

# Introduction

## *Affective Economies of Sexualized Tourism*

In 1991, my friend Sylviana Castillo, a Chicana feminist active in Cuban solidarity work, told me about an article that she had seen in *Playboy* magazine featuring Cuban women (Cohen 1991). Surprised to see the bodies of Cuban women displayed for mass consumption, we wondered where Cuba was heading after the fall of the Soviet Union. What happened to the ideal of liberating Cuban women from capitalist forms of sexual objectification? Why would the Cuban government, through its Ministry of Tourism, host a team of *Playboy* photographers and writers? Why, during the worst economic crisis of the Cuban Revolution, would it provide them with lavish accommodations and transport in helicopters, boats, and corporate jets? And where was the protective, vigilant, and image-conscious state patriarch in all of this? After all, was not this the only country in the Western Hemisphere that boasted the eradication of prostitution and beauty pageants, and that proudly supported women's professional accomplishments as doctors, scientists, and engineers?<sup>1</sup>

As it turned out, the *Playboy* team enjoyed the best of Cuban tourism, and its French photographer ended up marrying one of the Cuban models featured in the striking layout. Marriage soon became one of the paradigmatic outcomes of a new tourist economy in Cuba as increasing numbers of Cubans—mostly women—wedded foreign

visitors and left the island. The *Playboy* article, appearing at a crucial period of economic and political uncertainty and transition, introduced an era of a mixed-market economy in Cuba and initiated a decade of growth in tourism, tourist-oriented liaisons, and marriage to foreigners.

Sylviana and I wondered if Cuba would end up like the rest of the Caribbean, viewed as little more than a destination for travelers from the affluent North. Would its scenic beaches be blocked from view by the cloned resorts so common in Cancún, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica? Would it capitalize on its infamous past as a pleasure playground to recapture the international tourism market? Were Cuban women destined to become the means of selling beaches and vacation packages, in much the same way as had happened to women in the Dominican Republic and in other tropical settings? Cuba, it seems, had discovered the benefit of exploiting one of its most precious resources. Was it any surprise that the *Playboy* display of the bodies of Cuban women on a global stage of sexual entertainment coincided with a massive infusion of tourists, more visitors than the island had seen in three prior decades combined?<sup>2</sup> The *Playboy* article ushered in a period of painful transitions for all Cubans, with women becoming the shock absorbers for the many changes that such cultural, social, and economic shifts entail.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a frenzy of international media attention to the resurgence of prostitution in Cuba did more to stimulate interest in the new sexual economy than any direct promotion campaign could have achieved.<sup>3</sup> Just as the international media buzzed with accounts of cheap, sexy, and brown Cuban bodies for sale, rumors circulated throughout Cuba about young women—*jineteras*—leaving for stints in Havana and Varadero and returning home with dollars, perfume, designer clothes, domestic appliances, foreign boyfriends, and invitations to marry and travel abroad.<sup>4</sup>

The contradictions were particularly heartfelt in the dusty, rural, central Cuban town where I was born and raised. During return visits, I listened as folks talked about young women who wore the latest fashions and spent time trekking through vacation resorts and the capital city. People equally envied, admired, and chastised them for their ability to navigate the social and economic changes taking place. In a period of instability and complex changes, *jineteras* embodied and

symbolized the anxieties, dangers, and transitions that were beginning rapidly to transform Cuban society and culture away from a socialist ethos toward market reforms.

Before long, people inside and outside Cuba began saying that Cuba was becoming like the Dominican Republic—a major market and popular destination for Northern travelers seeking sex.<sup>5</sup> Uniformity in outcomes seemed a surprising assertion. After all, the Dominican Republic has long been a quasi-colony of the United States, while Cuba has remained a bastion of anticapitalist, anti-U.S. sentiment, having achieved some degree of independence from its powerful neighbor to the north. The Dominican Republic, on the other hand, was emblematic of the problems that could beset Cuba, troubles such as child prostitution, gambling casinos, widespread social inequities, and the pervasive lack of a social safety net for its citizens. Cuba had confronted and abolished all these problems shortly after the revolutionary government came to power in 1959. Therefore, unlike the Dominican Republic with its extensive marketplace of sex businesses, before the collapse of the socialist trading bloc and its entry into transnational tourism, Cuba had no widespread prostitution or sex establishments.

In contrast to Dominican women, Cuba's socialist policies guaranteed women a high level of investment in human capital formation, with large measures of juridical, occupational, sexual, and educational equity within the revolutionary process. *Cubanas* did not fit the formulaic representation of prostitutes, often portrayed as women lacking educational and vocational skills and agency.<sup>6</sup> It appeared to be an anomaly that foreign tourists were flocking to Cuba and buying sex as they did in other parts of the Caribbean. As a feminist, I was horrified to learn that women's socioeconomic independence appeared to dwindle to a small repertoire of options that included marriage and selling sex to foreigners. Certainly, the Cuban state and Communist Party apparatus owed more to women. By the mid-1990s, however, the erosion of women's status and material well-being made revolutionary Cuba resemble its Dominican neighbor more than in any other time in recent history.

*Economies of Desire: Sex and Tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic* explores the erotic underpinnings of transnational tourism by offering a comparative analysis of the complex affective economies of heterosexual sexualized tourism across Cuba and the Dominican

Republic. In so doing, it presents a reconceptualization and rearticulation of current understandings of sexualized tourism, the identity construction of the “sex worker,” and the affective processes of globalized enterprises by focusing on the unifying tendencies of capitalist production in the area of tourism development.<sup>7</sup> In this book, I strive to challenge the notion of “sex worker” that is often applied to racialized working-class women who participate in relationships with foreign men by detailing the ways in which third-world women negotiate new economies and navigate the contact zones between the first and third worlds by using tactical sex. I explore the ways in which practices and identities are discursively inscribed to eroticize racialized, working-class subjects. My argument is that the exchange of goods and money for sexual services is not an unambiguous commercial endeavor but a discursive construction that is contested and in motion, changing across time and space.

## Comparative Scope of This Book

The Dominican Republic and Cuba are ideal sites for a comparative investigation of sex and tourism. Indeed, César J. Ayala (1999) asserts that the nations of the Spanish Caribbean share a certain historical continuity that makes it appropriate to study them as a unified whole. For one thing, an intertwined history binds these neighboring countries. For example, migration between the islands has been a common occurrence throughout their histories, shaping many shared aspects of culture, economy, and society. Cuba and the Dominican Republic have also been constitutive in each other’s anticolonial and other emancipation struggles.

The transatlantic slave trade that fueled the political economy of the sugar plantation, and the geopolitical incorporation of these two nations into a global order that is inherently unequal and uneven, mark their historical trajectory. During the colonial and neocolonial eras, both countries shared resonant histories of racial and capitalist formation, with a monoculture economy that underpins the structures of the transnational tourism industry in these islands today. As I point out in Chapter 1, the blueprint for tourism and leisure services was established with the plantation economies and the extraction of labor and natural resources in earlier eras. This historical and geopolitical grid

thus constitutes the integration of these two countries into a global monopoly of leisure services. To a certain extent, Cuba was able to disengage from the empire of global capitalism from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, but its insertion into capitalist markets—particularly through tourism—temporarily brought it back into line with the rest of the Caribbean. Thus this book is concerned with the “unifying tendencies” that are the basis for the formation of the tourism corporate structure of the Caribbean that creates similar outcomes to the plantation economies (Ayala 1999: 21).<sup>8</sup> The new kinds of sex-affective relations that I discuss in this book are present not just in Cuba and the Dominican Republic but in other parts of the Caribbean as well.<sup>9</sup>

My concern is with excavating the policies and politics that promote sexual-affective relations in tourism-development projects. I spend less time examining differences within and between the Dominican Republic and Cuba. These are nevertheless significant. For instance, in 2004 the Bush administration advanced the notion that the Cuban state was promoting sex tourism (Reynolds 2004a, 2004b). However, the sale of sex to tourists in the Dominican Republic, more widespread and with a longer history, has not engrossed the U.S. media and policy makers to the same extent. The ongoing hostility toward the Cuban government serves as a backdrop for wider coverage of this phenomenon by the U.S. media.

Another difference between the two countries is the high degree of state-driven human capital development in Cuba (Feinsilver 1993; Carnoy 2007). At many levels, the condition of Cubans is enhanced by state involvement in social welfare programs, not just in universal education and health care but in the use of social workers to alleviate social problems at the level of communities and households, as well as subsidies connected to housing and nutrition, entertainment and leisure. Cuba also has lower levels of interpersonal violence, drug use, and drug trafficking, problems that haunt the lives of Dominicans on a daily basis. Does social capital make for greater levels of agency in exchanges with tourists and more solidarity between Cubans and foreigners? Yes, even though during the early 1990s, at the height of the post-Soviet crisis, the desperation for survival was acute and fraught with dangers.

The Dominican Republic does have more class segmentation and stratification than Cuba, offering economic growth without social or

cultural development and hence providing women a double-edged sword. In many ways, Dominican women take more risks and are more vulnerable in transnational encounters, but their longer history of engagement with transnational relations also offers more networks of support and protection. The greater development of civil society in the Dominican Republic also makes possible new avenues for women to seek redress and empowerment, albeit in limited ways. These are topics that deserve further research. Ultimately, however, as I argue in *Economies of Desire*, the global empire of capitalism flattened many differences between these two countries, conflating emergent opportunities with old forms of oppression.

Transnational speculations abound in island settings because people's orientation to what goes on *alla*, "over there," is part of daily parlance. In Cuba, comparisons were often made with the Dominican Republic: "No queremos ser otra República Dominicana" (We don't want to be another Dominican Republic), pronounced a conference participant in Cárdenas where I presented research findings on tourism and sex work in the Dominican Republic in 1997. "No queremos ser otra República Dominicana," a woman sociologist told me in Havana, referring to U.S. cultural and political imperialism in Dominican affairs. In daily conversations, as I discuss in Chapter 2, Dominicans were also eager to make comparisons between their situation and that of their neighboring island. Thus this book is an outcome of the ways in which Cubans and Dominicans pressed me to think and imagine comparatively.

## Setting and Methodology

This book is the culmination of over ten years of engagement with the subject of tourism and sex in the Caribbean. It began with questions about Cuban women's participation in the new tourism economy, which led to preliminary research trips to the island in the mid-1990s. However, conducting research in Cuba proved difficult. Because I was a Cuban émigré living in the United States, my visits were regulated by the awkward, contentious, and erratic relations that characterize U.S.-Cuba affairs. Fraught with restrictions from both the Cuban and U.S. governments at every step of the process, I channeled my energies into investigating the situation in the Dominican Republic, where a sex-worker organization was forming, the Movimiento de Mujeres Un-

idas (MODEMU). In 1996 and 1997, I interviewed women who sold sex to foreign tourists in Puerto Plata and Sosúa, resort regions on the north coast of the Dominican Republic.<sup>10</sup> Subsequent visits took place in 2004, 2005, and 2007 to the capital city of Santo Domingo and the nearby resort setting of Boca Chica. This later period of research concentrated mainly on the organization of MODEMU and less on tourist-oriented sex work.

When the Clinton administration temporarily relaxed restrictions to allow U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba, with the ostensible goal of fomenting “regime change” and imposing democracy, I was able to partake of this opportunity as a researcher. Along with U.S. visitors of various cultural, racial, and age demographics traveling to Cuba, from 2000 to 2004, I averaged three yearly trips to the island, working as an assistant tour guide for educational conferences, business meetings, and music festivals in Havana, Santiago, and Varadero. Going back and forth provided both continuity and distance in the research process, and working within the industry gave me an insider’s view of the culture at work within resorts, beaches, restaurants, discothèques, and other spaces that cater to tourists. I have taken precautions at every step of the research process to safeguard the identities and protect the anonymity of those I interviewed.<sup>11</sup>

Investigating a topic connected to stigmatized and criminal activities brought difficulties during early stints of fieldwork. As a Cuban living in the United States, I was entangled within the sociopolitical conflict between the United States and Cuba that continues to define those who travel to the island as dubious subjects with problematic political intentions.<sup>12</sup> We are admonished for traveling to Cuba by members of the Cuban American community who espouse total disengagement from the “Castro regime.” No longer referring to Cuban Americans as *gusanos* (worms), the official national discourse in Cuba positions us as accepted members of *la comunidad* (the community) because of our remittances, which constitute one of the largest contributions to the national economy. With due cause, nevertheless, we are still distrusted as possible counterrevolutionaries, CIA informants, or potential enemies of the state.<sup>13</sup>

My nationality was not the only hindrance to my research. In both settings, the fact that I was asking detailed questions about sexual, stigmatized, and illegal activities raised suspicion and made it challenging

to cultivate trust in research relationships. For example, a Dominican hotel clerk whom I befriended with the idea of obtaining an interview asked if I was really questioning him because of a study or because I was practicing prostitution in Santo Domingo. This situation and similar ones revealed how overidentified sex work is with women researchers and with women traveling alone. These types of experiences left me with the firm conviction that I was trespassing on cultural norms. Simply asking questions about sex work marked me as a moral transgressor and thus *una mala mujer*. As a bad woman, I crossed the boundaries of proper womanhood by traveling alone, openly asking and talking about sexual matters, and spending time in sexually demarcated spaces. Equally, I was configured as the good girl by sex workers who asked if I was a nun or an investigative reporter. Trapped in the binaries of social identities, I kept insisting that I was a researcher, much to everyone's chagrin.

Acting as both a tourist and field researcher produced a triangulation that continually located me in contradictory multiple subject positions.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, my positionality illuminated particular social conditions and raised important questions about epistemological inquiries and theoretical frames. I turn to these issues next.

## Theoretical Framework

My research on sex tourism in Cuba provoked a reevaluation of the categories of analysis that I employed when studying sex work in the Dominican Republic (Cabezas 1999, 1998).<sup>15</sup> Before long, I realized that the unified object of my research, the "sex worker," did not exist, was ambiguous, or at the very least was quite an unstable subject. Furthermore, most women in Cuba did not identify as a sex worker or a *jinetera*. Instead, I found many elusive travel romances and intimate encounters that did not fit the standard academic categories of "prostitute" or "sex worker." For example, in spite of living off remittances and gifts from their transnational boyfriends, many women did not identify themselves as sex workers or consider their romantic liaisons with tourists a form of prostitution. Rather, their situations presented the interstices of transnational linkages but did not confirm an easy fitting with the category of sex worker. I became fascinated by the indeterminacy and negotiation of decentered identities, the multivalent



nature of encounters, and the affection and obligation of social ties that develop between locals and travelers. By way of clarification, I offer Yolanda's story, which follows, as a way to crystallize some of the challenges and ambiguities inherent in these encounters.

## Yolanda's Story

Yolanda is a twenty-one-year-old mother of three from Puerto Plata, the oldest and largest tourist resort destination in the Dominican Republic. The day I met Yolanda, a tall, dark-skinned woman with long, shiny hair, she was on her way back from the capital city of Santo Domingo, where she had arranged a tourist visa to Austria to visit with her boyfriend in Vienna. This was quite a feat for a working-class woman who had never traveled outside the country.

At the age of twenty, Yolanda found herself with three children and no financial support. Her husband had left her, and had subsequently renounced all obligations toward his children. Her uncle, who had worked for many years at one of the many tourist enclaves in the area, helped her get a job as an "entertainer" at the beach resort. This work entailed facilitating recreational activities for the resort's guests, such as volleyball games, pool games, and conga dances. The wages were meager and did not fully support her family. She found constant sexual harassment from male tourists to be infuriating. They treated her as part of the entertainment. They touched her, grabbed her, and asked her to go back to their rooms or to go out dancing. This position, nevertheless, permitted her to meet some of her foreign boyfriends.

Her first long-term relationship was with a twenty-eight-year-old German tourist who invited her to go out after work. She agreed and thereafter saw him every night of his vacation stay. They dined in lavish restaurants and shopped at expensive boutiques. They spent a weekend at a tourist beach up the coast. When his vacation ended, he promised that she would visit him in Germany, and he left her *un regalo* (a small gift) of \$300. She visited him in Germany a few months later but eventually ended the arrangement because she felt that he was unwilling to commit to a more permanent relationship.

Her latest boyfriend is a thirty-three-year-old Austrian engineer from Vienna whom she also met at the resort complex. They dated during his vacation stay and became romantically involved. Before

leaving the country, he had a telephone installed at her house so that he could call her regularly. He also asked her to quit her job at the resort, promising to send her a monthly remittance to cover rent and help support her children.

Yolanda's experience and those of many other actors in the tourism landscape show that elements involved in what is called "sex tourism" can be ambiguous and go beyond the frameworks of victims and oppressors or the gender descriptors of "romance" versus "sex tourism" that characterize descriptions of transcultural liaisons.<sup>16</sup> Even in situations where money does change hands, ambiguity and inconsistency mark these relationships as something other than sex work.<sup>17</sup> We need to ask, therefore, who is considered a sex worker? Who identifies as one? When is it a productive category for instigating social change? When does it reify or challenge configurations of race and class? How does monetization and affective exchange in relationships lead to incomplete commodification in transnational encounters?

As I spent more time in Cuba and the Dominican Republic researching sex tourism, and as I learned from low-income women about the ways to navigate conditions of poverty, it became difficult to define all relations between foreigners and locals as "sex work." Reliant as they are on foreign sources of capital, both the state and individuals become enmeshed in a complex web of intimate interdependencies. Indeed, as I argue in the following chapters, it is often difficult to distinguish those who participate in the sex economy from those who do not. My work engages with and builds on three theoretical frameworks for thinking about tourist-related relations: affective and care work, sexual labor, and informalization theory. I elaborate on these here.

## Third World Love: Affective Extraction

The circulation of affect in the sexual economy is one of the major themes of this book. I explore how intimate forms of labor are interwoven into the tourism product and how it is exploited by both transnational corporate capital and people on the ground. Although studies of the care economy have examined the privatization and commodification of domestic services, child care, and elder care, studies of sex work and sex tourism have omitted, questioned, or impugned the authentic-

ity of the affective realm. Studies relating to the sex sector emphasize the exchange of sex for money. Even those who consider affective dimensions privilege the monetary aspect to the exclusion of ambiguous and contested meanings that are also present and traded for material gain. The artificial binary between sex work and care work obscures the constitutive properties present in both (Agustín 2007).

Feminist and postcolonial theories demonstrate the centrality of affective, intimate structures in the processes of racialization and sexualization in the colonial order (Stoler 2002; González 1999; McClintock 1995). For example, the centrality of sexual-affective processes informs Marta Savigliano's (1995) study of the tango with its attendant political economy of passion. Savigliano demonstrates how "a system of exotic representation that commoditized the colonials in order to suit imperial consumption" created homogenizing practices of exotification and "exotic" objects (1995: 2). This scholarship insists on examining the ways in which the development of empires is entwined with intimately personal, sexual, or social relations (Ballantyne and Burton 2005). Thus, the affective formation of a culture is shaped by the political and economic structures of power (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006). The insights of feminist and postcolonial scholars are building blocks for an integrative framework that considers the extraction of affect and passion as crucial components in the enterprise of travel, hospitality, and the empire of global capitalism. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 detail the progressive development and deployment of identity and sexual practices connected to this practice.

Central to understanding the transference and circulation of affect between the global North and South is the scholarship on affect, money, power, and sex developed by feminist sociologists, philosophers, and economists (Folbre and Nelson 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Zelizer 2005).<sup>18</sup> For example, Viviana Zelizer's scholarship proposes that we examine the widespread conviction that monetary exchange corrupts intimacy. Rather, her research into the varying practices of monetary and intimate exchange reveals the modes in which money and care are intertwined in various spheres where "participants are simultaneously negotiating delicate, consequential, interpersonal relations and marking difference between those relations and others with which they could easily and dangerously be confused" (Zelizer 2006: 304; 2005). Zelizer and other feminist scholars

offer an analysis that begins with the proposition that money runs through all affective relationships. I suggest that we grant the same level of complexity to transcultural relations in third-world tourism settings where reciprocity is present and where sophisticated negotiations take place to delimit the possibility that participants are merely trading sex for economic advantages. This is an argument that I put forward in Chapter 4.

The different material and discursive conditions in which multiple kinds of sexual-affective practices are produced, distributed, and consumed call for an understanding of tourism as a process of extraction and transference of eroticized capital that is always already racialized and exoticized. However, unlike previous studies that equate these processes with monolithic forms of oppression, I am interested in the ways in which participants in transcultural liaisons negotiate power, local and global, through affect, sex, solidarity, and monetary exchanges. Intimate exchanges thus become a way to subvert systems of class and racial inequalities and allow for the creation of new identities.

## Informalization

Unlike Yolanda, who had a paying job, most who labor in the service economy do so in connected spaces indirectly attached to the resorts and other tourism enterprises. They work in what is euphemistically referred to as the informal sector. Modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s assumed that the informal sector—also referred to as the underground economy—would eventually disappear with the right combination of policies, economic progress, and modern industrial development.<sup>19</sup> Instead, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the informal sector continued to expand, particularly in the low-income global South, where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank's austerity measures imposed the reduction of civil jobs and promoted entrepreneurship for the poor. Changes in the organization of production, including deindustrialization, deregulation of labor standards, and the expansion of the service sector, have multiplied insecurities and instabilities in people's lives. Large portions of the world's population must earn a living hustling in a broad spectrum of subsistence activities. Structural adjustment programs, leading to increases in income inequality, have further disenfranchised many people and forced them to eke out a liv-

ing in unstable occupations (Thorin 2001). These are all practices that plague the Dominican Republic and are part of the dynamics in Cuba's new mixed-market economy, as I discuss further in Chapter 2.<sup>20</sup>

Debates have focused on how the informal sector subsidizes transnational capital and is interconnected with, and necessary to, the productivity of the so-called formal sector (T. D. Wilson 1998; Stephen 1997; Sassen 1994; Birkbeck 1978). This approach has been documented for the global circuits of commodity production in manufacturing (Freeman 2000; Itzigsohn 2000; Benería and Roldán 1987), but we know much less about how it operates in the service economy. How are sexual-affective services interwoven into the reproduction and accumulation of capital in the tourist product? Studies of the informal sector have traditionally treated it as spatially distinct and differentiated from the formal sector. In this book, I focus on the suppleness and presence of processes of informalization within hospitality services, challenging prevalent notions that tourist-related sex work is an unfortunate and marginal by-product of tourism development. I establish that whether they occur in the streets or in beachfront resorts, sexual-affective relations are structured by the transnational tourism industries as part of the product being sold. I situate sexual-affective relations operating within beachfront resorts and hotels in Chapter 3.

With the restructuring of the world economy in the 1970s, production reorganized into a more flexible system of production that made segmentation in tourism possible. Now niche markets cater to new consumption patterns, accommodating the mobile middle class and encouraging the expansion of markets in sexualized entertainment (Mullings 1999; Urry 1996; Poon 1990). These processes in organization and production have generated demanding changes for workers. In addition to subcontracting, the expansion of flexible patterns of work and part-time employment, lack of job security, the intensification of work, and the rise of casual labor have transformed wage work (ILO 2002). Consequently, "the informal sector" has become a euphemism for the lack of wage-based work, nonstandard employment, and the instability of income. Today, unemployed, self-employed, part-time, seasonal, and temporary workers dominate the global workforce (Gorz 1999; Rifkin 1995). In fact, the International Labour Organization (ILO) maintains that the share of the global workforce that remains outside full-time, stable, and protected forms of employment has been

increasing over time (ILO 2002: 11).<sup>21</sup> As workers continue to suffer lack of control over earnings, a higher degree of discrimination, exploitative working conditions, and a lack of trade-union representation (Thomas 2002: 18), the central figure in global labor is no longer the worker identified with one particular trade or profession, but, as André Gorz (1999: 53) asserts, “It is becoming, rather, the figure of the insecure worker, who at times ‘works’ and at times does not ‘work,’ practices many different trades without any of them actually being a trade, has no identifiable profession or, rather, whose profession it is to have no profession, and cannot therefore identify with his/her work, but regards as his/her ‘true’ activity the one he/she devotes himself to in the gaps between his/her paid ‘work.’” This description of the “insecure worker” has, of course, historically characterized the conditions of labor for many women or people of color, but with deindustrialization, contingent work has become more pervasive in other parts of the population. It is in these gaps of identity and labor—spaces of liminality—that we can situate the sexual-affective economies of transnational tourism. It is in the interstices of the global economy that Dominicans and Cubans can create malleable identities that provide distance from stigma and criminality, identities continually in flux. In this process of liminality, Cubans and Dominicans generate new opportunities to transcend local configurations of class, race, and sexuality. Later, I use the vignette of Camilo to illustrate these points.

The World Travel & Tourism Council estimates that 19 percent of total employment in the Dominican Republic (WTTC 2005) and 9 percent in Cuba (WTTC 2008) is in the tourism sector, but an even larger percentage carves out a living connected to tourists through informal, freelance activities. For instance, in the north coast of the Dominican Republic, outside and near the beach resort enclaves, young men stand across the street hoping to befriend a wandering tourist. Unemployed, informal tour guides are looking for opportunities that are few and far between—a tourist who ventures out of the all-inclusive beachfront compound on foot, a couple looking to try a local restaurant, or a small group wanting to get away from the resort enclave. Dressed in some of their finest threads, the young men will slowly and respectfully approach the foreigner with multiple offers: “Let me take you to eat at a typical Dominican restaurant,” “How about if I show you around town?” and my favorite, “I can teach you to dance the *merengue*.”

One day during one of my trips to the Dominican Republic, as I walked past the golf course and headed toward the main highway that goes from Puerto Plata to Sosúa, I could see a group of men congregating outside the resort. I had gone into the resort enclave to use a bank, which, along with the post office, shops, and a museum, produces a small town atmosphere. I found Camilo and Jorge waiting for tourists to break free from the rigidly structured recreation activities of the resort. Camilo, the younger of the two, approached me with an offer to be my guide. He thought that I could use an excursion to see the amber museum in Puerto Plata. I told him that I was there to work, and we stood around talking about Puerto Plata and tourism in the north coast. Camilo had recently heard from one of the resort's guests that the expatriate management team had been making disparaging comments about Dominicans during orientation meetings for the guests:

The hotels in Playa Dorada and Playa Naco have a 25 percent and 17 percent of occupied capacity. The little tourism that we have in the complex is being used and managed by foreigners [expatriates] who are the representatives of the tours and are responsible for telling them [tourists] barbarities, because they are the authorities. How is it that an Englishman comes here, for example, and when that guest is in the hotel they tell him, "You see that little Dominican that's right there? Don't mind him, he will lie and deceive you." At every step he will take the largest portion of the pie, and he will say the most barbarous things about this country. About a month ago I was reading a brochure that says that when you get to the airport, and if you have it, give only five pesos in tips. Those guys are hungry for tips. Now what duck laid that egg? What he [the airport worker] needs are gratuities. Do you think it's all right for representatives to speak ill of Dominicans and to give them wrong propaganda? Tourism last summer was more or less all right. It's the case that people working here for a few years are able to make a living. Those of us who have been working here for a few years we even speak Chinese, even sign language. I speak four languages. When a guest leaves the hotel, which is now rare, because now they don't go to Puerto Plata—the hotel has them tied, they have to do everything that the hotel representative

tells them—they go to the lobby of the hotel to look for a taxi, and we explain to them that we will give them a tour of the city and that we charge a tip, whatever the guest wants to give. The guide says, “You give me whatever you want.” And the guide does everything possible for them to feel good; to do a good job. When they use a hotel tour guide, they charge them \$15 per person. I don’t understand why all these foreign agencies have to use expatriates. I don’t understand why they are replacing us in our country.

Camilo’s statements emphasize the massive displacement of Dominican workers. Because the majority of resorts are managed by expatriates—many of whom do not appreciate the cultural, social, and economic realities of the countries where they work—locals are frustrated by the lack of respect accorded by their bosses and the severe competition for resources and employment. This displacement has led many citizens to feel like strangers in their own land. Treated like outsiders in their home country, they are a marginalized workforce, performing roles and functions similar to those they would perform as undocumented workers in Europe or North America. Informality, however, is not just about exclusion from formal jobs. It is also a counter-economy to wage labor. As Camilo’s narrative reveals, and as Steven Gregory (2007) points out, it is also a structure that allows for oppositional resistance to the hierarchy of race and class that constitutes labor markets.

Deported for selling drugs in New York, Camilo was fluent in English and felt comfortable escorting Canadian and German tourists. After waiting for public transportation that never arrived, we started walking back to the main square of town, and Camilo shared how he often became romantically involved with the foreign women whom he met. Sometimes they were one-night stands, but often he cultivated an ongoing friendship.

“¿Eres *sanky*?” (Are you a *sanky* *panky*?), I asked in a teasing manner because he wore his hair in dreadlocks; an unusual hairstyle for Dominican men, but used by *sankys* as a way to signal their desire to attract foreign women.<sup>22</sup>

“No,” he said. “Los *sankys* se acuestan con cualquiera” (*Sankys* sleep with anyone), alluding to the male-to-male sexual relations that



were increasingly stigmatized. “Yo estoy interesado en la amistad” (I am interested in friendship), he added with a smile.

The affective dimensions of his work as a tour guide allowed Camilo to reposition himself as not simply an unemployed worker hustling a living, but rather as someone who nurtures relationships with foreigners for mutual benefit. He could cultivate malleable social and labor roles, thereby repositioning himself as a friend and a cosmopolitan subject. Lasting bonds with foreigners may ultimately position Camilo as a lover and a friend and assist him in asserting and maintaining a subjectivity of resistance to the exclusionary practices of transnational tourism capital. Informal arrangements thus generate the possibility for the emergence of new subjectivities. They also enable local people, who are otherwise shut out, to align themselves with transnational class relations. The sexual-affective exchanges that Camilo and others negotiate at the margins contest the dominant relations of the political economy of tourism. Thus these affective arrangements both complement the accumulation of capital and siphon profits from the state and transnational enterprises. Intimacy functions as a countereconomy.

*Sanky pankys* and the multitude of new social-sexual actors emerging across the global South who craft affective and sexual encounters are the touchstone of new power relations between transnational capital and labor that are at the core of “flexible accumulation” practices and are consequences of changes in the structure of global production (Robinson 2004). Scholars point out that the restructuring of the labor process has diminished the differences between formal and informal labor arrangements. This is particularly evident in the enclave model of tourism, as I discuss in further detail in Chapter 3. The casualization of labor in transnational tourism calls upon shifts in gender and sexual subjectivities while articulating class and racial hierarchies that require policing (Gregory 2007). This is a theme that I explore further in Chapter 5.

The late feminist philosopher Linda Singer suggests in “Sex and the Logic of Late Capitalism” that sexuality emerges in late capitalism as “both that which is to be disciplined, and that which remains as excess or resistance to discipline and therefore must also be pacified, accommodated, indulged. It is also, consequently, that which must also be socially managed and coordinated to maximize its social utility, i.e. its profitability” (Singer 1993: 35). *Economies of Desire* is concerned

with the accommodation and the resistance that sexual-affective relations present for people involved in marginal and elusive relations connected to travelers.

## Selling Sex

Studies that have appeared in the last thirty years have unearthed an extensive historical and cultural variability in prostitution (Gilfoyle 1999). No longer regarded as the world's oldest profession, prostitution is now seen as existing within specific cultural contexts and fields of power (O'Connell Davidson 1998). One of the most important influences is the feminist reformulation of prostitution as a form of labor. The reconceptualization of prostitution as a form of labor—"an income-generating activity"—is instrumental in distancing women from moralizing discourses that stigmatize those who sell sexual services (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998:4). It provides women in the sex industry a discourse to demand better working conditions and new forms of redress and protection (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). Sex workers have organized to gain legitimacy through labor rights and decriminalization of the sex trade (Nagle 1997; S. Bell 1994). The sex-worker identity is closely aligned to labor rights and facilitates the formation of collective action to raise awareness about abuses in the sex trade. This topic is further explored in Chapter 5. New forms of sex work, such as acting in pornographic films, erotic dancing, escort services, erotic massage, and telephone and cyber sex, can be subsumed under the category of sex work.

Controversies between feminists on the issue of prostitution and sex work focus on what exactly is sold in prostitution.<sup>23</sup> Some argue that the prostitute's body is bought and sold, rendering the transaction alienating and dehumanizing, particularly for the person selling the sexual service (O'Connell Davidson 1998). For other feminists, commercial sex is a service rendered similar to other forms of body work (Nussbaum 2005; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Chapkis 1997). Wendy Chapkis (1997), for example, locates sex work as the performance of emotional labor where only certain parts of the body and practices are provided for sexual access. In other words, the entire body is not being sold. This position draws on the sociology of emotions to argue that sex-work providers distinguish between intimate

love and paid sexual services (Chapkis 1997). It maintains that sex workers separate and demarcate their intimate selves from their working lives in much the same way as other professionals, such as flight attendants, actors, psychotherapists, masseuses, and child-care workers. It stresses a commonality with all those in occupations that use emotional labor as part of their work but can divorce themselves from the more pernicious aspects of entanglement.<sup>24</sup>

Some feminists bitterly contest that sex work can be just another form of labor because women are forced or coerced by poverty to sell sex in conditions of poverty, and this contributes to women's overall social subordination (Lacsamana 2004; Barry 1995; Satz 1995). In conditions of poverty and within structures of male domination, they maintain, the lack of choice renders sex workers survivors or victims who lack agency and self-determination because of economic constraints. But privileging liberal humanist notions of "choice" obscures the complexities that frame labor under capitalism. Since labor lacks ownership of the means of production, it is unable to survive except through the commodification of its labor power for wages (Joseph 2005: 389). Furthermore, race, gender, sexuality, and cultural capital structure labor markets, relegating most women laborers to very few occupations.<sup>25</sup> Although women who participate in the sex economy often have few options, their agency is not obliterated.

For feminists who contest the meaning and significance of sex work, Marx can provide some important insights. In Marx's early writings, prostitution served as a metaphor for capitalism.<sup>26</sup> Marx argued that labor itself was a commodity. The idea that, in prostitution, the commodity being sold is the self is partly articulated through the notion that the whole body is commodified and that the prostitute is completely powerless and subordinated.<sup>27</sup> In his later writings, Marx no longer conceptualized prostitution as the selling of a body (van der Veen 2001; Tucker 1987). Instead, he developed concepts such as labor power, use value, exchange value, and class as processes by which surplus labor is appropriated and distributed. He moved away from the notion of prostitution as the sale of the body and toward that of prostitution as the sale of a service. Thus Marx emphasized that prostitution could be conceived as selling "the service of *labor-power* in the production of a *service* sold to clients" (van der Veen 2001: 43).

The idea that the sale of the commodity is shaped by class processes is useful in allowing us to analyze situations in which class processes shape the commodity diversely. Instead of trying to subsume all sex work under the rubric of sexual slavery, as some prostitute groups, advocates, and feminist scholars have done, we can examine the context—not just class, but the cultural, gender, racial, political, legal, and economic processes—in which the commodity is produced. In situations where sex is provided within informal, freelance arrangements, the provider may be able to exercise control over his or her sexuality and minimize the possibilities for degradation. In other words, the provider has some control over producing and appropriating the surplus value, being able to determine “what is provided, when, where, with whom, how, and at what price” (van der Veen 2001: 47). The affective economies of transnational tourism effectively fuse exchange value with use value.

The category of sex work, however, does not apply to all erotic cross-cultural encounters. What of situations that are not clearly marked commercial endeavors? Or where sex is not present at all, but gifts and other forms of financial reward play a prominent role? What of relationships that combine pleasure, intimacy, and monetary support? The inability to read the subtle and liminal aspects of these encounters and an overemphasis on the sexual component risk privileging the sexual component as the most important aspect of interpersonal relations. Nicole Constable (2003), for example, argues that the overemphasis on analyzing the sexual component of transcultural relationships obscures other elements present that are equally important. She contends that this is a form of Orientalism and the exoticization of the “other.” Here I put forth a number of assertions to raise concerns with the category of sex work.

First, there is an overarching perspective that implies that “sex” and “sexuality” are understood as a universal category as projected by the European Enlightenment, a notion that anthropologists argue does not apply to many Asian, African, and African-based cultures (Waller and Marcos 2005; Wekker 1999; Kendall 1999; Herdt 1980). Expanding the cultural context of the meaning of sex, in Chapter 4 I analyze how the term *sex work* is not applicable within the religious cosmology of Santería, since superimposing a Western notion of sex denies the particular local meaning that connects sexuality to spirituality.

Second, the imposition of the term *sex worker* reveals an indiscriminately racist and classist perspective. I argue that the label *sex work* is difficult to apply to the new forms of flexible, contingent practices that may contain elements of partial commodification but that do not conform to rigid categories of commercial sex work. *Sex worker* is also a problematic descriptor for sex-for-money exchanges that take place in all-inclusive resorts (as discussed in Chapter 3). Furthermore, it is difficult to apply this term within the context of some same-sex desires and practices (Allen 2003).

In an ethnography of the Boca Chica tourist resort in the Dominican Republic, Gregory (2007) ascertains that the notion of sex work fails to capture the challenges that *dominicanas* face and the fortitude with which they struggle. Tourist-local relations in Boca Chica, Gregory argues, could be “reducible neither to ‘sex’ nor to ‘work’ but instead embraced disparate practices through which women renegotiated and contested hierarchies that were secured *simultaneously* in terms of gender, sex, race, and class” (2007: 134). Consequently, I make a case against portraying all practices and social relations within tourist economies as sex work and against subsuming significantly different forms of sexuality under the category of *sex worker*.<sup>28</sup>

*Sex worker* presupposes a fixed identity and thereby creates and freezes differences and subjects. This identity may be fixed where institutions like brothels or pimps control the conditions of women’s sexual activity, but not necessarily in less constrained situations. *Sex worker* is an empowering term in situations where the woman or man does not have substantial control over the disposition of sexual activities because it marks those activities as labor and therefore as entailing worker rights. In situations where sexual commerce is unclear or where full commodification does not take place, the sex-worker discourse proves futile in shaping identities that clamor and organize for rights. We need a more nuanced theoretical lens to understand these relationships and practices, one that can provide more ample recourse for social justice.

Transnational travel and leisure produce geographies that generate and reproduce the racialization of sexualized, eroticized bodies that are necessary for the ways in which tourism is imagined and shaped. The landscape of transnational corporate tourism makes it possible for erotic encounters between people of different racial-ethnic backgrounds to involve subject formations and practices that are more productive than

“sex work.” The general tendency in the scholarship to assume that participants in these relationships misrecognize their roles or are deluded about their actions misreads intentionality and the ways in which people negotiate and express desire with economic exigencies. It is more useful, I suggest, to interrogate our opposition between love and money. Instead of reading all relationships where there are monetary exchanges, gifts, and travel as immoral, oppressive, and exploitative, I reveal how money cultivates relationships, and gifts create identities in relationships that can be more fruitful to both participants than the alignment with “sex work.”

## Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 1, “Tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic,” I elucidate how and why tourism development in the Caribbean, contrary to the conjecture of politicians and policy makers, increased internal inequality, external dependency, and expanded informal-sector activities and unstable, low-paying jobs. By closely examining the framework for incorporating Cuba and the Dominican Republic into the global economy, I trace the foundation of the macrostructural patterns prevalent in tourism development. This chapter explains how the establishment of mass tourism development has produced similar effects and created new kinds of sex-affective relations and identities in both places. This chapter underscores the homogenizing practices of global capital.

Chapter 2, “Neoliberal Times in Cuba and the Dominican Republic,” is an analysis of economic restructuring after the fall of the socialist trading market that places Cuba within the larger global, neoliberal framework. Using features of structural adjustment programs, Cuba increased joint ventures and foreign investment, privatization, and retrenchment of state services as it quickly moved to a mixed-market system during the 1990s. These changes reintroduced vestiges of the prerevolution capitalist social order, such as prostitution, drugs, beggars, and maids. As a consequence, by the end of the 1990s, Cuba appeared more like the Dominican Republic than at any other time in the previous forty years. This chapter throws light on the multidimensionality of the crisis and Cuba’s move to the market. It specifically analyzes the cumulative effects of economic restructuring with attention to their impact on race and gender. Although the reforms exacerbated vulnera-

bilities for Black Cubans and women, connections to the global economy also provided unprecedented economic and social resources.

Having established an understanding of the political economy of international tourism in the Caribbean and the implications of restructuring with features of structural adjustment, I turn to the erotics of transnational tourism in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3, "Eroticizing Labor in All-Inclusive Beach Resorts" is the first ethnographic study of all-inclusive resorts in the Caribbean; it draws on participant observation and interviews with Cuban workers to interrogate the use of race and sexuality in the organization of labor in transnational firms. This chapter examines Cuba's new, all-inclusive beach resorts in Varadero, where workers are asked to enact scripts of affective labor, sexual enticement, and servility in the delivery of their occupational roles. Most studies of sexualized labor argue that resistance occurs when workers do not comply with management's demands. Instead, in this chapter I argue that workers' resistance can be found in the appropriation of their sexualized labor. This chapter illustrates the working of a hidden site for sexual-affective encounters that is invisible in studies of sex tourism.

In Chapter 4, "Daughters of Yemayá and Other *Luchadoras*," I use the narratives of women involved in relationships with tourists to explore the complexity of sexual-affective encounters. Drawing on the spiritual guidance of the Afro-Cuban deity Yemayá, women embrace tourists as divine intervention to help them support their children and to find love and spiritual affirmation. This chapter exposes a wide range of experiences in the Dominican Republic and Cuba that cannot be easily subsumed under the category of "sex work." Instead, these narratives reveal heterogeneity in experiences that move us away from a monolithic view of relationships, sexual practices, and sentimental entanglements. I employ the notion of *tactical sex* to capture the diverse, amorphous ways in which sex is deployed in tourist economies. The aim of this chapter is to problematize dichotomous categories employed in sex tourism and to show how essentialist notions obscure ambiguities and reinscribe racialist paradigms.

In both the Dominican Republic and Cuba, I found ample evidence of the ways in which women use sex work to escape domestic violence, only to end up exposed to further violence at the hands of the state. In Chapter 5, "Tourism, Sex Work, and the Discourse of Human Rights,"

I present evidence of human rights abuses connected to gender and sexuality by exploring them as outcomes of the tourist-based economic ordering of the state. I establish that the intensification in state-sponsored violence against women is an outcome of the tourism development project. I explore how and when the term *sex worker* is fruitful for political organizing and for women's empowerment. I discuss state enforcement of the category "prostitute" in tourism settings, particularly with regard to working-class women, and the response of organizations such as MODEMU in the Dominican Republic that clamor for human rights for sex workers.

Without question, trade in travel and tourism services at the turn of the century poses great challenges for the people of the Caribbean. A comparative study such as this book, therefore, provides an important departure in understanding how sex and love are intertwined within the structure and organization of transnational tourism and processes of the global political economy. I hope that this book will move us away from the focus on and stigmatization of erotic relationships and toward discussion of the human costs and disparities imposed by the expansion of a corporate empire of capital.