating to the world that individuals engage in as part of the process of producing themselves. These practices of mediation, which are socially organized, help to constitute both individual selves and the socioeconomic conditions to which they are subject. In this sense, experience does not belong to some deeply personal realm; subjective forms are products of this mediating activity as much as socioeconomic structures are products of labor. Experience is to be understood, as Teresa de Lauretis writes, “in the general sense of a *process* by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed.”⁶ In my view, this process results not only in the effect of subjectivity, but also in the effect of worldly realities. To revise Louis Althusser’s famous thesis, there is no subject except in and for a material world. This does not mean that the relation between subject and the world is one of adequation or, as in Althusser’s view, a matter of reproduction.⁷ Insofar as the material world consists of social relations of domination and subordination, the experiential process is at once the means and site of social struggle. The process by which

subjects are constituted is crucial to the maintenance and transformation of the world in and for which they are subjects.

In Part I, for example, I discuss the experiential practices of syncretic sociability, or *kapwa* (shared subjectivity), engaged in by Filipinas that contributes to their feminization and commodification within and outside of their communities. These practices of *kapwa* can be seen to fundamentally support the conditions of state-sponsored prostitution that obtained during the period of the Marcos dictatorship and thereby to demonstrate, against progressive political analyses of the complete objectification of women for and by capital, the productive power of “prostituted” Filipinas. In a second historical moment, these same practices of extended subjectivity and permeable selfhood are to be gleaned in the faithful and fate-playing actions of great numbers of Filipina women leaving their homes and the nation to fuel the “warm-body,” or domestic labor export industry. Superseding the sex tourism and light-manufacturing export industries as the primary dollar-revenue-generating industries of the national economy in the postauthoritarian period, the domestic labor export industry and its determinate role in globalization can be understood as in no small measure the consequence of the experiential practices of self-making on the part of an emergent Filipina diaspora and the revitalized traditions of personhood, cosmic power, and spiritual mediation on which these experiential practices depend. Through their literary rendering of these devalued yet absolutely vital experiential practices, Filipina writers make these other social relations available as potential bases of new political movements.

New and old modes of experience and subjective practices operating in emergent social formations are therefore to be viewed as cultural means of structuring and restructuring dominant social relations of production. *Things Fall Away* argues that the historical potential of experience as a social activity lies in its creative character. Feminists have long argued for recognizing the creative power, if not strictly value-productive character, of activities understood through the rubric of feminine reproduction.⁸ They have also argued for the fundamental importance of activities contained within the realm of the private to the political and economic activities comprising the putatively broader realm of the public sphere. Bringing these feminist arguments together with Marxist arguments about exploitation as the modus operandi of capitalism, I view social experience as a form of creative or living labor that is subject to exploitation. As Antonio Negri defines it, “Exploitation is precisely the seizure, the centralization

and the expropriation of the form and the product of social cooperation, and therefore it is an economic determination in a very meaningful way—but its form is political.”⁹ Systemic political and economic structures are predicated on the organized expropriation of the creative labor of social experience through sociocultural logics of nationhood, gender, sexuality, race, religion, and other categories of social difference and exclusion. Expropriation does not refer to the theft of any specific quantity of surplus labor time, as the Marxist labor theory of value would understand it. Rather, it refers to the subsumption of the immeasurable time of social cooperation, which feminists and third world intellectuals have shown to be indispensable to the productivity of labor and therefore to the creation of wealth and power.¹⁰

Indeed, what Marx understood about land and other natural resources—that they are fundamental means of people’s life production and self-production, which, through processes of force as well as capitalist development, both social and technological, they are continually dispossessed of—some, including Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Jonathan Beller, understand to be true of technologies and social practices of immaterial, intellectual, and sensorial labor. While attention to activities once classified as unproductive work, including consumption, as labor is often paid in reference to the formalization of such work under post-Fordist economies, Marxist-feminist thinking about culture, social cooperation, sex/affective, and reproductive women’s work (Maria Mies, Claudia von Werlhof, Victoria Bennholdt-Thomsen, Ann Ferguson, Gayatri Spivak) has importantly demonstrated that capitalist accumulation has historically and continuously depended on the “primitive accumulation” of “non-capitalist” resources and work, embodied in the naturalized forces comprised of the activities and personhoods of women, colonized natives, and slaves.¹¹ Such thinking builds on Rosa Luxemburg’s insight about how, in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism, capital needed noncapitalist strata to reproduce and expand beyond phases of simple profit. Contrary to her expectation, capitalism did not reach the limit of this expansion with the colonization of the entire world and the incorporation of the rest of the world’s territorial noncapitalist strata within the command of capital (a limit that would have constituted the conditions for capitalism’s collapse). What was beyond Luxemburg’s purview is the fact that capital had not exhausted other forms of noncapitalist strata as continuing sources of appropriable value. Besides spheres of labor reproduction delegated to women and to traditional

or underdeveloped and semicolonial communities (including racialized underclasses within metropolitan countries), capital has found and produced new noncapitalist strata as sites of appropriation of value. As the work of Jonathan Beller argues, capital “burrows” into the body, “mining” it of value, a phenomenon remarked upon by others as the absorption of “the production of subjectivity” in the processes of capitalism.

While capitalism has long relied on the noneconomic practices of colonialism, both of internal and external populations and their subsistence economies, as a necessary part of its logic of accumulation, it is certainly true that contemporary capitalism has found ways to incorporate arenas of human activity that had remained outside of its formal productive economy (such as domestic labor and other service work in the former colonies) within its new global industries, just as it has commodified natural resources that had remained part of the commons (such as water, seeds, and genetic material).¹² If we denaturalize these newly capitalized human and nonhuman resources and understand them not as freely appropriable nature but as the products of organized sentient, bodily capacities and energies (forms of cooperation that traverse human agency), then it is possible to consider social experience as an important force and means of life-production of those very human and natural resources.

The point is not so much to expand the concept of labor to subsume all human experience under this category, but rather to utilize the notion of labor as appropriable life-making social capacities and as a theoretico-political standpoint to examine the role of immaterial and bodily practices of experience of marginalized social groups in contemporary relations of accumulation and production. As I show in this book, just as the national sex work and domestic labor industries depend on the expropriation of the social experiential practices of women, so does the specific regime of accumulation achieved by the Marcos state known as crony capitalism depend on the expropriation of the social experiential practices of informal labor. In Part II, I discuss the latter experience in terms of adventurism, the fate-playing, speculative practices of the urban excess or lumpenproletariat, which I argue contributes both to the activist ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s and to the crony capitalist regime that establishes itself on the basis of this political crisis.

In addition to the notion of historical experience as socially organized and socially producing subjective practices (experience as living labor), I am also working with the notion of historical experience as the concrete articulation

of connections between subjective activity and socioeconomic structures (one might say, a reassemblage of heterogeneous symbolic and material practices) that provides a dynamic situated picture of a historical moment.¹³ Jun Cruz Reyes, the author of a novelistic memoir of urban life immediately following the declaration of martial law, demonstrates this notion of historical experience in the picture of authoritarian “development” that he creates out of his pedestrian meandering. Adopting the mode of life of the urban poor, Reyes’s protagonist becomes a scavenger, at once refuse and refuse collector, creating a narrative collage of the unassimilable residues of Marcos’s New Society in order to map the corrupt, repressive regime on which urban development depends. Similarly, in Part II, I reassemble constitutive connections between the liminal urban experiences articulated by Jun Cruz Reyes, Jose Lacaba, and Tony Perez and the transformation of Metro Manila from national capital to protoglobal city. In doing so, I am able, like Reyes, Lacaba, and Perez, to provide a dynamic picture of late Philippine urban modernity from the point of view of its human refuse.

If modernity is the project of obtaining a universal synchronicity of historical time, a project that entails the separation and hierarchic differentiation of social space and the sloughing off of populations — the production of surplus peoples — as its refuse, this is also a project that demands the devaluation and elimination of the diversity of times. Temporality is cleft between a time of history and times of waste. In the picture of urban modernity rendered by these authors, times of waste are not only the fallout of the time of catastrophe that is development; they are also diminished and disposable forms of life.

To render the historical experience of late modern urbanization from the side of these disposable times and lives, I look for tangential experiential practices that, while participating in the making of a dominant order, nevertheless elude its logical categories of social and political agency. In the liberative claim to a transcendent human value as a measure of coping with urban sexual abjection that Perez articulates, for example, I find the practice of what I call a queer faith in frivolous material details (*kiyeme*), in times spared from exchange. These practices of faith in excess matter entail another kind of self as well as another possible form of historical agency, than the self-possessed, self-valuing, and truth-bearing masculine subject that Perez politically constructs as a liberated gay subject. Out of these practices of faith, Perez pieces together a self that is commensurate with the new metropolitan subject supporting the emergent social order of global urbanism — the subject that is called civil society. And yet the very tangential

experience of *kiyeme* through which this subject thrives can find no legitimate place within such an order. It is from the side of this contradictory historical experience that we can see the hidden human costs of metropolitan achievement.

Historical experience is thus both the imaginary, affective, sociosubjective activity that impels and shapes prevailing relations of production in a particular sociohistorical formation and the hermeneutic perspective that recognizes alternative agencies in the making of history, which such activity affords. In Part III, I discuss the way outmoded or chiliastic spiritual practices continue to operate within, even as they exceed, the Messianic structure of experience of revolutionary struggle. Though diminished by party and Left criticism as semifeudal habits, practices of spiritual mediumship and of cult value are shown in revolutionary literature to operate as affective technologies that make possible the everyday life of the movement. A consideration of the fundamental role that these same affective technologies played in both the so-called spiritual revolution of the middle class that ousted Marcos and the paramilitary vigilante violence that followed on the heels of democratization demonstrates the broader unfinished process of cultural transformation, which the movement played a central part in shaping. It provides a glimpse of the surplus cultural resources invented within the course of revolutionary struggle whose political possibilities remain unexhausted by progressive political organization and strategy.

The surplus of cultural resources generated out of the historical experience of social struggles attests to the surplus of meaning and activity that is intrinsic to experience. In the revolutionary movement, such surplus can be found in the form of surplus life that is produced through rituals of radicalized grief and the invocation of what I call divine sorrow, serving as the very means of continuing struggle in the face of fatal losses incurred in war. And yet, even as practices of revolutionary experience play an important role in the production of existing conditions of struggle, they necessarily exceed their role as means of existing life, even of existing hopes. Surpassing their utility for the present, experiential practices of struggle can become seeds of the future or seeds that fall by the wayside of history. What we make of such practices, just as what we do with real seeds (“as the site and symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of life”), will shape the fate of our struggles.¹⁴ If we are not to be contained by the destinies of our own age, it is worth remembering what third world postcolonial and antiracist intellectuals have foregrounded as the modern foundational role and as yet unrealized political promise of impeded life possibilities, desires, and

subjectivities—ontologies that have historically been prevented from coming into being, or into presencing, by symbolic as well as material orders of domination and exploitation. From this renewed standpoint of dispossessed historical experience we are thus led to envision forms of political action and alternative futures that are at once immanent in and yet seemingly outside of the dominant historical imaginations of existing social movements.

Literature and Experience

The very concept of historical experience, which stems from the political exigencies of the present moment, allows a sustained consideration of the ways in which seemingly tangential subjective practices in peripheral social formations such as the Philippines participate in local makings of global subjects and their universal forms and conditions of possibility. It allows us to read social movement literatures as themselves kinds of “cultural software” for the transformation of dominant social relations. In this endeavor these literatures do not merely represent or thematize the historical experiences of existing social subjects (for whom they are means of expression); they also deploy socially shared modes of experience and subjective practices as a way of creating new social subjects with transformative historical agency. They are, in this regard, technological interventions in the process of subjective production of existing social relations.

Almost all the literature I analyze here regards itself precisely as an instrument of subjective change, though often it articulates this task as the changing of consciousness. Since the anticolonial movement against the Spanish empire, Philippine literature has been compelled toward the evocation of transformative historical experience. Besides decoding the social and cultural organization of power at a given moment, it has articulated through the historical experiences it renders standpoints for the coming into being of new social actors who would change the material conditions in which they find themselves. This renewed attention to historical experience not merely as submerged truth-content but also as practical social media has valuable repercussions for thinking more generally about strategies of political struggle in contemporary postcolonial contexts. It also allows a reconsideration of the potential of postcolonial literatures for putting into language vital forms of acting and being in the world that fall from the purview of the modern worlds they have helped to create.

An attention to literature as imaginary works forces us to consider the work

of mediation, not least of all the scholar's, when we seek truths in the world. Reading literature enables us to move away from the false typicality that more conventional works of anthropology and sociology tend to read and establish by means of oral testimonies, real stories of real people.¹⁵ This typicality also tends to inform minority histories, in which stories come to express the life and life-movement of a larger, preconstituted collective identity, conceived through the given form of a hegemonic political subject. As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes, "Minority histories, one may say, in part express the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies."¹⁶ To the extent that they aim to be adequate to an independently existing historical, sociocultural reality, accounts of Filipino culture and social life participate in the hegemony of realist and historicist representation that continues to prevail over academic knowledge production.

Although it uses literary texts as ciphers of experiential technologies, this book is not primarily concerned with the institution of literature and its products and values, or even with the political economy of world literature. Neither, however, is it concerned with literature as a transparent example of culture, conceived as a realm separate from the realm of politics and economics or as a repository of "the touch of the real," which can be excavated and seized by a literary studies seeking to recover lived life.¹⁷ Even as anthropology and history increasingly turn to literary sources to support claims about the discursive, cultural constructions of the real (while, conversely, literary criticism turns to historical archives and real events to do the same), this book does not use literature as a representation of lived experience.¹⁸ As Gilles Deleuze writes, "Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond any livable or lived experience."¹⁹ I understand writing as a practical experiment in the possibilities of experience — an exercise in becoming — that necessarily draws on prevailing social modes of experience in order to create those possibilities.²⁰

On this view, literature is a worldly artifact, subject to specific and general rules of production and both limited and open to particular kinds of relations with other worldly artifacts, such as film and music, as well as cooking utensils, overpasses, and graffiti, newspapers and political treatises. Thus I do not look to literature for typicality or representable realities; I look to it rather for creative possibility. Creative possibility recasts lived experience so that it no longer takes the form of incontrovertible social fact but instead takes on the experimental character of literature itself. Literary works are figurations of possibilities of life

that authors exercise in their imaginations of historical experience; in this way, they are also theoretical perspectives on both dominant and residual cultural logics of social life. In the analyses I undertake here, literary works are thus treated as both ethnographic material (ethnography of social imagination as much as of actually lived life) and theoretical resource for writing an alternative history of the present, a history that foregrounds the creative work and transformative potential of marginalized social experiences and their unrecognized role in the making of the contemporary world.

At the same time, literature is itself a technology that limits while it articulates what Sylvia Wynter calls specific “genres of being human” in the interest of involvement in truthful human experience.²¹ As Michel Foucault argues, our present forms of discourse, including literature, are constrained by a will to knowledge and a need to validate themselves on the basis of true discourse. Similar to what Foucault lauds as increasing contemporary attention to discontinuities and interruptions beneath the great continuities of thought and discourse, my interest in the discontinuities of plot, subject formation, and logics of social relation lies in the uncovering of forces of flight, points of insubordination, behaviors, capacities, and conducts that exceed or escape the structures governing political narratives and the proper subjectivities of nation and social movements. My method of reading is thus not a matter of reading *against* the grain but rather *within* the grain of manifest representation, attending to those moments and gestures that stick to the analytical comb, appearing interruptive or out of joint or simply superfluous to the works’ proper aims. In thus attending to such tangential tendencies within the representation of historical experience as elements of virtual life-worlds that might yet be organized into reimaged political claims, we make way for “the living openness of history.”²²

Things Fall Away is divided into three parts, each focusing on a zone of historical experience of late Philippine modernity. These zones — namely, the feminization of labor, accelerated urbanization, and revolution — serve as sites for viewing the social, economic, and political transformations that have taken place since the early 1970s. Each part is composed of three chapters delineating the transformations experienced in a particular social zone in several moments. In the first part,

“Feminization,” these moments are marked as (1) the restructuring of the Philippines into a female-fueled, export-oriented prostitution economy from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s and (2) the transformation of this economy into a domestic labor (or warm-body) export industry from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. In the second part, “Urbanization,” these two moments are marked as (1) the developmentalist modernization of Metro Manila as the national capital under the Marcos regime and (2) the transformation of the metropolis into a global city in the post-Marcos period. In the last part, “Revolution,” these two moments are marked as (1) the generation of a radical movement underground and the waging of a revolutionary people’s war against the state and the ruling socioeconomic order and (2) the decimation of the revolutionary forces by an intensified counterinsurgency campaign and the preemptive weakening of the movement through the supposed restoration of democracy brought about by a revolt led by the middle class that deposed Marcos in 1986.

In each part, I examine the construction of the proper political subjects produced by the respective literary/social movements of feminism, urban activism, and revolution. I trace constitutive relations between, on the one hand, the modes of experience thematized and deployed in the construction of these political subjects and, on the other, the dominant socioeconomic relations against which these dissident subjects struggled. I then examine the subaltern subjective practices that fall away from the universal forms of political agency that these proper political subjects aspire to. These universal forms of political agency are delimited by the social categories of the commodity, money, and capital. Wynter argues that bourgeois European humanism inaugurated an economic conception of being human that now dominates our experience of ourselves, a domination propagated and furthered not least by the institution of literature. As she writes: “The *economic* conception of the human—*Man*— . . . unifies us as a species in *economically* rather than, as before, in *theologically* absolute terms.”²³ Wynter argues further that “it is the bioeconomic conception of the human that we inscript and institute by means of our present disciplines and their epistemic order, as Foucault shows so incisively, that determines the hegemony of the *economic* system over the social and political systems—even more, that mandates the functioning of the capitalist mode of production as the everyday expression of that hegemony.”²⁴ It is on this view that we can understand the universal categories of commodity, money, and capital as dominant social representational

categories that serve as measures by which certain experiential practices fall into subalternity and, correspondingly, as the interpretative horizons beyond which it behooves us to imagine other possibilities for political agency.

Global South Theory

The specific modalities of social life in a seemingly peripheral social formation such as the Philippines do not merely demonstrate the localization or vernacularization of global forms, as many accounts of alternative modernities would have it. Rather, these modalities of social life provide hermeneutic elements for understanding the productive dimensions of local, cultural activity and, by extension, the unrecognized productive forces of globalization itself. (If globalization is the very process of generalization and universalization of life forms through the interpellation of diverse cultural practices, Philippine authors are explicitly as well as tacitly involved in social projects that are themselves part of these processes insofar as they have universalist political aims.) But this is not a localist argument, to the extent that I very much rely on the analytical resources generated out of other postcolonial or global south contexts. Scholarly works on minority contexts and the historical experiences of slavery and immigration in the United States as well as transnational feminist works in Egypt, for example, provide important resources and affiliative solidarity for thinking about overseas Filipina domestic labor and contemporary nonsecularist forms of belonging; other works on political forms and informal work and non-work in the contexts of Puerto Rico, Cameroon, and Tanzania inform my interpretation of urban informal labor and adventurism; and revolutionary imagination in Latin America and China shapes my views of the Philippine revolutionary movement. These works of and from the global south, as the site of some of the most vigorous processes of labor exploitation and social dispossession as well as some of the most vibrant historical and contemporary social movements in the world today, have shaped the hermeneutic possibilities I have found in the Philippine context. In this collective endeavor to understand the periphery of the advanced capitalist world beyond Eurocentric accounts of it, I find an emergent theory of hidden and unacknowledged productive forces of the global economy.

Thus, features of postmodernity that appear to characterize some of the historical experiences I describe here can be seen to derive to a great extent from the inventions and innovations of marginalized global peoples struggling to mate-

rially imagine themselves out of present, discrepant conditions of modernity.²⁵ Only through hermeneutic perspectives afforded by subaltern historical experiences of globalization can these inventions and innovations and their tangential roles in the making of generalized forms of globality such as postmodernity be recognized, hopefully to be recast in the directions of histories that are truly alternative to the ones now available to us. In the mode of creative restitution proposed here, experiences that seem destined for disappearance and loss will no longer be the inevitable leavings of those proper liberatory struggles that, from the distance of an achieved global system, appear to have failed. Rather, they can become the very means to realize as yet untried, if not unimagined, viable, just modes of social life.

Unlike early subaltern studies work, I locate cultural subalternity not in clearly delineated realms of indigenous or traditional practice outside of capitalist structures but rather precisely *within* capitalist processes and relations. This book is premised on the idea that the outsides of capitalism are everywhere to be found in cultural practices in the moment prior to their subsumption by universal capitalist forms. “Outside,” then, refers not to a particular spatial or social location on the field of political exchange but to a missed temporal dimension subsisting within and yet different from the time of capital. It refers to what Dussel describes as the seemingly trivial, useless, and unproductive practices of people’s experiential activity, which remain invisible to the capitalist economy and continue to “bypass the oppressor’s ‘universal culture.’”²⁶ If, as Fanon reminds us, “every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time,” it is by understanding these cultural practices within the diversity of their times — what appear here as the times of waste and of suffering as well as the time of castaways, of passion and divine sorrow — that we can view the dynamism of human creativity and struggle.

Raymond Williams writes, “No mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts the full range of human practice, human energy, human intention.”²⁷ The recognition of those dimensions of human practice, energy, and intention that are *not* exhausted depends on conceptual apparatuses provided by their practitioners and on the epistemological/cosmological instruments they employ. These practitioners are not a unified group — they are socialities in the making, socialities whose constitutive limits are created and defined by the very structures of experience they invent and draw upon in the course of their social

(not simply class) struggles. Members of that middling stratum known as the postcolonial petty bourgeoisie, the authors discussed here show their participation in these struggles as they attempt to go beyond the imaginary limits of their own social destinies, becoming in the course of these struggles, among other things, feminists, activists, and revolutionaries. In doing so, they show themselves to be part of the very forces creating the dynamism of changing Philippine social relations.

The growing global social polarities and antagonisms everywhere remarked upon are thus produced by people themselves, not merely by the inhuman structures of capitalism and other hypostatized agents of oppression. In the literary works I analyze here, we witness this negative kind of social agency, which is infrequently commented upon in the celebratory accounts of agency as resistance that abound. Here we see liberatory practices intricately intertwined with practices of devaluation, diminishment, and suppression. On the other hand, social practices that appear to support the material conditions of prostitution, crony capitalism, and semifeudal social relations, which stand readily condemned from the available moral-political positions of progressive thought, are shown to yield other political potentials, creative cultural resources that are continually stolen by dominant social groups and then used by these groups to make damning moral judgments against their inventors.

This is a tale of dispossession and lost potential, told, like many other tales of dispossession and loss, with some measure of anger, some measure of sadness, and some measure of hope. In my estimation, efforts to remake the world, not from a transcendent or idealist site of politics but rather from within an ever-compromised yet also ever-promising world, must have these measures — anger, sadness, hope, such paltry words considering what they might invoke and what changes the experiences of tangential life might yet bring about.

PART I Feminization

Prostituted Filipinas and the Crisis of Philippine Culture

During the 1980s, a decade since the beginning of Ferdinand Marcos's authoritarian regime, a bad joke was making rounds in the Philippines: "Gas, rice, sugar — everything is going up! The only things coming down are panties!" What people were remarking upon in this bit of tendentious humor was the massive growth of prostitution that had taken place since the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1972 and that had consequently earned Manila the reputation of being the sex capital of the world. As disclosed by the word "panties," the sexual goods on the market were not ungendered; they were almost exclusively female. During this period, between three hundred thousand and five hundred thousand prostituted women were working in the areas surrounding the U.S. bases, impelling one U.S. soldier to remark, "Pussy, that's what the Philippines is all about."¹

In this misogynist, homophobic, racist worldview, pussy is not only what the Philippines *has*, it is what the Philippines *is*. The interpretation of this particular nation as "female" sex owes its deplorable truth to what I have elsewhere called a heterosexist fantasy of political-economic relations and practices at work among nations.² In this libidinal new world order, in which gendered sexualities are

signifiers of the organizing principles of national economies and their political status in the international community, the Philippines functions as a hostess nation, catering to the demands and desires of her clients — multinational capital and the U.S. government and military. That the national economic crisis should be depicted by Filipinos themselves as the clearance sale of female sexual goods thus comes as no surprise.³ In this period, prostitution became the central metaphor for the state-directed turning over of the national economy to export-oriented industrialization and tourism, which meant, for those who vigorously objected, turning the national body — its people, its resources — over to multinational capital dominated by the United States. Prostituted women thus became the symptoms of the crisis of the nation. They were not only specific instances of the general debasing, corrupt, and corrupting enterprise overseen by the state, but also the symbolic embodiment of the inconsistencies threatening the ideal consistency of the nation, a consistency conceived in the moral, political, and economic terms of sovereignty and integrity. The figure of the prostitute becomes the paradigmatic figure of the crisis of Philippine culture to the extent that the national economy drives its people to the same kind of living. As it was once put to me, “We are a nation of prostitutes.” Taking the synecdochic part of the nation in crisis, the prostituted woman is the figure for the sacrifice of one’s moral integrity, conceived as feminine sexuality, and the trampling of one’s sovereignty, conceived as masculine authority, losses which the culture, as a result of its state-keepers’ betrayal, now suffers.

The Crisis of Culture

The discourse of the crisis of Philippine culture is not new. It is as old as the concept of Philippine culture. That is because the anticolonial nation is itself born of crisis, defined by crisis, and, to the extent that it is successful in maintaining itself, perpetuating and perpetuated by crisis. Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan explain the inclination of postcolonial governments to generate narratives of national crisis: “By repeatedly focusing anxiety on the fragility of the new nation, its ostensible vulnerability to every kind of exigency, the state’s originating agency is periodically reinvoked and ratified, its access to wide-ranging instruments of power in the service of national protection continually consolidated.”⁴ Certainly, this was demonstrated by Marcos’s constant invocation of the

communist threat with the intention of securing for himself a permanent presidency. The crises that beset the nation are, however, many, and not necessarily invoked by the state. Marcos's own narrative was a response precisely to the crisis posed by a competing narrative of crisis, deployed by the anti-imperialist nationalisms of bourgeois and socialist social movements alike. To the anti-imperialist nationalists, Philippine culture was suffocating under the weight of Western powers, duped by colonial mentality, weakened through brain drain, alienated and divided from itself, all to the economic and political detriment of the people. In Renato Constantino's version of this narrative, a version widely held in the wake of national political independence "granted" by the United States in 1946, true Philippine culture was itself oppressed, prevented from coming into authentic, unalienated, and empowered being: "Victims of cultural Westernization, we suffer a crisis of identity as well."⁵

The narrative of cultural crisis deployed by radical nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s and directly addressed by the Marcos regime's own nationalist cultural mythology did not take on an explicitly female form. The gendered and sexual presumptions of this narrative are, however, already implicit in the representation of a culture rendered impotent by its multiple personality, its lack of identity and sovereignty, what the nationalist statesman Claro M. Recto described as its incomplete separation from and lingering dependence on the United States and its servile mentality and hysterical obsession with what Americans thought. Under the new international economic order of the 1970s and 1980s, years during which the Philippines mounted developmentalist economic projects that invited foreign capital investment, the crisis of culture comes to be expressed through the gendered and sexual imagery of prostitution. Feminized bodies and natural resources, which are rightfully the territory and domain of the nation, are immorally used by multinational capital. Under the new global order of the 1980s and 1990s, the crisis of culture comes to be expressed through the gendered and sexual imagery of overseas domestic work. The threat is now globalization and diasporic dispersion, and the threatened are conceived less in terms of body and territory than in terms of capacity and ethnicity. As crucial elements of the cultural order, mothers, sisters, and daughters who take their reproductive caring skills elsewhere are seen as causing the disintegration not only of their own families, but, by logical extension, of the values and indeed the moral fabric of Philippine society.⁶ In short, what is a crisis of cultural sovereignty within a

world of nationalisms and internationalisms becomes, within a world of post-nationalisms and cosmopolitanisms, a crisis of cultural dislocation, diffusion, and dysfunction. Throughout, “culture” is the “loss” of the nation, a loss embodied and effected by Filipinas and shaped by the forces of globalizing capital.

Considerable work has been done on the signifying roles of genders and sexualities in the making of various nationalisms, whether of revolutions or of nation-states. Much of this work has been on the representations—tropes and images—of gender and sex deployed in discourses of the nation, discourses which are recognized to have material effects on actual men and women. As bearers, keepers, and guardians of cultural traditions and values and national identity, women and the meanings of women become foregrounded in discourses of crisis. In much of this work, however, meanings of gender and sexuality are understood to serve as “vehicles of social and political commentary” about changes which have come about from other causes, causes like modernization and globalization.⁷ Culturally circumscribing concepts such as “sex/gender system,” “gender relations,” and “gender and sexuality ideologies” take on an autonomy that forecloses analysis of constitutive relations between this thing called culture and this thing called capital (indeed, of the very gendered and sexualized thinking about and separation of these incommensurable realms). Such culturalist and economic frameworks offer us an untenable dialectic between culture and capital: capital uses cultural meanings and practices of gender and sexuality to create new forms of production; cultural meanings and practices of gender and sexuality are in turn transformed by these new forms of production of capital. In effect, although they are shown to interact, culture and capital are neatly separated in their respective symbolic and material realms.

The “prostitution” of the Philippines consists, however, of a much more muddled involvement of symbolic and material practices. In the following, I analyze the concept of the feminization of Philippine labor as a crucial aspect of the prostitution of the nation. I then examine the role of gender and sexuality in the constitution of the general category of labor. Finally, I examine the ways in which Fanny Garcia, in a short story, theorizes the sociosubjective practices engaged in by Filipina women which contribute to their feminization and commodification—in a word, their prostitution—within and outside of their communities, practices which might also serve as the means of their transformative power.

Prostituting the Nation: Feminization

As a receptive, pliable, permeable body, investment in which yields value, the Filipina seems to be the private simulation of the Philippines, the very corporeal embodiment of the country's putatively legendary openness and hospitality, except that in the subcontracting of their bodies they both share the same military and corporate clients and produce the same surplus values: political power and capital, values that not only exceed the grasp of their producers but moreover return as even greater forces for their exploitation. In effecting the restructuring of the Philippines into an economic formation of export-processing zones, the conditionality attached to loans and other forms of financing extended to the Philippines by international multilateral agencies throughout the 1970s and 1980s directly applied to the individual bodies of female labor who worked in these zones as well as in other sectors converted to export-oriented production and services: increasingly, the bodies of Filipinas were employed to satisfy this conditionality, restructured to corporeally conform to the specific forms and operations of labor required in tourism, prostitution, manufacturing, and other export-led industries.⁸

On this view, strategies of production which characterize the latest modes in global capitalism, such as privatization of national industries, decentralization of corporations, deregulation, informalization, and flexibilization of labor operations—all these processes are brought to bear on the Filipina body. For example, particular zones of Filipina bodies are marked and transformed for export-processing operations—hands, fingers, eyes as well as sexual orifices are detailed for increasingly specialized and fragmented tasks in the electronics, garments, textiles, and sex-work industries. The subcontracting of production processes hence entails the subcontracting of Filipina body parts and their respective skills. Such a correlation represents the national body and the individual body as sites for the reception and processing of capital-intensive flows and, therefore, as effects of the same gendered and gendering, sexualized and sexualizing global production processes. This is the perspective one arrives at when one proceeds from the presumption of the privileged, unified determining agency of capital.

The history of these transformations, which are widely recognized as developments concomitant with the establishment of the New International Division of

Labor, cannot be rendered, however, merely as the dire consequences and necessary conditions of the actions and processes of capital. The restructuring of global production also depends, after all, on the restructuring of labor. And inasmuch as they engage in their own transformation as well as in their own production, Filipinas are not only products but also producers.⁹ Prostituted Filipinas contribute significantly not only to the maintenance of the U.S. military, the security system of transnational capital, but also to its almost exclusively male international managerial class, especially that of the dominant economic power in the region, Japan.¹⁰ The sexual as well as domestic services they provide to their international clientele are composed of complex skills they must acquire and refine; in the process of developing these skills and reshaping their bodies in order to ensure their marketability, they must also develop strategies of self-sustenance — psychical and social strategies that enable them to go on laboring under conditions they might otherwise find impossible to bear.¹¹ Prostituted as well by transnational manufacturing industries, Filipinas compose a significant part of the female global labor force whose socially gendered skills and subsistence work give it the flexibility and cheap reproductive cost exploited and demanded by capital.

Prostitution thus pertains not only to the metaphorical construction of the Philippines as both female and feminine (signifying its lack of political and economic power and its status as possessed territory with permeable boundaries), but also to the actual conscription of female workers and their sexualized labor. Recognizing that post-Fordist strategies of accumulation have brought about a radical shift in the composition of the global labor force, including the feminization and informalization of labor in cheaper wage-zones across the world, Kenneth Surin points out the need to reconstitute the category of labor.¹² He asserts furthermore that “it will be possible to reconfigure labor as a category only if there is first an analysis of the structure of productive social cooperation, since this structure is the ontological basis for the mode of production.”¹³ The structure of productive cooperation consists of a complex of noneconomic systems of value (of gender, race, sexuality), each of which interacts with the others in the creation, maintenance, and modification of their respective terms of valence; each of these systems, including that of economic value, serves as a system of variables for the others.

Thus feminization is not merely the subsumption by capital of an entirely separate logic of social reproduction which en-genders labor power. Women are

not products of a traditional sex-gender system, which has of late been incorporated into the mode of production. This perspective gives rise to attributions of the overreadiness or ready-madness of more traditional, less-modernized, i.e., third world, women for the “age-old” domestic-related tasks required in the Taylorist production processes in the “free trade zones.” Here, patriarchy and tradition both function as pre- or noncapitalist systems which capitalism has subcontracted for the cheap production of this custom-made labor. Produced by older systems on consignment to capital, third world women and children are treated, conceptually and materially, as component parts that are then easily inserted into the capitalist mode of production.¹⁴ Apart from ignoring the systematic violence deployed in the manufacturing industries to maintain this labor force and the militant protests, strikes, and other forms of resistance indefatigably put up by women workers and their communities (which completely disprove what is often posited either as the willingness, acquiescence, or predisposition of women to the kinds of tasks required in these industries), accounts of feminization that view it as the deployment or transposition of older structures of social cooperation into capitalist production maintain a rigid distinction between the economic and the noneconomic as well as a distinction between capitalist and traditional patriarchal practices, with which it tends to converge.¹⁵ As such, they cannot explicate the ways in which forms of gender and sexuality are constructed through (and not just tapped by) production, in other words, the ways in which gender and sexual logics of cooperation have been at once product and object of capitalist exploitation.

Elizabeth Eviota shows how the gendering of particular skills and kinds of work in the Philippines has been the result of the historical interaction between traditional, colonial, and capitalist practices and institutions.¹⁶ Among the institutions and structures introduced through Spanish colonization and subsequently reinforced by U.S. colonization that figured prominently in the organization of gender roles were Christianity, the Catholic Church, the state form, private property, commercialized agricultural production (including cash crops for export), and a national marketing system. Eviota shows, for example, how the granting of land titles to men during the Spanish period transformed women’s relation to the land and subordinated their agricultural work to that of their fathers and husbands. Additionally, the colonial conscription of male labor not only separated men from shared tasks, but also devalued traditional women’s work, such as handicrafts work. While giving a very useful overview of the

historical imbrication of political economy and gender ideology throughout the Spanish and U.S. colonial periods up to the present, Eviota nevertheless subscribes to the account of feminization as a process of gender ideology informing production, which allows her to conclude that in today's garments industry "gender has come to determine class."¹⁷

My point is not merely that the organization of gender and sexuality is imbricated in the organization of labor and capital, and vice versa; it is also that the sign systems of gender and value are constitutively related.¹⁸ Luce Irigaray suggests this latter relation in positing that Marx's analysis of commodities can be reconsidered as an interpretation of the social status of women.¹⁹ She asserts that the analogism of her own interpretation is the means of a "going back" to the question of sexual difference, inasmuch as the relation of form to matter (on which Marx's analysis of commodities depends) was determined in the first place by analogy to the relation between masculine and feminine. Irigaray effectively shows ways in which gender categories are constitutive principles of the system of value, suggesting that the symbolic system on which patriarchal societies are organized "contain in nuclear form the developments that Marx defines as characteristic of a capitalist regime."²⁰ Foremost among these developments is the submission of a nature correlated with women to the labor of men, whereby that nature is converted into commodities exchanged among men according to a standard of value which they themselves provide. What Irigaray postulates, in other words, is the confluence between the money-form and the phallic function, between the system of economic value of capitalism and the system of sexual value of what she calls "hom(m)o-sexuality."

This confluence is based on a shared principle of organization: the masculinity of its subjects and of its metaphysical representative (the transcendental sexual standard of value).²¹ While Irigaray's analysis precludes understanding women as labor except as the filling in of a masculine category, her suggestion of the determining significance of gender in the theory of value can serve as a basis for reexamining the very constitution of the category of labor. I suggest that a fundamental dimension of labor is constructed through notions of the feminine — just as notions of femininity are constructed through conceptions of labor — and, further, that the symbolic logic of this construction is inextricable from the logic of social cooperation at work in the constitution of feminized labor. This understanding enables us to consider the so-called feminization of labor as the realization of a historical tendency rather than, as the discourse of crisis would

have it, a radically new development and, further, to view the prostitution of the Philippines which is predicated on this tendency as the effect of these intertwined logics.

The Gendered and Sexualized Constitution of Labor

The feminine dimension of labor can be gleaned from Marx's well-known assertion that "prostitution is only a *specific* expression of the *general* prostitution of the laborer."²² The use of the *metaphor* of general prostitution to characterize the condition of labor depends on the construction of female prostitution as the selling of one's body as a commodity. Labor can be said to be prostituted and thus feminized in its function as a commodity with respect to capital. This feminine condition of labor is foregrounded in Friedrich Engels's characterization of marital sexual relations in terms of relations of production: "Within the family [the husband] is the *bourgeois* and the wife represents the proletariat. . . . [The wife] only differs from the ordinary courtesan in that she does not let out her body on piecework as a wage worker, but sells it once and for all into slavery."²³ Wage work is women's work to the extent that it consists of "letting out" or selling one's body. The worker thus becomes feminized in his reduction to mere corporeality.

Marx invokes the metaphor of prostitution in order to show this corporeal debasement of the worker under capitalism. In capitalist relations, "labour always appears as repulsive, always external, forced labour; and not labour by contrast as 'freedom and happiness.'"²⁴ The debasement of labor lies in its function as "a mere being for something else"²⁵ and, more particularly, as a mere bodily being to be used and exchanged by and for capital. To emphasize the worker's debasement, Marx constructs this condition of labor as a repulsive condition of feminization and emasculation. On the one hand, existence as a mere body, as an object of nature, is viewed as feminine inasmuch as nature, as the object of man's labor, is defined as that which is *not* man's body. On the other hand, being used by one's own alienated and objectified labor (capital) is viewed as emasculating to the extent that capital, as the compounding of male labor, is masculine.²⁶ Prostitution thus becomes the expression of the unnatural condition of labor which workers must rise against. The unnaturalness of this condition is, of course, predicated on the presumption of workers as male and therefore as entitled to their heteromascularity.

The construction of the feminine condition of labor through prostitution is not, however, merely rhetorical. It formalizes a social logic already at work in capitalist gender and sexual relations. We can see the operations of this social logic by looking at the symbolic operations necessary in order for the metaphor to work. Although female prostitution is posited as the specific expression of the general prostitution of the laborer, the general prostitution of the laborer is distinguished from female prostitution in that it entails productive labor while female prostitution entails “labor as mere service for the satisfaction of immediate needs.”²⁷ The difference between female prostitution and the general prostitution of labor hence lies in the surplus value that is extracted from labor. How then can nonproductive labor be a specific expression of productive labor? Another kind of surplus must overcome this contradiction, a qualitative leap which is paradigmatically performed by capital in relation to labor: “Labour must of course correspond to the particular substance of which a particular capital consists as a particular labor; but since capital *as such* is indifferent to every particularity of its substance, and is both the totality of all its particularities as well as the abstraction from all of them, labour confronting capital has subjectively this same totality and abstraction in itself.”²⁸ General prostitution is the condition of labor *qua* labor (labor confronting capital) and *as such* is indifferent to the particularities or specific expressions of its substance. It is the condition of labor as the totality of all its particularities and the abstraction from all of them. As we will see later, this totalization and abstraction are essential sociosymbolic operations in the prostitution of Filipina labor.

The indifference to the particularities of female prostitution, which the metaphor of general prostitution requires, is, moreover, a sexual indifference. Labor *qua* labor must be capable of producing new value. Inasmuch as this value as a “being-for-itself” is realized in the labor which exceeds necessary or reproductive labor, labor *qua* labor is realized in its difference from its feminine condition as a “mere being for something else.”²⁹ Labor for capital is this (potential) value-for-itself that is objectified surplus labor. From the standpoint of capital, labor is already objectified—it resembles the machines that it produced in the past but that now serve as its conditions. As such, labor is separated from itself, from itself as living labor. Labor experiences this difference as “the independent being-for-itself of value vis-à-vis living labour capacity, hence its being as capital; the objective self-sufficient indifference, the *separateness* of the objective conditions

of labor vis-à-vis living labor capacity.”³⁰ The detachment of labor as capital means also the detachment from the gendered significance of living labor, which Marx implies in his description of “the potentialities resting in living labour’s own womb.”³¹ Inasmuch as labor comes to mean not living labor, but “value endowed with its own power and will,” it partakes of the masculinity of capital, the being for whom the laborer is prostituted.³²

The category of labor does in fact assume this masculinity in its distinction from reproductive or nonproductive activities.³³ The surplus labor-time objectified in the surplus value that is extracted from the generally prostituted laborer is labor-time expended in areas of production and activities that have historically — within Western industrialized societies — been dominated (and designated to be dominated) by men. The surplus labor that hence distinguishes productive general prostitution from reproductive specific prostitution (reproductive in its mere satisfying of immediate needs) is gendered as masculine labor. It is this masculine labor that is represented in the category of abstract universal labor-time, the measure of value which now applies generally to all labor and that therefore predicates the gendered difference between so-called productive and nonproductive activity. Thus the sexual difference which helps to constitute the category of labor as productive is removed from the category itself, which now appears sexually indifferent.

Along with other Marxist-feminists, Leopoldina Fortunati argues that within the capitalist system, the male/female relationship is a formal relation of production.³⁴ Capitalism requires the development of sex work as nondirectly waged work engaged in the reproduction of labor power: “It is the positing of reproduction as non-value that enables both production and reproduction to function as the production of value.”³⁵ In the continuously aggressive expansion of capital accumulation through increased expropriation of surplus labor, feminization names the drive toward the increased devaluation of the worker’s necessary labor toward nonvalue, that is, the tendency of labor toward reproductive labor “which appear[s] to have had all value stripped from [it] by capital.”³⁶ This condition is feminine inasmuch as it is created by work gendered as female, i.e., work that is viewed as a “natural force of social labor” engaged in the reproduction of labor power. Moreover, it is “feminine to the extent that it consists of activities considered inalienable from the body, indeed, commensurate with the body.” This feminine work comes to stand in for other forms of corporeal labor,

embodied in slavery and colonial labor, which might be said to be the paradigm of the nonvalue of the natural force of reproductive labor. As Fortunati shows, while such work creates value for capital, this value remains hidden, incorporated, as it were, within the forms of masculine labor power which are visibly expropriated by capital. It is precisely the disappearance of the value-productive labor of prostitution in the appearance of the female worker's body as nonvalue that enables capital to expropriate her labor. Capital's subsumption of the value produced by female prostitution work through male labor power is a practice repeated by the metaphorical subsumption of the difference of general prostitution as productive labor from specific prostitution as reproductive labor. The operations that enable the disappearance of the value created by reproductive work and its hidden expropriation by capital are repeated in the symbolic construction of the concept of universal labor. These operations include the simultaneous construction and sublated negation of sexual difference to constitute the unmarked yet masculinist category of productive labor. I argue that the masculinist and heterosexist logic of the construction of this concept enables the intensified expropriation of surplus value outside of conventional spheres of production by defining feminine work as free, and, furthermore, that this construction and its subsumption of feminine labor are determined by the position of labor confronting capital.

The feminization of labor is realized, therefore, from the same standpoint from which it is configured as masculine, that is, from the standpoint of capital. Hence, the prostitution of Filipinas is not merely the specific expression of the general prostitution of labor except from this standpoint. The prostitution of Pilipinas, the country, is realized as a metaphor for the prostitution of Filipinas, the women, only through its totalization of and abstraction from the particularities of Filipinas. As a corollary of this, the synecdochic deployment of the figure of the prostitute to signify the third world nation (as a figure of global labor) rests on the objectifying detachment of this part and the subsumption of the particularities of this part, as part, to signify the whole. I argue that the synecdoche is a crucial apparatus in the logic of social cooperation that underwrites the historical tendency of Filipinas toward prostitution. In the movement to undo this tendency, we must recognize the specific practices of the prostitution of Filipinas as constitutive of the general prostitution of the nation. That is, we must look at the feminized commodification of Philippine labor from the standpoint of Filipinas.

The Experience of Labor

It is important to recognize that even as Filipinas are produced as commodity objects from the standpoint of capital, they are never just objects. There is a dimension of their existence that exceeds this objectification: what Marx described as “labor which is still objectifying itself, labor as subjectivity.”³⁷ The problem with some feminist critiques of the objectification of women and their trafficking as goods among men is a too strict adherence to the distinction between subject and object, often expressed as the psychoanalytic distinction between having and being. This Western philosophical distinction, which is also predicated on the related “scientific” divide between animate and inanimate, enables, for example, Gayle Rubin’s argument in her foundational essay “The Traffic in Women” that “if women are for men to dispose of, they are in no position to give themselves away,” an assertion that implies a necessary passivity of the exchanged goods and the completeness of their objectification.³⁸ What systems-oriented, exchange-focused analyses such as Rubin’s fail to recognize is the role of the subjective activity, that is, the experience of objectified women, in the making of the abstract systems — the very order of exchange — that appear to regulate their lives. Such oversight is characteristic of contemporary analyses of feminized labor in the context of globalization, including so-called sex trafficking, which tend to discover women’s agency within the system in the form of women’s negotiation of given rules and processes. I am arguing, in contrast, that it is not simply that women are exchanged through existing relationships. Rather, the structure of exchange and exchange relationships themselves are produced by women and other members of society in their active mediation, realization, and socialization of phenomenological differences. To attend to this activity is to recognize the ontological primacy of mediation in the production of the very differences on which relationships of exchange, exploitation and oppression are predicated. Analyses of the traffic of women that forget this activity (even if it is meant to be included later, after the patriarchal/capitalist system has been fully rendered) erect the system of relationships itself as the cause, the determining agent, of the oppression of women. As Marx writes, “The exchange relationship establishes itself as a power external to and independent of the producers.”³⁹ Moreover, such analyses forget that women are themselves produced as the objects to be exchanged by men. *How they are produced* hence becomes a crucial question, one which the elaboration of a static system of

exchange forecloses. Instead, women are viewed as finished products whose subordinate status in society is a result of their place in an already operative system of relationships, which, as Irigaray states, they do not participate in making. Women are products but they are also producers. As such, they participate in the process of their own production.

In keeping with Marx, the work of Antonio Negri emphasizes that “what seems an objective structure is in fact the product of subjective activity. The economy is not a system of ‘objective’ laws operating independently of social agents.”⁴⁰ It is in the realm of the subjective that humans will themselves to live and subsist (and by “will” here I mean the energy they expend in the practical decision, desire, and work to go on — a form of labor that exceeds the concept of both necessary and reproductive labor), and it is their lives that are necessary for the production and operation of objective structures. This cannot be emphasized enough: the myriad fields of signification and orientation of subjective forms and the structures of sociality and social cooperation that are viewed as now having been subsumed by capital are themselves produced by the activity of humans, by labor that has not yet become *being*.⁴¹

On this view, the category of experience as activity, as *doing*, is crucial if we are to realize the participation of Philippine labor in the production and transformation of the social reality to which they are subject, that is, in the making of history. This concept of experience has two registers: first, as the psychical, passional, visceral, cognitive, physical, and social practices of mediation between self and environment that individuals engage in as part of the process of producing themselves and their social reality. In this register, experience as subjective activity is historical to the extent that its elements and operations are collectively available and at work in a social formation it bears constitutive connections to. Second, experience as the concrete articulation of the determinative relations between subjective activity and socioeconomic structures, a concrete assemblage of heterogeneous practices and matter. In this register, experience is not an object to be described but an event to reconstruct through the making of relations, the grasping of connections, among different kinds of practices and structures. It is, in other words, the making of a socioeconomic fabric, a connective tissue that also images a historical moment.⁴²

The dimension of Filipinas that goes beyond their being-for-something-else, that is, beyond their objectification for capital and their production of masculin-

ist value, lies in the particularities of their experience as subjective activity. This still-objectifying living labor is engaged in a complex of systems of signs, values, and practices in which gender, sexuality, nationality, and race function not only as central organizing principles of production but also as effects of those practices. Fanny Garcia renders this subjective activity and the practices that constitute the historical tendency toward the prostitution of Filipinas in “Pina, Pina, Saan Ka Pupunta?” (Pina, Pina, Where Are You Going?), a short story she wrote in 1982 about a young woman named Pina.⁴³ In brief, Pina, a poor, barely educated young woman, dreams of striking it rich by marrying an American. Through a pen pal magazine, she finds Sammy, an American businessman, with whom she begins a romantic correspondence. Sammy comes over, laden with gifts and money for her and her family, takes her around and enjoys her sexual companionship for a month and then leaves. Pina finds out that she is pregnant and that Sammy has no plans to return for her; she aborts the fetus.

“Pina, Pina, Saan Ka Pupunta?” depicts the activities and practices that give rise to the historical plot of Philippine–U.S. relations: the unalterable fate of the Philippines as kept mistress of the United States. The national allegorical character of the story is supported by a long epigraph from the speech given by President William McKinley of the United States in November 1899, in which he narrates how the decision to colonize the Philippines came to him one night in an epiphany as he prayed for guidance from God.

In depicting the particular activities that give rise to Pina’s prostitution before and as they become totalized and abstracted in the allegorical function of her story, Garcia reconstructs the particular sociosymbolic operations that allow Pina’s living labor to be objectified as a sexual plaything for Sammy and that also allow her, as this already objectified being, to stand in for her country, that is, to serve, symbolically and materially, as a Filipina. Garcia not only shows the process of expropriation of Filipina labor, but also renders the activity and agency of Filipinas in the production of their national destiny. Such activity by Filipinas can be viewed precisely in the unraveling of the story’s details which, when brought out of the story, become elements of a historical experience that exceeds the dominant national plot.

For one thing, what seems to be an allegorical story about *’Pinas* (Filipino slang for Filipinas, or Philippines) starts with and for awhile remains a narrative about two fast and firm friends, Carmen and Pina, “the Fat and Thin of Looban”