

## P R E F A C E

*Monsoon Marketplace* was written, reviewed, and revised over a span of twelve years. This book almost never came to be published.

Through the long, tireless process of bringing its narratives and arguments to life, I was married and my daughter was born. I divided my time between Berkeley and Manila. I taught in Singapore, then in Hong Kong. As my manuscript gestated, all this unfolded, although not necessarily in the order I describe.

Doing archival work for this manuscript, I spent a significant amount of my time in libraries. I benefited from two University of California grants that enabled me to conduct preliminary research in Manila and Singapore in the incipient stages of this study. I was fortunate to be able to visit the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the National Archives in Kew, London, where I learned about the disparities in how marginalized colonial materials are preserved and loaned. Institutional and financial support from the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Faculty of Arts, Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, and the Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies Programme funded respites from my teaching duties that allowed me to complete my monograph.

My experience of libraries inspired the book's methods. I remember straining my eyes for hours in the darkness of the microfilm section of the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library in Singapore. I thought a lot about comparison and juxtaposition through the physical act of browsing its Southeast Asian Studies collection, which allowed me to see affinities among the seemingly unrelated volumes on its shelves. In Metro Manila, doing archival work was less straightforward and efficient, as I needed to travel to

various libraries scattered across the traffic-choked megalopolis to be able to access issues from the same periodicals. Delving into the Rizal Library's American Historical Collection and Filipiniana Section, I carefully flipped through brittle, yellowing pages of long discontinued newspapers and magazines, cognizant of the fragility of memory. I consumed a wide range of materials produced and circulated during the periods I was studying, beguiled by the ultimately futile goal of immersing myself in their now disparate, alien cultures.

I am indebted to scholars whose influence permeates this work. Trinh T. Minh-ha's indefatigable advocacy of underrepresented perspectives and experiences has informed *Monsoon Marketplace's* sensibility. Despite its unconventional structure, Jeff Wasserstrom's publication of an earlier extract in the *Journal of Asian Studies* helped nurture its ideas. The late Jeff Hadler's ebullient passion for Southeast Asian Studies will always be an inspiration, even in his absence. In ways I had been unaware of, they highlighted the ethics and politics behind our choices as scholars about the objects and methods we grapple with in our analyses.

My deep gratitude goes to my editor, Fred Nachbaur, without whose support and commitment this book would not have been published. I am enormously appreciative of his effort to shepherd my manuscript through the precarious process of peer evaluation and editorial approval. Thank you to my two anonymous referees, who were equally encouraging and critical. One expert incisively read different versions of my manuscript with a meticulous eye for structure, argumentation, and evidence. The other referee's unconditional enthusiasm for my book project gave it a final, crucial push over the goal line. Their comments and questions stressed upon me the importance of negotiating the tension between theory and history, which I am still striving to resolve.

Having taught in three different cities and countries, I am lucky to have been enriched by the insight and encouragement of diverse and erudite coworkers, collaborators, and friends who have shaped my thoughts. Ruanni Tupas was an early proponent with his shared interest in decolonizing critical frameworks. Bearing the same engagement with the history and culture of our city, Vince Serrano's poetry about Manila forms the creative counterpoint to this monograph. I am extremely thankful for present and former colleagues at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Department

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Close friends back in Manila, who will probably never read this book, are a godsend for keeping me grounded with their constant care and humor. To the Gonzaga and Limsico families, I could barely even begin to repay their unwavering compassion and encouragement beyond the bounds of necessity. Having the courage and diligence to raise me on her own, my mother gave me the freedom and confidence to explore my own interests and projects.

This book is dedicated to two people in particular: Taryn is a boundless ball of energy and affection who suspects me of being the hardest-working teacher for typing furiously on my MacBook each waking day. Tiffany, my harshest critic, constantly urges me never to settle for the mundane or overdone. As she always reminds me, living in the world means loving and striving intensely.

Beyond the discrete traces of their influence, this book is inescapably indebted to the divergent interpretations and expectations of readers about how its pages should have been written or what its ideas might imply.



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