Unconventional Sisterhood
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Notes

Prolegomenon

1. The following is not intended as a public statement of any individual’s personal or political views. I obtained permission to engage in interviewing and participant observation from the sisters in accordance with the human-subjects requirements established by the University of California, San Diego.

2. While interesting comparisons might be made between the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations—particularly given apparent widespread gender parity and male and female complementarity in the region—I have chosen not to engage in an extensive review of other scholarship on Southeast Asia here both precisely because the Philippines has a unique colonial and thus religiocultural history and due to lack of space.

3. Historians, conversely, have done some excellent work on female mysticism and monasticism in the Middle Ages in particular; see, e.g., Bynum 1982.

4. While I used Filipino and Taglish with the nuns during informal conversation, most of my interviews were conducted in English, largely because many of my informants were not native Tagalog speakers and thus were more comfortable with English than with Filipino.

5. Of course, their narratives were always already retrospective in nature, reenvisioned and retold within the interview context in motivated response to my prompting and interest. Nevertheless, even filtered and selectively processed remembrances and recollections can, I think, reveal much about identity and self-conception.

6. Emotional and ideological predilections inevitably inflect ethnography, and it seems more intellectually honest to acknowledge them than to hide behind a pretense of noninvolvement.

Chapter 1

1. While *ora et labora* is a Latin injunction to pray and work, my informants often loosely translated *ora* and *labora* as nouns.
3. At one of their fiestas, for instance, several sisters dressed up in stilettoes and miniskirts, while others donned male garb, staging a somewhat racy play for the assembly. Feast days also involve a good deal of singing and dancing.

4. The image of the nun as strict ascetic seems to have gained hold with reference to the foreign missionary women initially responsible for establishing female congregations in the Philippines.

5. Criminals are much less likely to target nuns than lay women because the nuns are widely respected as religious figures and well known to be pledged to poverty. Nevertheless, the habit doesn’t provide any absolute guarantee of safety. Sister Virginia was victimized when shopping for school supplies at a local mall: some fleet-fingered crook removed one thousand pesos from her pocket before she reached the checkout line. Another sister told me a story of attempted theft: while on a bus one day, she felt a hand reaching into her hip pocket. She slapped the hand and admonished the aspiring thief that all she had in her pocket was a pack of Skyflakes crackers—did he really want them that much?

6. Such Harlequin romances, full of highly idealized stories of true love despite difficult odds, can be purchased at innumerable Manileño street-vendor stalls. They are also carried in major bookstores and are consumed by a good many Filipinas, including my landlady’s daughter.

7. Although most Filipinos identify as Catholic, many others are Muslim, Protestant, Taoist, or Buddhist or are affiliated with alternative indigenous forms of Christianity such as the nationalist Aglipayan Church (Philippine Independent Church) and the Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ).

8. While the sisterhood was initially associated with the German Benedictine Congregation of St. Ottilien under its founder, Father Andreas Amrhein, it was established as a congregation of sisters directly under the Holy See (and headed by a superior general in Grottferrata, Rome) in 1924. The Missionary Benedictines in the Philippines initially established themselves in Tondo, one of the more impoverished districts of Manila, with the construction of their first Philippine school. As their clientele grew, they moved to San Marcelino and then to their current location in Manila proper, where St. Scholastica’s College now serves an almost entirely female student body.

10. Ibid.

11. Consider, for example, the Marcoses’ appropriation of the legend of Malakas and Maganda to represent themselves as a near-mythical first couple (Rafael 1990). Twentieth-century Philippine feminists have also used the story to affirm the original sexual equality of the Philippine peoples.

12. Interestingly, “[m]en who aspired to be priests had to dress and act like their women counterparts” (Santiago 1995, 154; see also Cullamar 1986).

13. Although strongly officially opposed to anito worship, the Spaniards appropriated various anitos for their own purposes, reconfiguring the spirits as Christian icons (Santiago 1995). Many of the indigenous peoples, on the
other hand, continued to practice local customs alongside Christianity. For many, “conversion” was probably simply a matter of playing the part to avoid conquistador wrath. Moreover, many doubtless understood the new God in terms of their traditional cultural logic, as a more powerful and perhaps more insistent (and certainly more incomprehensible) _anito_ but nevertheless simply one _anito_ among many (Santiago 1995; Rafael 1988).

14. “The basic assumption in the Spanish court was that Filipino women, including criollas (Spanish women born and raised in the islands), were neither worthy nor competent to form religious communities” (Santiago 1995, 166). On the other hand, the Order of Poor Clares (the first sisterhood established in the Philippines, in 1621) originally planned to open its convent to all interested Manileñas and agitated for the development of a Filipina convent in Pandacan (Torres 1992). Likewise, many other female religious congregations established under Spanish rule were quick to accept Filipinas as full members (Santiago 1995).

15. While my Tagalog-English dictionary (English 1986) does not list _solid_ as a translation of _sarado_, the sister seems to be suggesting that the phrase _Katoliko Sarado_ is colloquially taken to mean “solid Catholic.”

16. The sister claimed the “third-year syndrome” relatively common among potential applicants.

17. Social pressures exist within the Philippines to make light of difficulties in public.

18. The sister identified herself as a stickler for organization and order; she generally had little tolerance for mess and often pointedly teased me about the regularity with which my hair worked its way free of my braids.

19. See also Eugenio 1994.

20. While the suggestion that I consider the convent was not comfortable for me, the sisters were not entirely off base in assuming that my research was more than simply anthropological. I could identify with the desire to live a meaningful and ethical life, I am concerned with gender systems as a woman and feminist, and I have long been interested in issues of both individual agency and creativity, given my own struggles with limiting cultural expectations. In other words, my motivations were manifold, and they have undoubtedly heavily influenced my perspective as an ethnographer (Clifford and Marcus 1986; di Leonardo 1991; Haraway 1988; Marcus and Fischer 1986).

21. Women in particular must contend with potentially problematic configurations of femininity and female sexuality within orthodox Catholicism, as illustrated by the Madonna-whore dichotomy and the expectations of Marian-like behavior once espoused by even the Missionary Benedictine schools in the Philippines.

22. See Constantino 1975; Constantino and Constantino 1978; and Schirmer and Shalom 1986.

23. In this respect, the Philippines resembles precolonial Malaya and Indonesia. Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia, in contrast, were all unified under indigenous rulers prior to colonization.

24. These communities were headed by _datu_, village leaders who gained their position through their political facility, access to resources, and ability
to create support networks through establishing exchange relations with others. Their power was fluid and relative, a matter not of birthright but of the strategic negotiation of debts.

25. Assuming the existence of a fixed status hierarchy, the Spanish effectively imposed a class system on the indigenous peoples (see Rafael 1988 for a provocative account of Tagalog responses to the colonization of the Philippines). The country remains highly stratified to this day: roughly 2 percent of the population controls 75 percent of the land and capital (Mananzan 1992).

26. As devout if not always very good Catholics, the Spanish were interested not only in securing access to Philippine resources but also in Christianizing the Philippines, an endeavor effectively serving and served by their imperialist efforts.

27. Conversion is not always forced: foreign deities are often relatively easily incorporated into existing pantheons, if more rarely accepted in monotheistic fashion. That aside, see Rafael 1988 on the ways in which power was both consolidated and contested within the confessional.


29. Rafael (1988) suggests that the first Filipino converts creatively appropriated (and in so doing elided and resisted the deeper meanings of) the linguistic and religious signs forced on them in a context of military domination that rendered any attempts to ignore the Spanish unrealistic.

30. Filipino religious figures who could authoritatively interpret Catholicism in ways favorable to nationalist efforts—in support of the Propagandist movement, for example—were key in undermining a popular sense of religious indebtedness to the Spanish (Schumacher 1979).

31. Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*, perhaps the most well known work of literature in the Philippines, is widely credited for inciting mass revolt against the Spanish. While the tale of corrupt Spanish priests and indigenous heroes represents a critique of colonialism in and of itself, however, its fame rests largely on the strong response it provoked: Rizal was banished and eventually assassinated because the Spanish considered the book threatening. In executing Rizal, the Spanish effectively martyred him and aroused even greater revolutionary zeal on the part of many Filipinos. Interestingly, because the *Noli* was written in Spanish—a language in which only the *ilustrados* were trained—the story probably was not widely read but rather was orally transmitted among the masses.

32. The official national language of the Philippines is now Filipino, a newly created language subject to a great deal of controversy because it is based primarily on Tagalog, the tongue of the national capital region, virtually excluding many other indigenous Philippine dialects.

33. The drive for Philippine independence was backed by both American anti-imperialists and racist Americans angry about the special immigration rights accorded Filipinos as citizens of a U.S. territory. The Philippines passed a parity amendment to its constitution granting special rights to U.S. investors in 1946 and signed a ninety-nine-year U.S. military base agreement in 1947 (although the United States relinquished its Philippine bases in 1992).
34. Justifying his actions with dubious reference to governmental corruption and conspiracy, Marcos jailed his political opponents and instituted policies giving him the power to legislate by his own decree, override the Philippine Assembly, and make arrests at will. Thus, he effectively established a dictatorship, even with the nominal dissolution of martial law in January 1981.


Chapter 2

1. The sister’s dishonesty is notable given her concern with Christian morality. The justification here seems to be the primacy of her calling, apparently rendering such dishonesty a minor and legitimate sin.

2. See Warner 1976 for a discussion of the myth and cult of the Virgin Mary throughout Church history.

3. In the Philippines, older siblings are usually expected to help out with the care of their younger brothers and sisters. In such cases, entrants are generally allowed leave without having to repeat their aspirancy.


5. Thanks to Fenella Cannell for pointing this out.


7. Although Blanc-Szanton (1990) acknowledges restrictions constraining the mobility of unmarried girls in the Visayas, the married women of Estancia appear to be granted much more freedom of movement.

8. While Mrs. Seth was ethnically Indian, she was born and raised in the Philippines. Tagalog was her native tongue, she enjoyed traditional Filipino food, and she attended Catholic Mass every Sunday.

9. The fact that many Filipino men have second (or third or fourth) families makes for a good many abandoned women and children.

10. Perhaps it shouldn’t be surprising to find knowledge presumed to corrupt women in an overwhelmingly Catholic nation when, for Catholics, Eve represents the original sinner.

11. Comparisons might be made between Ferdinand’s claims and the gender stereotypes uncovered by Blanc-Szanton’s work in Estancia, the Visayas, where males are “seen as easygoing, generous, and fun-loving but easily offended, and females as more reliable, more skilled in economic interactions, and more inclined towards verbal rather than physical abuse” (Blanc-Szanton 1990, 378). Blanc-Szanton further observes that such characteristics are seen as complementary.

12. While most of my Manileño informants placed a great deal of emphasis on female virginity, Cannell (1999) observes that female virginity wasn’t granted such significance in the Bicolano villages she has studied, and Blanc-Szanton (1990) suggests that the emphasis placed on female virginity in the Visayas is not as strong as in many Mediterranean cultural contexts.

13. Of course, I suspect few Philippine women consider the querida system a desirable aspect of their heritage. After all, it is a one-sided system.
Had former president Corazon Aquino taken a lover, the public would hardly have been supportive; even after her famed husband’s death, she was expected to remain faithful to his memory.


15. See Stoler 1991 on colonial understandings of gender elsewhere in southeast Asia. More generally, it is important to observe that women have both lost and gained rights and opportunities under colonization. Blanket status assessments (and perhaps the term status itself) are thus suspect in the absence of specificity (di Leonardo 1991).

16. One of the first modern feminist organizations in the Philippines, MAKIBAKA, formed in part in protest over a beauty contest. Moreover, GABRIELA protested the Miss Universe contest in the Philippines, condemning it as a costly marketing ploy to increase tourism.

17. Why? Perhaps in part because males are allowed greater mobility while women are expected to remain relatively housebound. Moreover, men who act feminine are essentially taking up a less dominant (and thus more tolerable) position, whereas women who act masculine may be seen as insubordinate and as agitating for power not rightfully theirs. Female cross-dressing in the Philippines is also simply much less glamorous, much less visible, and much more everyday than male transvestitism.

18. The bakla is also often the butt of jokes.

Chapter 3

1. Veil here refers both to the veil itself—a head covering symbolizing humility before God—and the Missionary Benedictine costume in its entirety.

2. The congregation now sends applicants to be tested at an intercongregational formation center in Metro Manila.

3. During Sister Mary Peter’s time, the process included a year of candidacy, a year of postulancy, and a year of the novitiate.

4. The community superiors play an important role in facilitating such reconciliation.

5. Much as I was tempted by Mona’s invitation, I declined because both concerned that my actions would be seen as sacrilegious by the more conservative sisters and well aware that my desire to participate in the ceremony was anthropological, not religious.

6. Community recreation both provides relief from the serious business of becoming a nun and facilitates the development of community feeling. Entrants are also allotted a certain amount of free time.

7. Entrants are supposed to observe silence after 10:00 P.M.

8. Many of my informants spoke of having become politicized during the Marcos years. Sister Justine and Sister Jacoba claimed the national crisis situation key to their personal and congregational radicalization, while Sister Placid told me that she had begun to work full time with the anti-Marcos mass movements in 1975.

9. See also Bynum 1982 on the use of maternal imagery, the feminization of religious language, and female monasticism in the High Middle Ages.
10. Of course, Catholicism is hardly unique in this respect; many forms of Protestantism restrict religious roles for women and define femininity in limiting fashion. Nor are traditional Hinduism or fundamentalist Islam any less patriarchal (although in every case it is important to examine variations in practice at particular points in place and time).

11. See Cannell 1995 on the ways in which female healers in Bicol imitate Christ as a “shamanic exemplar.”

12. During Sister Micha’s time, novices were sent out for only two to three months. The time period has been extended to provide a better taste of the life.

13. Novices do not always have much choice about their assignments; such decisions are made by superiors in formation, in concert with the provincial governor.

14. While the juniorate now lasts a full five years, it was only three and a half years when Sister Mary Peter entered and only three years during Sister Micha’s time. The sisters adapted their formation program after the Holy See recommended extending the juniorate.

15. While the Missionary Benedictines now admit candidates only once a year, the juniors making their perpetual vows while I was in Philippines had entered (and thus were graduating from formation) six months apart.

Chapter 4

1. My seminarian friends in the Philippines appeared even more strongly focused on sexuality—one told me that men in his order were encouraged to have platonic girlfriends and to channel their sexual curiosity into the consumption of erotic movies and pictures.

2. The physiology of female sexuality is still open to debate, of course.

3. Sex is hardly the only—or even the primary—factor motivating Filipino women to marry. Filipinas are not only socialized to push their own sexual needs aside but also to desire husbands for financial security, legitimate reproduction, status and cultural acceptance, and even love and romance.

4. Sister Sylvia, Sister Placid, and Sister Justine—all high-profile activists responsible for expanding the congregation’s mission thrust in new directions—appear to have been allowed greater freedom of choice. Such cases are relatively unusual, however.

5. It was not by accident that Sister Micha and Sister Josephine became my primary informants; both remained in the Manila priory/college complex even after the April rotations, rendering them far more regularly accessible to me than most of my other interviewees.

6. Filipinos typically term Metro Manila “the city” and everywhere else “the province.”

7. During the tenure of my research, I became friends with two Chinese aspirants secretly being coached for the convent as well as several Indian nuns brought over to the Philippines for formation after their congregation was annexed by the Missionary Benedictines. Both the Chinese and the Indians talked to me of significant misunderstandings and exhibited resistance...
to Filipinization. On the other hand, my Filipina informants did not appear to recognize the imperialist tinge to the ways in which they were attempting to remake their guests in Philippine fashion.

8. See Constable 1997 on Filipina domestic servants in Hong Kong.

9. The language issue was a sore point for Sister Micha, who had advocated the use of indigenous dialects during the graduation liturgy at the Holy Family school; she was unhappy that the graduating class had insisted on English to prove itself as good as its Scholastican counterpart.

10. She had had to petition to be allowed to live in such an unorthodox community, but the fact that her superiors ultimately agreed to let her do as she wanted attests to the flexibility of the congregation’s rules.

11. During the Marcos dictatorship, a relative of Imelda’s named Hermínio Disini became heavily involved in Philippine politics and prospered tremendously from his position. As head of Herdis Management and Investment Corporation, Disini helped to engineer a deal in which Westinghouse’s highly inflated bid on the construction of the Bataan nuclear power plant was accepted over General Electric’s much lower bid. Following the Chernobyl accident and the growth of Filipino anti-nuclear sentiment, however, the Aquino government halted work on the plant (Schirmer and Shalom 1986).

12. Some unemployed townsfolk apparently initially cooperated with the government in working on the plant, although they told Sister Sylvia that they took the work on faith that the plant would never become operational.

13. The Roman Catholic Church, led by Pope John XXIII, convened its second ecumenical council—Vatican II—in 1962. At that time, the Church instituted the vernacularization of the liturgy, recommended greater lay participation in Church activities, acknowledged the importance of ecumenical dialogue with other churches, and initiated various reforms of relevance to the lives of men and women religious in the modern world (see Gaerlan 1993).

14. Such remembrances not only mark the importance of historicizing the community’s radicalization but also signify the Philippineness of the congregation.

15. The German HDF sponsors had their own ideas about the use of their money, however, despite their distance from and lack of familiarity with the Philippine situation.

16. St. Benedict lived as a hermit for some time in Subiaco, Italy.

17. The sisters have additional opportunities to get away. On the first Sunday of every month, Sister Josephine told me, they engage in “recollec- tion” (“a whole day of prayer”) to reaffirm their personal faith; they “have eight days retreat every year . . . for refueling”; they can request “psychospiritual renewal or sabbatical leave” every seven years; and they can ask for more time off as needed.

18. **Balut** is a Filipino delicacy consisting of a chick in its shell; **sampaguita** is an indigenous flower.

### Chapter 5

1. While I am using Filipino spelling, the cult is also known as the Suprema de la Iglesia del Ciudad Mística de Dios.
2. While Carmen was one of my primary informants about the Siyudad, she remained an outsider engaged in an act of translation. I do not in fact know how accurate believers would deem her explanations. Although Mr. Santos seconded her arguments, there are doubtless large gaps, both of experience and background, between the ways in which the cult has been rendered here and the ways in which cult members might define themselves and their directive. After all, Carmen was keenly interested in the cult’s logic and may well have been forwarding interpretations of its activities that were far more explicitly coherent than those maintained by its members—much as I am attempting to make sense of my own field data in ways perhaps quite alien to my subject populations. The problem here is not unique: anthropologists are typically highly dependent on their closest interviewees’ perspectives to supplement general observations of and encounters with larger subject populations. Much ethnographic knowledge is thus inevitably secondhand, which is not a bad thing per se but is something of concern with respect to the possibility, and perhaps the probability, of misrepresenting others.

3. Constable (1997) suggests that not all Hong Kong employers share the view that Filipinas are ideal household servants.

4. While nationalism is difficult to define, the populations in question identify as nationalist because explicitly dedicated to promoting Filipino well-being in light of historically based concerns about both foreign and local exploitation. See Anderson (1983) on the development of (imagined) national identities within colonial contexts. Comparisons might also be made between the Siyudad and other anticolonial syncretic millenarian sects in Southeast Asia, including the Cao Dai in Vietnam (Oliver 1976).

5. Ironically, the colors of the Philippine flag are the same as the colors of the U.S. flag. If displaying these colors was subversive for the Siyudad, it might well have been understood in very different ways by the Americans in the Philippines.

6. It is doubtful that Rizal, a strong critic of the Church, conceived of himself as another Christ.

7. Priestesses are ordinary laborers and are not compensated for their religious services. The church does not collect taxes. While the town is officially run by a separately elected barangay captain, however, all of the 250 or so adults residing in the community subscribe to the faith (what’s more, Suprema claims close to 50,000 followers nationwide).

8. Ileto 1979 is a good reference with respect to the popular and peasant nature of Philippine millennialism.

9. In this case, our debt was mediated through the presence of Carmen, who, as an interested theologian, acted as a self-appointed translator for the rest of us. She appeared to view this endeavor more as an open exchange of knowledge than an exercise in hospitality. Yet such scholarly dialogue itself involves considerations of power: knowledge, specifically spiritual knowledge, is and has been historically used in the Philippines to maintain control over others. The early colonial Spanish male priests, for example, initially claimed special and supreme knowledge, thereby positioning themselves as experts in a way Philippine women could never be by virtue of both their
gender and their race. By Siyudad reckoning, in contrast, Filipinas are the recognized experts.

10. I am not sure if this is the true etymology: my Tagalog-English dictionary (English 1986) lists *panatika-ko* as a term of Spanish origin but fails to indicate the origins of the word *panata*. Nonetheless, the Siyudad has reappropriated what was doubtless intended as a derogatory appellation for positive, self-empowering purposes.

11. We visited Santa Lucia Falls, Jacob’s Well, and the Twin Caves of Peter and Paul. More devout pilgrims go on to Judgment, marked by passage through a long narrow cavern; Calvary, marked by a hike up into hills representing sacrifice; the Cave of the Father, marked by a trek seven thousand feet up the mountain; and finally Paradise, where two waterfalls signifying Creation can be found in the crater of the extinct volcano.


13. Of course, all social beings, including those professing a more unified sense of self, maintain potential membership in multiple, often conflicting, communities of reference, variously indexed within different contexts for different purposes.

14. The phrase can be literally glossed as the “settling down of the water of life,” although Nona’s gloss probably more clearly duplicates its affective tone and poetic meaning. *Pagtining* is deep Tagalog and indicates depths of stillness.

15. The distinction I am drawing here is again complicated with respect to the frame of reference involved—Catholicism, after all, is still widely deemed a more mystical faith than Protestantism, although I have been arguing that it is more intellectual than the Siyudad Mistika.

Chapter 6

1. My informants’ motivations were multiple and complex. Sister Micha, for example, used the interviews partly to clear away cobwebbed stereotypes about nuns.

2. Although also encouraged to be modest, most modern-day Philippine monks eventually become priests, a high-status career engendering both significant respect and the sort of glamour associated in the United States with high-powered professions such as law and medicine. Thus, male Filipinos may be more likely than their female cohorts to undertake a religious vocation to feed ambitions for fame and recognition.

3. Likewise, ethnographers make use of cultural distance to develop a greater understanding of cultural alternatives.

4. My sources were in conflict about *Pilipina*’s founding date and even about the organization’s name: some sources also instead term it *Filipina*. Almanzor (1990) sets the founding date at 1980, Lanot (1985) writes that it was founded in 1981, and Sister Justine claims to have established it in the 1970s (when talking with me, she set the date at 1977). While I found this confusion frustrating given my desire for accuracy, perhaps there is a lesson
here—it may not matter so much exactly when Pilipina was established, at least not to the founders; rather, the important thing is that it was founded during the Marcos years as one of the country’s first feminist organizations.

5. GABRIELA’s member organizations include Amihan, a federation of peasant women; Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan, an alliance of women workers; SAMAKANA, an organization of urban poor women; Innabuyog, an alliance of indigenous women’s organizations in the Cordillera; GABRIELA-Youth; and the Association of Women in Theology. Notably, GABRIELA’s diversity underlines the diversity of Filipina feminism.

6. While primarily focused on such local issues, GABRIELA also maintains an international desk and sponsors an annual Women International Solidarity Conference.

7. While the use of missalettes is common Catholic practice worldwide, the routine was new to me at the time.

8. Few of the priests used inclusive language—rendering it all the more difficult for the nuns to be forbidden the priesthood themselves.

9. While it may seem strange that the nuns use inclusive English rather than reverting to gender-neutral Filipino forms, their choice probably reflects the assumption that English is better suited to communication with a broad audience, not to mention the fact that the congregation includes native speakers of many of the different languages indigenous to the Philippines. Moreover, making a point about inclusive language through the use of English represents one means of making a larger point about gender in Catholic tradition.


11. Regular offerings include such classes as Gender-Fair Education, Women and Development, Women and Health, Feminist Theories, Gender Issues in Marriage, and even Aikido, Tai Chi, Core Energy, Enneagram, and Neurolinguistics.

12. The phrase the woman question was also current in Victorian England.

13. The bakla example aside, such body consciousness is notably weaker when it comes to Filipino males, although I did meet men who took pride in their strong physiques, Western wear, and fashionable hair, and although men participate in and actively maintain the cultural belief that a woman’s looks matter.

14. Philippine Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin recently observed, “Women have another mission in the world and should not become priests. Besides, who would go to confession anymore if the priest was a woman? A woman will not keep the secret” (Quote, Unquote).

15. Notwithstanding the sister’s observations, many Filipinas are not very subservient, as demonstrated by both the nuns’ example and the tenacity of the myth of matriarchy.

16. While legislation may well eventually be enacted prohibiting incest, further criminalizing rape, and protecting lesbians, attitudes toward sexuality are not very amenable to legislative regulation.
Chapter 7

1. See also Jayawardena 1986 for a historical overview of Filipina feminism and its connections with Philippine nationalism.

2. The KMK currently claims to represent fifteen thousand women workers—a significant but still small number when compared to the more than eight million women workers reported by the Philippine Department of Labor in 1986 (West 1992). Although the KMK originally comprised primarily laborers in factories and in the service sectors, by 1988 peasant women, sugar workers, and miners’ wives were included.

3. MAKIBAKA’s first public action was the picketing of a beauty pageant: “The picket attacked the commercialization of sex, the degradation of women as objects of pleasure, and the irrelevance of beauty contests in a poverty-stricken country” (Fortaleza in Aquino 1985, 338).

4. Many Native Americans are not happy about the appropriation of their traditions by outsiders, a point lucidly made in the Cheyenne film White Shamans, Plastic Medicine Men.

5. Cardinals are bishops with elective power over the Pope; they are also qualified to occupy certain exclusive administrative positions in Rome. The International Synod of Bishops is called every three years for consultation, with a steering committee active in the interim.

6. The structural possibility of greater power on the part of international Church participants remains present, a possibility that may be utilized to a greater degree by future Popes.

7. Burns (1992) observes that the Church itself has created the conditions for feminist insurgency on the part of many female orders. The Second Vatican Council, convened between 1959 and 1961, encouraged Catholic sisters in their attempts to gain greater control over their lives, permitting at least limited experimentation on the part of individual orders. And although “it is clear from [Rome’s] later disputes with some communities that it expected that women religious would concentrate on minor external changes in their habits, their daily schedules of prayer and other activities, and their relationships to the larger Catholic community . . . reaffirm[ing] commitment to the traditional interpretation of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience,” many sisters in fact instituted more radical reforms (Burns 1992, 137).

8. Bailey (1993) further argues that some degree of practical or symbolic resistance or disengagement is characteristic of institutions in general and is probably even necessary to their survival given the unforeseen contingencies with which institutions are constantly forced to contend. Rarely are the members of a collectivity always and entirely committed to the collectivity: their evasions, rule breaking, and outright rebellion may variously forward, inhibit, and redirect organizational aims.

9. In many respects, I very much agree with Sister Justine’s definitions of feminism. I call myself feminist because I am concerned about the ways in which culturally constructed understandings of gender play into and are affected by larger systems of power and privilege, and because committed to reformist action in pursuit of more egalitarian ideals.