



Introduction

Points of Departure

The effect of mass migrations has been the creation of a radically new type of human being, people who root themselves in ideas rather than place, in memories as much as material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves — because they are so defined by others — by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. — SALMAN RUSHDIE, *Imaginary Homelands*

I left the Philippines for America to become the international beauty queen that I was meant to be. I thought everything will be like the movies and TV shows that I have seen when I was growing up. Well, I have had some disappointments. I still wonder what would have happened if I were still back home. Would I still be the exotic beauty of my childhood or the blond bombshell that I am today? I am very

happy to be here [in America], but once in a while, memories of Manila and my wild days come rushing like a typhoon — and I get a little nostalgic. — MARIO

No Borders?

It was 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in Greenwich Village. In keeping with urban gay weekly rhythms, gay men were converging for tea time, or tea dance. This ritual has nothing to do with the British custom of drinking the brew and eating fancy sandwiches. This is the moment when gay men who have been up the previous night carousing go off to their favorite bars or dance clubs for one last chance to cruise or hang out before the much-dreaded Monday morning. Exotica, my main informant, and I were in a gay bar, which at that time (August 1987) was the in place to be on a Sunday afternoon.

We were doing what most of the natives were doing — s&m, or “standing and modeling,” that is, trying to appear nonchalant while attentively appraising the crowd. Suddenly, Exotica nudged me and said, “Tingnan mo, isang pang Miss Philippines.” [Look, another Miss Philippines.]

In the middle of a small group of white men was a seemingly uncomfortable Asian man who would approximate what I would consider a Filipino (on the basis of my extended experience). Exotica suggested that we approach him. After some initial greetings and small talk, Arturo (the other Miss Philippines) started to warm up to us. He mentioned the fact that he had been in America for more than five years and that he lived in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Exotica asked, “Atche, ang ganda-ganda mo e bakit ka parang napapaso. Parang hindi ka nag-eejoy.” [Big sister, you are so beautiful, but why do you look uncomfortable? You don't seem to be enjoying yourself.]

Arturo said, “Ay hindi matakake ng biyuti ko ang drama dito sa bar.” [Oh, my biyuti (I) can't take the drama in this bar.]

“Vakit?” [Why?] Exotica and I both chorused.

Arthur countered, “Puro mga bakla este gay ang mga tao dito, walang totoong lalaki. Kung hindi lang ako pinilit ng mga puting ito, hindi ako pupunta dito.” [This place is full of bakla. I mean gays. There are no real men here. If these white folks didn't cajole me into going, I would not be here.]

“E saan ka naman naghahagip ng min?” [Where do you go to pick up men?] I asked.

Arturo mentioned a section of Jersey City that is home to a large number of Filipino immigrants and even has a street called Manila Avenue. He said that among his Filipino neighbors he had found his one true love.

Then he described his boyfriend/lover as “*Totoong lalaki, ’di tulad ng mga tao dito — macho! May asawa pa!*” [A real man, unlike the people here — macho! He even has a wife!]

Exotica gushed, “*Ay mamà, talagang orig pa rin ang drama mo, made in the Philippines!*” [Oh, mamà, your drama is still original, made in the Philippines!]

Arturo said, “*Parang hindi nagbabago pero iba na rin ang drama ko ngayon.*” [It seems to be unchanged, but in fact, my drama is different now.]

This conversation occurred in what can be considered the quintessential space for gay identity and culture everywhere — the New York City gay bar. For many lesbians and gays, this space evokes a sense of community and solidarity. Activist Simon Watney (1995: 61) suggests that the gay bar is the site for ubiquitous homecomings for gay men and lesbians around the world, the one place where despite divergent origins and agendas, queers readily feel at home. He writes, “Few heterosexuals can imagine the sense of relief which a gay man or lesbian finds in a gay bar or a dyke bar in a strange city in a foreign country. Even if one cannot speak the local language, we feel a sense of identification. Besides, we generally like meeting one another, learning about what is happening to people ‘like us’ from other parts of the world” (ibid.).

Watney’s statement resonates with the popular view that gay identity and space are intrinsically and organically linked. By this logic, Arturo is not quite “like us” and thus not included in the “we” of Watney’s vision of the modern lesbian and gay world. Instead, in these terms, Arturo occupies an anachronistic pre-gay if not pre-modern state of being. Others might go so far as to fault Arturo for being “internally homophobic” or self-hating or for being an ignorant immigrant who is “fresh off the boat.” Their logic goes this way — given time Arturo will be as comfortable in and assimilated into the Ameri-

can mainstream as *Exotica* and I. For this book, however, I draw on the contradictions, discomfort, and disparities between the three of us in the bar to complicate the popular and hegemonic tableau of a world turning gay or of queerness going global.

The idea of a global lesbian and gay culture has become part of most popular discourses around queer visibility. Consider this specific example. The theme for the New York City Lesbian and Gay Pride Month celebrations in June 1996 was “Pride without Borders.” The official guide to the different activities and parties read:

We are so different from one another. The places where we live, the colors of our skin, the possessions and beliefs we hold dear all conspire to divide us and remind us of our difference, but all over this city and in this state, in these 50 states, and in provinces, cantons, parishes and hemispheres so convenient for maps and for separating us, the one thing that we are is gay and lesbian. And queer. And homosexual. . . . We are so different. And we are everywhere. . . . And we are dykes and fags and pansies and patas and sissies and so butch we’re questioned in the ladies’ room at rest stops. . . . We know we are everywhere and that we have always been everywhere, and that knowledge should make all of us proud. We are strong because our love and our struggle draw us together. Our Pride, our desire to celebrate what we have made for ourselves and our determination to achieve everything that we deserve erases all the borders and makes the differences meaningless. We are so different, and yet we must work as one. (New York Lesbian and Gay Pride Guide 1996: 12)

The text begins and ends with difference and yet is permeated by political exhortations of its elision. The 1996 theme not only implies an engagement with diversity, but also idealizes the globalization or universalization of lesbian and gay identity. At the same time, it engages with a popular “McDonald’s” notion of the global as a homogenizing process that emanates from above. Thus, while there is a perfunctory gesture toward differences, the final act is to break down these potential barriers to community. The rainbow flag (a flag with horizontal stripes in the colors of the rainbow), an important symbol of gay and lesbian identity and community, is an example of some of the ways by which the lesbian and gay “community” has attempted to recognize diversity. Seemingly separate bands of color are fused into a unitary

amalgam and one single cultural emblem of queer togetherness and belonging. While these important symbols and meanings of unity provide a potent impetus for community efforts, they at once obscure contradictory and uneven queer spaces. As in the case of Arturo in the gay bar, fissures and borders crisscross the seemingly placid terrain of queer communities. How do we understand these differences in the face of the global dispersal and movement of people beyond a teleological narrative of the movement from tradition to modernity, and from discomfort to settlement into gay and lesbian life?

Globalization is often seen in extreme terms either as a foreboding specter of a catastrophic future or as a cause for a celebratory jubilation over the resolution of local repressions (Giddens 2000). In queer discourses, redemptive narratives of the global abound and are deployed in various venues such as gay pride parades, mass media, gay rights groups, and most notably in the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Stonewall rebellion held in New York City in 1994 (Manalansan 1995). On the other extreme, various nation-states forestall what is perceived as a contaminating global flow of Western queerness as a means to erect and resurrect legal, cultural, and politico-economic barriers (Alexander 1997). Indeed, ideas about diaspora and globalization have invaded even the most mundane aspects of queer lives. Such words as *globalization* are used to index or mark sophistication and cosmopolitanism in queer culture. At the same time, skeptics have used the words as ominous signs of more insidious processes such as Western capitalist expansion and queer cultural imperialism and exploitation.

These facile yet dangerous ideas have necessitated what has been called a “transnational turn” in lesbian, gay, and queer studies (Povinelli and Chauncey 1999). This shift in lesbian, gay, and queer studies in the past ten years recognizes the limitations of place-based queer politics and at the same time conveys the complications brought about by migration and travel of queer peoples and cultures.

Queering the Diaspora and the Global: Whose Gaze? Who’s Gay?

The transnational turn in lesbian, gay, and queer studies has not produced a singular mode of inquiry. One group of scholarly works focusing on the global and transnational has insistently examined gay and

lesbian transnationalism as symptomatic of the proliferation of gay and lesbian social movements and their growing strengths within specific national and regional contexts.¹ These works often suggest that globalization can best be gleaned in the activities of established and institutionalized social movements and negotiations with state institutions and processes. This leads to a rendering of diaspora and migration, if mentioned at all in these works, as insignificant after-effects or vestigial processes of queer globalization. At the same time, diaspora and migration stand in for the idea of America as a monolithic and powerful center of queerness, ready to spread its influence all over the world. Unfortunately, these studies unwittingly posit a *white* gay male gaze—namely an omniscient, unreflexive observer whose erotic and practical politics are based on an imagined level playing field for all queers. Within this framework, queer globalization is primarily a privileged form of “optic”²—or a vantage point that allows a certain kind of ownership of global gayness or lesbianness in various locations and thus enables the right to claim queer spaces everywhere as “home.”

Competing with these scholars are practitioners of what I call the “new queer studies.”³ While the now established works and scholars in queer theory, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Warner, and Bidy Martin among others, have emerged out of disciplinary concerns of reading canonical works or popular media texts, the scholars of the “new queer studies” have come out, so to speak, from the intersection of established disciplines and formerly marginalized terrains of the American academy such as ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, women’s studies, and gay and lesbian studies. The new queer theorists critically locate themselves and their works in local and global processes to produce scholarship that Gayatri Gopinath (1998: 117) aptly describes as “a more nuanced understanding of the traffic and travel of competing systems of desire in a transnational frame . . . and of how colonial structures of knowing and seeing remain in place within a discourse of an ‘international’ lesbian and gay movement.” This body of work can best be examined in terms of the political stakes in positing a particular understanding or vision of the global. In other words, these bodies of works that constitute the transnational turn in queer studies can be exemplified by what Appadurai (2000) has called the “optics” of globalization. Who gets to *see* globalization and in what way? For whom and to whom does this vision of queer globalization speak?

To illustrate this contention, let me relay a particular moment in queer globalization scholarship. In a jointly authored introduction to a collection of works (Cruz-Malave and Manalansan 2002), Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and I recalled a particular moment in a 1998 conference on queer globalization which we had co-organized and which had been held at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies of the City University of New York Graduate Center. At the penultimate plenary, a white scholar deemed it appropriate to ask the panel consisting of queer scholars, including Geeta Patel, Norma Alarcon, Michael Warner, and Kobena Mercer, what he could have done in a particular encounter that occurred that same afternoon. He had been sitting in Bryant Park across the street from the CUNY Graduate Center building when a “Latino” man who was distributing born-again Christian literature approached him. The scholar informed the “Latino” man that he was gay and did not need the literature. The “Latino” man then informed the scholar that he had been gay but had changed when he “found” Christ. The white scholar then asked the panel what he could have told the “Latino” man. The panel members were noncommittal, but as Cruz-Malave and I pointed out, rather than answering the scholar’s question, it was critical to interrogate the presuppositions of his own question and narrative of the event. To what extent is the story of this scholar in question another instance of ideological re-colonization or more appropriately another example of the unequal and hierarchical structure of knowledge around the global, the transcultural, and the transnational? Why does the scholar assume that the “Latino” man would even be interested in what he has to say? To bring it to another level, how can scholars of queer globalization not repeat such moments of colonization and privilege like that of the queer scholar in his response to the “Latino” man? How do works like this book refuse a recapitulation of one-sided communication and omniscient observations?

I suggest that one way to undertake and respond to these kinds of dilemmas is to take seriously the genealogy of the “new queer studies,” particularly its investment in a progressive understanding of globalization and transnationalism. This book and the works of the “new queer studies” owe a clear intellectual debt to feminist scholars of the “politics of location.” In the mid to late 1980s, several feminist thinkers, among them lesbians, Third World women, and women of color, began a critique of the prevailing feminist construction of *woman* as a

universal category and called for the recognition and analysis of the particularities and divergences in experiences of women in various parts of the world. Adrienne Rich (1986) is popularly cited as the first theorist to use the term “politics of location” to acknowledge her own position as a white woman within U.S. national and international relations of power. Rich identified the body and the nation as important sites for the provenance of critical insights around identity, location, and difference. Therefore, she suggested that race, class, and ethnicity, among other categories, complicated the facile “sisterhood” that was often assumed in feminist circles.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1990, 1991a, 1991b) and others⁴ have insisted on the interrogation and destabilization of long-held “natural” categories such as “woman” and “gender” and have focused their attention on understanding the politics of difference as inflected by various hierarchical arrangements brought about by colonial and postcolonial processes. Chicana feminists, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Chela Sandoval (1991), have highlighted race as an important vantage from which to mount a more fruitful critique of the complexities of geography, identity, and struggle. More recently, the works of Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal (1994) have extended the views of these women from more traditional perspectives of the local into a more transnational perspective in which seemingly bounded experiences and struggles are implicated in relationships that go beyond national and state lines within a globalizing world. Indeed, Kaplan (1996) goes on to critique the “politics of location” scholarship for not being more mindful of the displacements caused by global migration and travel.

These feminist works are clearly relevant for queer scholars who are responding to the vicissitudes of the intensified movement of people, capital, ideas, and technology across borders. The works of the “new queer studies” are questioning the universal gay/lesbian subject but *at the same time* recognizing the ways in which gay and lesbian cultures in specific localities inflect and influence the growth of alternative sex and gender identities and practices. In other words, the useful step that these new queer scholars are making is not in denigrating gay and lesbian identity categories and cultures but rather expanding and troubling their seemingly stable borders by illuminating the different ways in which various queer subjects located in and moving in between specific national locations establish and negotiate complex relationships to each other and to the state. In the face of so-called mobile

queers, it is also necessary to expand the notion of “mobility” and to talk about the ways in which cosmopolitanism is not always privileged.⁵ Immigrant queers of color in particular demonstrate how mobility is not only about the actual physical traversing of national boundaries but also about the traffic of status and hierarchies *within* and across such boundaries.

At the same time, important books on globalization and transnationalism have disregarded or decentered the place of gendered and sexual subjectivity.⁶ In fact, Povinelli and Chauncey (1999: 445) bemoaned the tendency of “the literature on globalization . . . to read social life off external social forms—flows, circuits, circulations of people, capital and culture—without any model of subjective mediation.” *Global Divas* addresses this gap by presenting an ethnographic case study of how processes of globalization and transnationalism are negotiated through the processes of identity formation and everyday life of Filipino gay immigrants in New York City. I trace the historical and cultural parameters of Filipino immigration in general and the issue of Filipino gay immigration in particular as way to offer a window on how these supranational elements and processes are not creating generic “McDonaldized” lives but rather intricately woven lives that are at once global and local. This ethnography, while based in New York City, is far from the traditional view of a local picture of a group of people. Rather, this book presents a complex picture of interconnections and disjunctures faced by this group of men. As such, the lives of these men are historically and culturally counterposed to the networks and movements of people, ideologies, technologies, capital, and the whole enterprise of diasporic travel in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

“Belonging to the World”: The Transnational Sites of the Filipino Gay Immigrant

Dapat ka bang mag-ibang bayan?
Dito ba’y wala kang mapaglagyan?
Tungkol sa babae, dito’y maraming okey.
Dito ang lalaki ang kulang.
Bakit pa iiiwanan ang lupang tinubuan?
Dito ka natuto ng iyong mga kalokohan.
Baka akala mo ganoon lamang ang mamuhay sa ibang bayan.

At kung ikaw ay magasawa, ang kunin mo ay Pilipina.
Mas magaganda ang mga Pinay.
Sa bahay man sila'y mahuhusay.
Minsan ay selosa rin ang Pinay
Sapagkat ang selos ay tanda ng pagmamahal ng Pinay
At kung umibig ay lalong okey ang Pinay.

Do you need to go to another country?
Don't you have your own niche here?
In terms of women, there are a lot of okay ones here.
Here, the guys are outnumbered.
Why do you have to leave your homeland?
You learned all your mischief here.
Don't you know that it is not that easy to live in another country?
And if you were to get married, get a Filipina!
Pinays are more beautiful.
They are even well skilled in the house.
Sometimes they are also the jealous type
Because jealousy is the sign of the Pinay's true love
And the Pinays are even better when they are in love.
Sometimes the Pinay is the jealous type
Because jealousy is a sign of love.
And when they are in love, the Pinays are even more okay.
— FLORANTE DE LEON, "Pinay"⁷

In the 1970s, the song "Pinay" became the anthem for a predominantly male migrant labor flow from the Philippines to the Middle East. *Pinay* is a Tagalog slang term for Filipina, or a Filipino woman. The song's initial mournful invocation of national belonging is coupled with the sexualized and gendered dimensions of the nation. Indeed, the song prescribes heterosexual marriage and desire to be the saving grace for the potential male migrant worker. Moreover, the song strongly suggests that the female body and the Pinay's excellent domestic skills should be more than enough reason for the potential migrant to stay home in the Philippines.

The song constructs the space outside the nation as dangerous for heteronormative masculinity.⁸ This song's viewpoint has been supported by gossip and stories about life outside the homeland. Stories about Arab men preying on beardless and relatively hairless Filipino men were rampant and included episodes of homosexual rape. Fur-

thermore, narratives of Filipino overseas workers succumbing to the perils of murder, rape, and/or diseases such as AIDS further amplified this view. However, although these stories strengthened the heteronormative underpinnings of Filipino male patriotism, they did not diminish the allure of economic benefits brought about by dollar remittances and other material rewards of life abroad.

The Filipino diaspora in the last two decades of the twentieth century reached astronomical proportions. Labor migration has become a highly institutionalized practice in the Philippines with the state functioning in more than a facilitating role together with private and non-governmental/nonprivate organizations. This has led to the Philippines becoming the “world’s largest exporter of government-sponsored labor” (Tyner 2000: 132).

Anthropologist Jonathan Okamura summed up the far-reaching range of the Filipino diaspora when he wrote, “Filipinos can be found in more than 130 nations and territories throughout the world including both developing and developed countries” (1998: 101). Computer programmers, nurses, doctors, construction workers, domestics, entertainers, and sex workers are a huge part of the mobile labor power leaving the Philippines.⁹ Epifanio San Juan, a prominent Filipino literary theorist, eloquently described the Filipino as “belonging to the world,” meaning that Filipinos when they migrate “become assets, ‘human capital’ . . . exchangeable commodities” as part of the global labor market (1998: 7).

However, in the past twenty years, Filipino labor migration has become increasingly female.¹⁰ Thus, in many ways, the song “Pinay” may seem to have become an obsolete paeon in that the Filipina, or the Pinay, has become the paradigmatic migrant laborer coming from the Philippines and not the one who stays put. Filipinas work in such jobs as domestics, entertainers, teachers, and nurses in various countries in Asia, the Middle East, and North America. This gendered transformation did not alter the heteronormative underpinnings of nationhood, however. Rather, many discourses about several tragic situations that have befallen these women abroad have intensified the normalized and naturalized positions of women. At the same time, there is a strong acknowledgment among Filipinos of the global demand for female labor and despite particular misgivings about women leaving their families, these women are almost deified by the government and mass media to the point of martyrdom or heroism.

Despite the global dimensions of the Filipino diaspora, the United States has remained the ideal destination for Filipino immigrants. The largest Filipino overseas community is in the United States and numbers about 1.4 million (Okamura 1998: 101). After independence from U.S. colonial rule in 1946, the Philippines maintained close cultural, economic, and political ties with its former colonizer. These relationships have forged popular imageries that normalize and naturalize the links between the two countries.

Imaginary topographies that construct the United States and the Philippines as physically contiguous are part of many Filipino immigrant life narratives. Roberto, one of my informants, told me that while he was growing up he had always thought that America was just an hour bus ride away, hidden by the mountains of his home province. As a child, he had watched gray buses containing dozens of young American men with crew cuts running down the main highway near his home on their way to some spot in the mountains. It was only when he was eleven and he took a trip to Olongapo City that he learned that the America he thought was in the mountains was in fact only a military facility and that America was indeed very far away.

In the novel *Umbrella Country*, Filipino American author Bino Re-aluyo weaves a gay coming of age story set in the Philippines, where the persistent background image of America propels personal yearnings and an imagined future. A bittersweet tale of a young boy aptly named Gringo amid the lower middle-class mayhem of a Manila neighborhood, *Umbrella Country* is punctuated by scenes and dreams of America. At first glance, this story may be seen as a mere echo of a million other dreams and aspirations of would-be immigrants to America from all over the globe. However, as many scholars have argued, Filipinos occupy a unique position among diasporic groups owing to their colonial and postcolonial relationship with America.¹¹

Some commentators such as Pico Iyer (1988: 151–93), a popular travel writer, suggest that the Filipino is a sad, almost pathetic, copy of the American, an empty cultural shell devastated by Spanish and American colonialism. He further suggests that while Filipinos are virtuoso performers of American culture, they are left with the dubious heritage of disco, rock and roll, and the beauty pageant. In other words, Filipinos have nothing substantive to show except the shallow features of American popular culture.

However, more astute observers such as the anthropologist Fenella

Cannell (1999: 252) conjure up the image of contemporary Philippine society as a palimpsest where colonial and postcolonial elements bleed through layers of history and culture.¹² Cannell further suggests that Filipinos, particularly the rural poor of the Bicol region that she studied, are constantly negotiating with the image of America and various imagined “others” in order to displace power and hierarchies, and to create a sense of self (*ibid.*). For Cannell, what Pico Iyer and others have considered to be the pathetic imitative nature of the Filipinos is not constitutive of a barren tradition but rather of an “alternative modernity.”¹³ Therefore, Filipinos’ modernity is established not through a rejection of “tradition” but rather through complex amalgamations of cultural and historical elements. In this book, I extend and complicate Cannell’s incisive analysis by examining the predicament of Filipino gay men within the contradictory and uneven sites of transnational migration and global cultures. Queer immigrants, like the Filipino gay men I consider in this book, perform between competing ideologies of belonging and citizenship to offset the multiple forms of displacements of life away from the homeland. Carrying the baggage of colonial and postcolonial cultures, the Filipino gay immigrant arrives in the United States not to begin a process of Americanization but rather to continue and transform the ongoing engagement with America.¹⁴

Performing Selves and Transforming Citizenship: The Filipino Gay Immigrant in the Modern World

The processes of globalization and transnationalism have complicated, if not transformed, the ways subjects create a sense of belonging and identity.¹⁵ Notions of being Filipino, American, or gay cannot be easily apprehended in static, essential terms alone. While nationhood is no longer the primary anchor for creating a sense of citizenship and belonging, the situation is far from a simple dismissal of the nation. Despite what many herald as the demise of the nation, the contemporary moment has created a “crisis of citizenship” (Castles and Davidson 2000). Place, identity, and belonging can no longer be regarded as logically connected in the midst of globalizing tendencies (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), but at the same time people on the move are not just free-floating monads or cultural vagabonds who are unmoored to specific spaces and identities. In the face of these realities, queer diasporic subjects, particularly those from the Third World, who are confronted

with multiple displacements, are faced with the monumental tasks of creating and refiguring home.

I argue that Filipino gay men are not typical immigrants who “move” from tradition to modernity; rather, they rewrite the static notions of tradition as modern or as strategies with which to negotiate American culture. Immigration, therefore, does not always end in an assimilative process but rather in contestation and reformation of identities.

The juxtaposition of performance and citizenship is based on the anthropological notion of cultural citizenship. Following Rosaldo (1994), Ong (1999), and Rofel (1999), I consider the process of citizen formation not as a mere political process but one “in which culture becomes a relevant category of affinity” (Rofel 1999: 457). Here, I take these scripts of belonging to include the “right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense” (Rosaldo 1994: 402; see also Ong 1999). Cultural citizenship, therefore, is constituted by unofficial or vernacular scripts that promote seemingly disparate views of membership within a political and cultural body or community. Citizenship requires more than the assumption of rights and duties; more importantly, it also requires the performance and contestation of the behavior, ideas, and images of the proper citizen.¹⁶

I am interested in the way in which performance in diasporic queer communities is part of Filipino gay men’s attempts to write or rewrite scripts or modes of behavior and attachments. As May Joseph (1995: 6) aptly puts it, the conjunction of performance and hybrid subjectivities in this context “[makes] possible competing epistemologies of mutually afflicted, dissonant, and contesting narratives of empires, bodies, localities, and nations.” Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994: 42) argue convincingly that Third World transmigrants or, as they call them, “hybrid diasporic subject[s],” are “confronted with the ‘theatrical’ challenge of moving, as it were, among the diverse performative modes of sharply contrasting cultural and ideological worlds.” The immigrant is continually made aware of the performative aspects of survival so much so that he or she is continually compelled to move or “travel” (albeit discomfittingly) between various codes of behavior. The immigrant has a heightened consciousness of the importance of having a *bricoleur*’s sense of the right or appropriate conduct. Such valuations of conduct continually change depending on who is (over)-

seeing the situation, which could be anyone from an older family member to immigration authorities.

Performance as a paradigm in the humanities has been seen as a universalizing process that is inherent in such matters as gender (Butler 1990, 1991, 1993).¹⁷ More importantly, the intersections of performance with race, class, and ethnicity have remained largely unexplored. I suggest following Rosalind Morris's lead, that in order to understand both these situations, the interpenetration of the everyday with spectacle and theater must be placed in the center of the analysis. As Morris brilliantly notes, "Gender [and sexuality] may not be the primary object[s] of identification. . . . We need a conceptual vocabulary that permits discussion of engenderings that are multiply refracted in and through other categories of identities that are not reducible to gender. . . . We still need ethnographies that explore the constitution of racialized and ethnicized genders and/or genderized races and ethnicities" (1995: 585). To accomplish this task, one needs to locate performance within various hierarchical relationships, which implies divergent engagements of actors with so-called "scattered hegemonies" (Kaplan and Grewal 1994). In other words, performance is constituted through and contextualized by power and history.

My preoccupation with performance as part of citizenship developed from consistent themes that arose from fieldwork encounters with Filipino gay men. In many instances, informants' discourses and behavior have presented a persistent performative view of the world.¹⁸ This is evident in the pivotal idioms of *biyuti* and *drama*. As I have briefly explained in the preface, both idioms pertain to aspects of personhood, demeanor, and self-fashioning. *Biyuti*, unlike Cannell's (1999) transliteration, is not the same as the English word *beauty* but extends to other realms of social and personal life. I have deliberately changed the spelling to reflect the difference in meanings as well as the pronunciation and speaking situations among Filipino gay men. I deploy the idioms *biyuti* and *drama* from Filipino gay men's language to encapsulate a self-conscious notion of performance that is embedded not only in gendered phenomena but in the exigencies of everyday life, including those of kinship and family, religion, sexual desire, and economic survival. These idioms serve as a means of understanding the world, and, more importantly, assessing proper conduct and action.

However, as Arturo and Exotica's words imply, the dramas of Fil-

ipino gay men's lives are full of complex and difficult navigations and negotiations of bakla and gay traditions. The cleavages and differences that exist within the so-called gay community, as exemplified by Arturo's discomfort, should be seen not as temporary irritations or momentary lapses on the path toward becoming full-fledged gay citizens, but rather as part and parcel of the diversity of performances of selves in the gay public arena and in everyday life. Cultural citizenship then is not about monolithic constructions of identity and belonging, but rather about competing cultural traditions and ideologies of self and personhood.

My work highlights the ways the everyday lives of Filipino gay men inform and are informed by the idioms and processes of religion and theater. In other words, I want to explore the dramaturgy of Filipino gay men's lives not only as an aesthetic exercise, but also as a way of understanding the articulation of their identities and the conditions under which they live. The primacy of the everyday provides an ethical basis for considering the theatrical aspects of social life. Performance in this book, therefore, is not only a matter of just "acting," but rather is about the aesthetics of Filipino gay men's struggles for survival. They are agentive sexual subjects who defy their representations in either mainstream films or in gay male porn (Fung 1991a, 1991b). They move beyond the stereotypes of houseboys, farmers, feminized sexual vessels, innocent waifs, and other "Oriental" icons in both genres (Ogasawara 1993).

This book is an ethnographic study of how Filipino gay men, most of whom are immigrants or long-time residents, negotiate between hegemonic American/Western and Filipino/Southeast Asian sexual/gender ideologies. Bakla is concerned with the manipulation of surface appearances in such a way that a singular consistent self is not suggested. Rather, bakla self-formation involves a range of possible scripts and the scripting of divergent selves, each of which is embedded in a specific social situation and network of social relationships.

Filipino gay men construct their sense of self and citizenship through negotiations between bakla and gay traditions that occur in quotidian and spectacular arenas. In the next five chapters, performances of these negotiations and engagements are portrayed in the interpenetration of time and place, images and memories, actions and counter-reactions of both "staged performance" and performance in everyday life. While American/Western sexual ideology is not totally foreign to Filipino gay

men, the colonial and postcolonial ties with America have created hybrid amalgamations of practices and beliefs. This book attempts to re-imagine this highly contested terrain by releasing seemingly static concepts such as *bakla*, *gay*, *Filipino*, and *American* from their incarceration within specific places and ideas. By doing so, I open up the possibility of rethinking these identities, practices, and ideas within the grounds of history and culture, and I lay out the possible ways Filipino gay men create a sense of cultural citizenship amid and despite economic, political, and cultural spatial constraints.

As such, Filipino gay men's experiences with modernity and with America are suffused with the ambiguity and ambivalence of immigrant life. Filipino gay men's experiences in a drag beauty contest in Manhattan or in riding the New York City subways reveal the instability of boundaries and at the same time portray how, in many instances, such boundaries can also be experienced by these men as essential, fixed, and unchanging nodes of difference and/or affinity. While most accounts of postmodern or late modern travel and diasporas articulate a kind of mournful, if not listless displacement, the narratives in these chapters complicate this rather one-sided view. Consider the words of Leilani, who said, "Coming to and living here in America may be difficult at times, *pero* [but] I think it is all worthwhile. I think you can't forget the good and bad side of immigrating here. But consider the things that opened up for me when my *biyuti* arrived here." I submit that together with experiences of alienation and displacement come the experiences of a rebirth or a second chance, or more succinctly, experiences of pleasure and settlement. The ceaseless dialectic between unbounding and fixing, displacement and emplacement becomes apparent in the narratives and life events of these informants in the next five chapters. Furthermore, I argue that experiences of immigration and displacement guide Filipino gay men's "readings," or interpretations, of gay cultural events and identity as well as shape their reactions to and engagements with these phenomena.

The succeeding chapters present a nuanced and complex tableau of experiences that both demarcate and unbound the borders between the *bakla* and *gay* ideologies. These experiences, I would argue, are mediated not only through the trappings of Western modern elements such as a gay consumer lifestyle, but also through the vigorous process of vernacularization. This process occurs not only at the level of language but also on the level of cultural practices, which include the pervasive

and vigorous undercurrents of family and folk Catholicism. While some people may apprehend these elements as either anachronisms or vestigial aspects of homeland culture, I argue instead that such elements are vital symbolic and material anchors for these men's lives and are instrumental in the creation of a particular form of modernity that is constructed by multiply marginalized peoples.

Filipino gay men in the diaspora are not mere members of a "post-Stonewall" generation that emerged out of the ushering in of modern gay identity. As immigrants and as queers, Filipino gay men are destabilizing the idea of "generation" and geography. I veer away from a strict chronological conception of "generation" as a temporal or cohort marker. Instead I recast the term as constituted by cultural displacement and temporal-spatial intersections. By doing so, these men's lives are seen to be complicating the ways gay, lesbian, and queer histories and cultural studies can be written and new queer activism forged. Positioned at the intersection of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender), ethnic, global, area, and postcolonial studies, this book pushes the boundaries of queer scholarship by going beyond nationalist and disciplinary restrictions.

The Book: An Itinerary

Global Divas is marked by a nonlinear trajectory. As Clifford (1992: 105) rightly describes it, an itinerary can offer a "way into" the various chapters of a book by presenting them not as a series of tightly chained ideas but rather as a more dispersed "history of locations and a location of histories." In this vein, every chapter in this book speaks to and against the others.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 map out the linguistic, cultural, and geographic spaces in which Filipino gay men's border crossings take place. These three chapters in fact set up the stages on which enactment of crossings, contestations, resistance, capitulation, pleasure, and survival are played out. These chapters describe and analyze institutions, identities, practices, and persons that constitute the material and symbolic borderlands in the lives of Filipino gay men. Linguistic, cultural, and geographic borderlands are necessarily contingent and always in flux, particularly in terms of how gay and bakla traditions are marked, reconfigured, and realigned with other experiences and practices in the lives of Filipino gay men living in New York City.

In chapter 1 I describe and analyze the borderlands between *bakla* and *gay*. While maintaining their permeable cultural boundaries, *bakla* and *gay* also have concepts and ideas that do not “travel.” Foremost among these is the idea of coming out, which is crucial to a gay self-formation and which does not translate to a particularly meaningful *bakla* category.

Chapter 2 discusses swardspeak, or the queer vernacular/code spoken by Filipino gay men, and especially focuses on the pivotal roles of the idioms of *biyuti* and *drama*. It describes how queer language functions as the medium through which Filipino gay men in the diaspora create new meanings and worlds to negotiate between the promise of transnational migration and experiences of displacement. The processes of vernacularizing and translating diasporic experiences are rendered in swardspeak terms and strongly demonstrate the continuities and discontinuities of queer immigrant life.

In chapter 3 I describe the organization of gay life in post-Stonewall New York City. This chapter interweaves narratives about the various ways in which gay places, practices, and images inflect and demarcate race, class, and gender. I then move into a discussion of the place of Asians and more specifically Filipino gay men in New York City gay life. Far beyond a description of an ethnographic setting, the chapter argues that an examination of queer spaces in New York from a particular marginalized gaze can provide a complicated yet positioned view of gay urban landscape in the late twentieth century.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the heart of this book and provide thick descriptions of Filipino gay men’s negotiations between *bakla* and gay traditions. In each chapter, Filipino gay men’s crossings and transgressions between the two traditions are marked in particular spaces such as everyday life, ritual or stage spectacles, and the AIDS pandemic. Filipino gay men’s performances are located or positioned in the aforementioned spaces and are placed against experiences of immigration and displacement.

Chapter 4 narrates/unravels the dramaturgical dimension of everyday life among Filipino gay men. Discussions of various spaces and practices, such as domestic space and weekly routines, are provided in order to present issues of race, class, and other forms of social relationships (i.e., religion, family) as part of Filipino gay men’s negotiations with various instances of differences and exclusion. This chapter argues that everyday life is an arena for contestation and resistance

against as well as acquiescence and capitulation to the experiences of cultural displacement and marginality. Moreover, Filipino gay men's quotidian struggles are in fact part of a drama of survival that goes beyond performances of gender and sexuality, and that brings into focus the predicament of being an immigrant of color in the late twentieth-century United States.

In chapter 5 I consider the Santacruzán, a traditional Filipino religious ritual that is performed by a group of Filipino queers and becomes the context for an examination of Filipino gay men's negotiations in the public arena. A specific performance of the ritual in 1991 by a group of Filipino gay men in New York City is presented to lay bare the issues of race, gender, and class, and the tensions between bakla and gay traditions as they are manifested in the contested practice of cross-dressing.

Chapter 6 explores how AIDS has transformed or affected the lives of Filipino gay men, who have the highest number of HIV cases among Asian Americans. Conversely, it examines the discursive practices Filipino gay men have employed to confront and indeed transform AIDS. Using life histories of both Filipinos with and without AIDS, the discussion centers on *Tita Aida*, the idiom Filipino gay men have coined for AIDS and the concomitant practices and beliefs that surround it. I demonstrate how such an idiom connects various Filipino ideas about homosexuality, gender, religion, cross-dressing, death, family, and illness, as well as the whole enterprise of immigration and transnational lives. The relationship between AIDS and immigration among Filipino gay men illustrates how the intersections of place and time are highlighted, particularly in trying to come to terms with the suffering involved in the pandemic and the struggle for some kind of transcendence.

In the conclusion, I reflect on the various themes encountered in the ethnographic chapters, particularly focusing on the location or position of Filipino gay men's performances or articulations of being and belonging within a global and transnational context. I explore the dialectic of arrivals and departures as a means to nuance the implications of this work in terms of possible academic and political routes to the future.