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**"I COULD PUT THIS HOUSE ON FIRE!"
THE EVERYDAY RESISTANCE OF FILIPINA DOMESTICS IN CANADA**

by
Rita Parikh

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University
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Maureen Appel Molot

Maureen Appel Molot, Director
The Norman Paterson School
of International Affairs

James Keil

Professor J. Keil, Supervisor

Abstract

Filipina migrant domestics are among the most exploited and vulnerable workers in Canadian society today. The fear of deportation coupled with their lack of citizenship rights have meant that they do not often overtly or collectively confront their oppressors. This study argues that where open, collective defiance is neither realistic nor practical, resistance will take on alternative, more subtle forms. While these forms are often non-dramatic, highly routine, and generally ambiguous, they serve, nonetheless, as the most logical and effective means through which the dominated make their claims. Focusing on the stories of 11 migrant women offers a privileged perspective from which the innovative and diverse nature of that resistance can be revealed. This analysis demonstrates that through these discrete acts the women navigate an intricate web of power relations, pushing forward their demands and working the system to their advantage. In the end, it maintains that through such resistance, these women struggle not only to shape their daily environments, but also to challenge the dominant ideology and to effect broader social change.

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*For Nalini, Vastupal, Margie and Sagar -- a family whose
spirit of resistance has rarely been disguised.*

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Introduction

From Helpless Victim to Empowered Human Agent

Their status is so unstable and they're afraid to lose their jobs. There are employers who treat them as slaves. They work them morning till night, don't give them enough food. And then the threats start from the employer that, if the domestic leaves her job, the employer will deport her from the country. This is terrible exploitation. This is injustice!

*Annie Miaral, Former Domestic Worker
(Lightstone, 1991:24)*

The job has its drawbacks. But not as many as the others she has held. The couple in whose home she spent two years of sixteen-hour days -- cooking, cleaning, ironing, looking after twins, with only the occasional Sunday off to spend a little of the money she had not sent to Rudy and the children -- were not bad people. They were just people who lived by only their own, deeply held priorities, people in whom -- and she knew, with delight, that this would wound them -- the spirit of slavery was not quite extinguished . . .

One day Mr. Youseesee brought in a silver tea service still in its Birks box, put it on her desk, and ordered that she prepare his tea every afternoon at three o'clock. She did as instructed, following the specifications he had printed in fountain pen on a sheet of typing paper. Yet her efforts merited neither words of gratitude nor acknowledgement of effort. Monica took a little revenge each day by spitting juicily into the pot before filling it with boiling water. But vengeance in small doses, unnoticed, soon proves unfulfilling. Monica knew it was time to depart the day she thought of urinating into the pot.

*Neil Bissoondath
The Power of Reason (1989:213-214)*

The experiences of what may arguably be the most exploited and vulnerable group of workers in Canadian society today are increasingly being captured in a growing body of fictional and non-fictional literature as is reflected in the excerpts which appear above. Through these glimpses into the travails of domestic workers in

Canada, into the lives of Third World¹ migrant women serving in the homes of mostly white Canadians, one learns of a history of exploitation, indentured labour, oppressive environments and violent abuse. Indeed, exhaustive hours, miserable wages, restricted freedom of movement and extreme homesickness, are but a few of the wearying particulars which shape the lives of migrant workers and which fill the stories they choose to tell. But woven into this bleak, historically enduring tapestry are flashes of defiant colour, threads of steadfast resistance. These tell the tale of the migrant women's struggle, of their untiring, relentless efforts to survive, and to negotiate the grounds upon which their labour is exploited. It is through these threads of resistance and through the patterns they weave, that the migrant workers' victories, however small, are revealed. It is on the migrant domestic worker's everyday resistance to the myriad exploitations she experiences, on her ability to negotiate the power relations through which she is subordinated and oppressed, that this thesis will focus.

This study revolves around the experiences of 11 Filipino women -- those who, along with more than 70,000 other women, migrated to Canada through the Foreign Domestic Movement Programme between 1982 and 1992. Together, these women are both victims and survivors of an exploitative employment programme aimed at providing a quick and easy solution to the domestic crisis in Canada. The

¹. There are several competing terms used to designate countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Together with the women of Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era, I believe the use of the term Third World best reflects the political reality of inequitable and exploitative economic, social, political and cultural relationships which obtain between these nations, and those of North America, Europe, Japan and Australia.

Foreign Domestic Movement Programme², conceived in 1981, evolved out of almost a century of private and governmental attempts to source domestic workers from outside the country. These efforts in themselves are a strong reflection of the low social, political and economical status which is ascribed to domestic labour in capitalist societies (Timoli, 1989:1). Indeed, working as a domestic has been so undesirable in Canada that even in times of high unemployment, few Canadians are willing to take on this kind of work (Arnopoulos, 1979:24). As a result, the state has relied increasingly on foreign labour, an option which appears to be politically expedient (Arat-Koc, 1989:36). Rather than working to create a system of universal and accessible daycare, or to reorganize domestic labour in a more just and equitable way, the state has opted for a less expensive and simpler alternative -- that is, it has chosen to recruit workers from among a particularly cheap and vulnerable labour force and to work actively to control them through discriminatory legislation (Ibid).

It is no coincidence, then, that the majority of entrants to the FDMP are from impoverished Third World countries like the Philippines. Between 1982 and 1991, the number of Filipinas entering Canada through the FDMP jumped from 2,279 to 8,300 annually (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991:3). By September 1991, Filipinas comprised two thirds of all entrants to the programme. Significantly, this study into the everyday resistance of the oppressed evolved out of the desire not only to comprehend migrant domestic workers' experiences in Canada, but also to

² The Foreign Domestic Movement Programme was replaced in the Spring of 1992 by the Live-in Caregiver Programme. While the regulations governing who gains entry to the programme are now considerably stiffer, the characteristics and nature of the LCP itself differ little from its predecessors. These will be discussed in Chapter Three.

understand the Filipina migratory experience in general. The migration of Filipinas as domestic workers to Canada is part of a greater phenomenon of Filipina out migration, one marked by the mass exodus of increasing numbers of young, single, women seeking jobs as domestics, nurses or entertainers around the world. In the past decade, Filipino migratory streams have so teemed with women that in Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, Germany and Japan, to name just a few countries, women comprised between 70 and 90 per cent of all Filipinos entering the country (Padilla, 1989; Estrada-Claudio, 1989; Anonuevo, 1990). It was out of an effort to grasp the significance of this phenomenon, and to understand more concretely the varied experience of the migrant domestic, that the impetus for this study gradually arose. This thesis focuses on one aspect of the migratory experience -- that of the routine strategies of resistance employed by migrants to survive. By briefly tracing the initial steps taken at the outset of this research, justification for this emphasis will, perhaps, become clear.

My search for explanations took me first to the vast literature on international migration. A wealth of material on Third World labour migration in general, and, to a lesser extent, on the migration of Filipino women in particular, clearly exists (for gendered analyses of migration, see for example: Pedraza, 1991; Estrada-Claudio, 1990; Eviota and Smith, 1984; Ishi, 1987; Lauby and Stark, 1988; Padilla, 1989; Thadani and Todaro, 1984; Timoli, 1989; Trager, 1984; Villasin, 1990a, 1990b). The migration literature offers up a variety of theoretical perspectives. Neo-classical economists such as Everett Lee (1966), for example, argue that decisions to migrate

revolve around a set of basic economic assumptions involving the logic of efficient resource allocation, along with a series of "push" and "pull" variables like employment, education, and the desire for freedom.

Conversely, the world systems or structuralist theorists view migration both as integral to an international system of exploitation and as a function of the Third World's progressive incorporation into global capitalist relations (Ishi, 1987; Parikh, 1992; Portes, 1978). Contributing to these theoretical insights are those who would seek to include a gendered analysis of migration -- those who call attention to the fact that while migration streams have traditionally been dominated by men, they are now ever increasingly populated by women. These theorists bring to the analysis of the migratory experience, a variety of additional factors. These include the possibility of social constraints inhibiting the mobility of women, or alternatively, cultural norms working to promote the migration of women.

Feminist analyses go on to suggest that while women's migration must be seen as a product of an internationally exploitative system in which women as a whole are unarguably subordinated, variation can be explained as a function of the fact that gendered social relations are continuously reshaped and reconstructed (Parikh, 1992:13). These relations, in this view, are themselves a product of the "concrete historical and political forms of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and capitalism" (Mohanty, 1991:14). Together these theories offer substantial insight into the major "push" and "pull" conditions regulating the movement of Filipino women.

At the same time, much has been documented, both in writing and on film, on

the plight of foreign domestic workers in Canada and elsewhere (see for example: Arat-Koc, 1989; Arnopoulos, 1979; Calliste, 1989; INTERCEDE, 1991b; Boti and Bautista, 1990; Rollins, 1985; Silvera, 1989; Villasin 1990a, 1990b, 1991; Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990). From these works one gains insight into the role of the Canadian state and its articulation of a racially specific gender ideology in its efforts to recruit a particularly vulnerable group of workers for domestic labour in Canada (Timoli, 1989:28). One learns of the patriarchal, racist and classist relations of domination upon which the state's recruitment efforts have been constructed. And one becomes aware simultaneously of the historic devaluation of domestic labour and of the ongoing, seemingly insatiable demand for foreign domestic workers this reality has generated. Finally, one learns of the soul-destroying working conditions -- of the slavish wages, the 16-hour work days, the verbal and physical abuse, the host of indignities -- which migrant domestics who lack formal citizenship rights are forced to endure.

Together, this collection of both descriptive and analytical writings offer significant insights into the migratory experience of the Filipina domestic. Despite the powerful analytical value these works retain, they are, nonetheless, characterized by one fundamental weakness -- that is, the tendency to ignore the voices of the migrants themselves, to neglect the role of human agency in shaping human experience.

It is precisely such voices, as expressed through life stories or personal narratives, however, which feminists are increasingly insisting are critical to any

effort to understand social reality (see for example, Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Mohanty, 1991; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). The inclusion of human experience in all its richest detail allows us to move beyond the traditional analyses of structuralist variables -- variables like colonialism, capitalism, or political change -- to understand how human beings, with their particular values and histories, interpret these variables and shape their own experience. In doing so, such narratives reveal the marginalized and oppressed, not as victims of social change, but as those in constant struggle. Such an approach is a means, then, not only of enhancing an understanding of social reality, but also of affirming human agency and decoding the nature of resistance.

Yet, rarely in the migratory literature do the voices of the young women appear. Only occasionally are their personal experiences of, and attitudes towards, migration and migrant labour verbally expressed (for exceptional work in the area see for example: Guyot, 1978; 1988; Silvera, 1989). As a result of the conspicuous absence of migrant women's voices, we are left with a partial and misleading construction of the migrant experience. This construction, I maintain, is one which portrays the migrant as helpless victim, as the mechanistic object pushed and pulled by the vagaries of an international system over which she has little, if any control. One theorist makes this observation in his critique of the migratory literature. He writes:

Human beings, like iron filings, were impelled by forces beyond their conscious control and, like atoms stripped of their cultural and temporal diversity, were denied creative capacity to innovate and shape the worlds which and into which they moved (Bach, 1987:323).

It is precisely this dynamic quality of the migratory act which is denied through the absence of a methodology incorporating human experience. That socioeconomic and political structures and the general constructs of race, class and gender are crucial to forming any understanding of the migratory process including migrant labour has been demonstrated elsewhere (Parikh, 1992). Within the parameters set up by these global or local structures, however, human beings fashion their individual responses. These are based on their own experience, interpretations, histories and realities (Scott, 1985:42). As the Personal Narratives Group has so eloquently articulated:

The word context literally means to weave together, to twine, to connect. This interrelatedness creates the webs of meaning within which humans act. The individual is joined to the world through social groups, structural relations, and identities. However, these are not inflexible categories to which individuals can be reduced. The more we considered context, the more we realized that while the general constructs of race, class, and gender are essential, they are not rigidly determinant. Context is not a script. Rather, it is a dynamic process through which the individual simultaneously shapes and is shaped by her environment (1989:19).

In short, the migratory act and the migrant labourers' realities are mediated, as feminists suggest, by human experience and interpretation. Only by capturing this experience in all its richness and variety can the act of migration, including the experience of migrant domestic labour, be understood (Parikh, 1992). This study, with its focus on the lives of 11 Filipina migrants in Canada, is posited first, then, as an effort to address this apparent gap in the literature.

At the same time, with its attention to women's voices and its examination of human experience, this study serves also as one modest attempt to broaden our understanding of what constitutes resistance. Indeed, the two are inextricably linked.

As we shall see in ensuing chapters, the tendency to characterize resistance as overt, collective and revolutionary defiance, has meant that other, more subtle challenges have been, for the most part, misunderstood and ignored. How migrants act to thwart the very exploitative economic system upon which and through which their economic survival depends and is ensured, may not be immediately obvious. Nor are the strategies through which domestic labourers resist and reshape their oppressive environments always clear. It must be recognized that the resistance on which this thesis centres occurs often in isolation and under conditions of anonymity. Rarely are revolutionary intentions expressed. More rarely still are they garbed in any ideological emancipatory rhetoric. As a result, while unionizing, political lobbying, or organized international pressure are easily recognizable as forms of resistance, vandalism, lying, theft and shirking, are seldom viewed as anything beyond discrete displays of criminality. These quotidian defiant acts in which the oppressed courageously engage are most often seen as the isolated acts of the depraved or the incorrigible, or as the unfortunate accidents of the careless and maladroit.

Not all migrants can afford to be involved in overt, organized defiance. Still, it is inconceivable that migrants are unaware of the way in which their labour is both extracted and manipulated. It is even more implausible that their lives are devoid of any meaningful resistance to this exploitation. That the vulnerability of the women can drive their resistance underground must be realized. Anthropologist James Scott maintains that resistance is evident not simply in the overt dramatic actions of the oppressed and the marginalized, but also, and more logically, in the symbols, the

norms, and the ideological forms that comprise their daily consciousness and everyday actions (1985:38). The challenge, then, is to search for this resistance amidst the subtleties of human experience. It is here that justification for this study truly lies.

In general, one can suggest that by revealing or exposing both the nature of exploitation, and the various oppositional strategies in which the oppressed are engaged, opportunities are presented not only for expanding our understanding of how social change occurs, but also for building solidarity among those struggling for such change. This study hopes to contribute to this broader effort. As mentioned earlier, it revolves around the experiences of 11 Filipino women. These life stories, in allowing me to examine the human agency of women migrants, can simultaneously reveal the points of their resistance. Through these narratives one can learn how resistance can and does arise directly out of the banality of everyday affairs, how social consciousness is born and nurtured in the quotidian relations of domination. I hope also to demonstrate how these hidden, discrete, and apparently spontaneous behaviours nonetheless weave a distinct pattern of rationalized resistance which poses an ideological challenge to the discourse of the dominant. I will argue, in the end, that through these actions Filipina migrants navigate through an intricate web of power relations, pushing forward their demands and working the system to their advantage and in the process shaping their daily environments and effecting social change. It is the process of this struggle that this thesis seeks to explore.

The body of this study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one will briefly survey concepts of power and resistance, challenging traditional notions of how each

is seen to operate in an attempt to arrive at a theoretical understanding more rooted in the lives of the oppressed. Chapter two traverses historical, geographic, and cultural boundaries to offer a sense of the plethora of strategies which constitute everyday resistance and to theorize about their character and varied intentions. In chapter three, the focus fixes more directly on the lives of domestic workers, exploring the political and socio-economic circumstances behind their migration, and the exploitative conditions in which they regularly work. Women's innovative responses to these conditions, and their efforts to challenge power relations, then become the subject for chapter four as the voices of the 11 Filipinas are heard and their varied experiences elaborated and documented. The methodological approach I have taken will also be outlined here. It is in the fifth and final chapter that conclusions will be drawn and an attempt will be made to address ideological challenges and their complexities. It is hoped that the five separate chapters construct but a single story of resistance -- one which both reveals and celebrates the innovative and persistent spirit of the oppressed not only to prevent the worst from happening but also to promise something better (Scott, 1985:349). To begin, however, we must turn to an exploration of concepts of resistance and power to discover, at least at an analytical level, both how domination is constructed and articulated and how resistance effectively challenges it.

Chapter One

Beyond Traditional Theories of Power and Resistance

. . . the binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one. The existence of those who seem not to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and inflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purposes and calculations, desires and choices resist any simple division into the political and the apolitical. The schema of a strategy of resistance as a vanguard of politicisation needs to be subjected to re-examination, and account must be taken of resistances whose strategy is one of evasion or defence -- the Schweijks as well as the Solzhenitsyns. There are no good subjects of resistance.

Colin Gordon (1980)

(Resistances) are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. . . Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.

Michel Foucault
The History of Sexuality (1980:96)

In *Accommodating Protest*, a work which provides an insightful exploration into the unique efforts of lower-class women in Cairo to resist the Westernization of their society, Arlene Elowe MacLeod writes that the seeming permanence of oppressive relations of power tends to obscure the fact that the dominated are constantly engaged in negotiating those relations (1991:19). Indeed, she argues, the historical persistence of fundamental inequalities has meant the oppressed's efforts to contest the dominant's legitimacy, have for the most part, gone unnoticed (*Ibid.*).

This latter assertion rests on three fundamental beliefs: that power is not something to be wrested from the elite, but rather a force inscribed in each individual and produced through every social interaction (Foucault, 1980a:94); that the dominated do not perceive existing relations of power as either legitimate or inevitable; and that resistance is a force existing in tension with power, one rising out of the separate ideological and oppositional stance of the dominated.

It is on the basis of these assumptions that Macleod can argue not only that existing relations of domination are forever being challenged and recreated, but also that both the subordinated and the dominant -- each a locus of power and resistance -- are together continually implicated in producing those same relations (1991:19).

This chapter seeks to explore the nature of this dynamic. Traditional beliefs about how power operates and about what constitutes resistance, and about the nature of the relationship between power and resistance, have conspired, as MacLeod suggests, to obscure our view of the routine defiance in which the oppressed ceaselessly engage. The ensuing exploration of concepts of power and resistance, and of the dynamic relationship which exists between them, is aimed at uncovering, if only partially, the mass of activity transpiring behind this veil. As such, it serves as one attempt to construct an analysis of resistance which recognizes and affirms the endless efforts of the oppressed both to challenge exploitative relations and to negotiate for change.

We begin this construction by chipping away at the façade which has tended to present only a partial and limited view of the nature and character of resistance. Our

attention first addresses the set of fundamental assumptions about what constitutes resistance, and about what should be its goals. We attempt next to lay the foundation for a broader conceptualization of resistance by proceeding beyond the notion of resistance as a strictly reactive force, toward one rooted in human experience and aimed at bringing about change. Intrinsic to any in depth study of resistance, however, must be a parallel exploration of concepts of power. Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power as a non-hierarchical, productive and omnipresent force serves as an entry point for this process. We turn next to James Scott's theorizing on the hegemonic operations of power to challenge further long-held assumptions about the way in which, and the people through whom, power is articulated. Foucault's conceptualization of resistance, along with Scott's notions of the 'public' and 'hidden' transcript allow us simultaneously to explore the buried spaces where resistance is born and nurtured. It is out of these reconstructions of both power and resistance that we will at last be able to observe the dynamic, productive relationship which obtains between power and resistance. It is hoped that in the end, by engaging in such an analysis, the irrepressible oppositional spirit of the oppressed will be affirmed. Challenging fundamental assumptions about the character of resistance is a logical starting point in this multidimensional process.

Within the sociological, feminist, and political literatures, there exists a clear bias toward viewing as resistance only strictly overt, collective action, or revolutionary acts. This reality, in turn, has meant that other forms of challenge have been driven from fields of study and that the change attained through such resistance

has tended to be ignored. Hence, it is hardly surprising that efforts at unionizing, at mass mobilizing, at building coalitions or revolutions remain, for the most part, the centre of research into, for example, the responses of women to the oppressive working conditions in free trade zones, or the experiences of young Chinese in their attempts to challenge China's socialist regime.

In recent years, feminists have attempted to challenge these assumptions arguing that they are at once sexist and ethnocentric and, as a result, tend to ignore cultural and gender-based forms of resistance. It is little wonder, for example, that few studies have been conducted into the everyday defiance of the traditional middle-class Western housewife. Few have investigated the burned dinners, spoiled parties, exorbitant purchases and countless other strategies housewives regularly employ both to assert a sense of worth and to subvert their husband's dominance. Traditional assumptions about resistance are in some cases so pervasive that, some feminists argue, women's efforts towards social change have been wholly overlooked. Iranian women's participation in the 1979 revolution which ended the 50-year rule of the Western-leaning Pahlavi dynasty is a case in point (Tohidi, 1991).

In Iran, women threatened by the erosion of their traditional Islamic values and angered by the assault of the Western capitalist ethic on their identity, clearly resisted the Westernization of their society (MacLeod, 1991; Tohidi, 1991). Admittedly, women's involvement in the revolution took on various forms, most of which might be recognized as mainstream strategies of resistance. Women marched and shouted slogans, disseminated pamphlets and fought with police. Some took up

arms and eventually joined the underground guerilla movement (Tohidi, 1991:251). For many, however, resistance assumed a more subtle guise: in the months leading up to the Shah's overthrow, women of various classes and educational status, women on the left and right on the political spectrum, indeed women deeply orthodox along with those non-religious, were seen donning the veil and reverting to traditional dress. (This practice had gradually become marginalized under Pahlavi rule.)

For Iranian women, as activist and theorist Nayereh Tohidi argues, wearing the veil represented a pointed act of resistance, a direct challenge to the threat of Westernization and to the accompanying loss of cultural and religious identity. For many students of resistance, however, and particularly for Western feminists, this voluntary reversion to traditional dress was singularly distressing, a clear sign of the oppression of women under Islam. The fact that the veil has been worn in different periods throughout the world in direct opposition to Western imperialism, patriarchy, and class oppression, has been, it seems, routinely ignored. Instead, many choose to see the veil as an example of domination, as perhaps the clearest illustration of Muslim women's subservience to men (MacLeod, 1991; Tohidi, 1991).

If assumptions about the overt and collective nature of resistance have tended to divert attention away from exploration of alternative strategies, assertions about the need for resistance to be both principled and broadly-aimed have been no less diversionary. To be considered truly resistance, it appears, such actions need not only embody truly revolutionary goals, but also blatantly aim at opposing the ideological basis of domination (Scott, 1985:292).

Yet, among the most attractive features to be found in everyday forms of resistance -- in tale-telling, theft, gossip, or vandalism, for example -- is the tangible nature of the struggle and the immediate gains it confers on those engaged in it. It is common-sensical, Scott argues, that such acts of protest are conveniently situated, grounded, and centred on immediate causes of distress (1985:182). Expecting the impoverished Malay peasant to take as the direct object of her resistance the intangible global capitalist system built on race, class and gender hierarchies is wholly unrealistic, he adds (though she may clearly recognize this as the source of her oppression)³. It makes infinitely more sense to set one's sights on the more plainly identified, and directly accountable targets of the usurious rents of her landlord and the unjust taxation practices of the community elite. Such an emphasis derives directly from the basic recognition that social reality is constructed not out of a set of abstract theoretical categories, but rather out of a collection of historical specificities (Ibid). Scott explains:

(T)he Malay peasant experiences increasing land rents, stingy landlords, ruinous interest rates from moneylenders, combine-harvesters that replace him, and petty bureaucrats who treat him shabbily. He does not experience the cash nexus or the capitalist pyramid of finance that makes of those landlords, combine-harvester owners, moneylenders, and bureaucrats only the penultimate link in a complex process (1985:44).

Given this context, it is hardly an accident that such resistance proves to be highly opportunistic, aimed directly at securing immediate material gains. Scott once again

³. MacLeod argues that everyday resistance focuses on the immediate and tangible because often the true oppressor is not clearly identifiable. Given that capitalist expansionism in the Third World, for example, is articulated through a complex weave of race, class, and gender hierarchies, knowing who is "the enemy" she would argue, is not straightforward.

is instructive on this point. He writes:

It is no coincidence that the cries of "bread," "land," and "no taxes" that so often lie at the core of peasant rebellion are all joined to the basic material survival needs of the peasant household. Nor should it be anything more than commonplace that everyday peasant politics and everyday peasant resistance (and also, of course, everyday compliance) flows from these same fundamental material needs . . . To ignore the self-interested element in peasant resistance is to ignore the determinate context not only of peasant politics, but of most lower-class politics. It is precisely the fusion of self-interest and resistance that is the vital force animating the resistance of peasants and proletarians (1985:295).

Such opportunistic resistance clearly challenges the assumption that for resistance to be effective, indeed, for resistance to be genuine, it must be not only noble and sacrificial, but also revolutionary in intent.

The need to look elsewhere and to recognize alternative forms of resistance becomes increasingly compelling when one acknowledges that under particular circumstances, overt, revolutionary defiance is highly improbable. Michel De Certeau writes that given modern society's increasingly invidious forms of power, quiet, everyday resistance becomes the most viable kind of protest for the weak (as cited in MacLeod, 1991:106). In nations where protest leads to censure, to imprisonment, to torture, and even to death, fear of retribution most often precludes overt struggle. Violent repression of resistance, however, is expressed through a variety of forms. Thus, where the worker may decline strike action for fear of job loss and hence poverty, a Malay farmer may resist peasant organizing for fear of land loss and hence starvation. Similarly, domestic workers from the Philippines still lacking citizenship status in Canada rarely overtly and collectively challenge exploitative immigration practices for fear of risking their own, and their family's,

economic survival (as indicated through interview notes). It is this reality which leads Scott to argue that against the backdrop of the threat of expected retaliation is the equally real imperative of daily survival (1985:245).

To be sure, the dominated also lead and lend their voices to broader movements for social justice -- history offers countless examples of rebellion and revolution, strike action and public protest. The possibility of collective struggle must never be ruled out. Still, such resistance demands resources which the dominated often lack. For collective protest to be realized vast amounts of time and money are often required -- to facilitate contacts, raise awareness, build common agendas and coalitions. Yet few among the dominated have the resources required for such an effort. Logistical barriers further conspire to make common struggle unlikely. Isolation of the oppressed, for instance, in either their homes and/or places of work, has meant that oppression may be experienced differently, and at different times by each person (Scott, 1985:242). Similarly, the fact that each worker's exploitation is experienced as a function of her relationship with her employer means that the source of one domestic's anger may be non-existent for another. Exploitation experienced, then, in varying degrees at varying times remains a constant challenge to those seeking to create collective struggle. At the same time, cultural and language barriers combine to make mass mobilization an added challenge.

Contributing to the realities which make such collective defiance an unlikely choice for many, must be added one final yet critical point of observation -- that public protest and revolution even when successful, have seldom served the needs of

those whose support was sought and coopted (Scott, 1985:349).

It is significant, for instance, that despite women's participation in the Iranian revolution, the new political structure has clearly not served women's interests (Tohidi, 1991:253). Instead, Tohidi writes, Khomeini's orthodox regime has further circumscribed women's power, making traditional dress mandatory and restricting women's rights in marriage and over property (Ibid). It is precisely because of the failure of overt and collective acts of resistance to bring about real change in the lives of the oppressed that, Scott argues, resistance is driven underground. Because revolutionary "successes" are so often at odds with the interests of the poorest or most deeply subordinated, resistance so often takes alternative forms. It is here, then, that justification for the study of everyday resistance lies. For if resistance is expressed in the overt dramatic actions of the marginalized, it is also, and more logically, lodged in their everyday consciousness and quotidian behaviour (Scott, 1985:38).

From where, however, does such resistance arise? What are the various forms its expression can take? What is the nature of the challenges it poses? Answers to these questions can only emerge through further probing into the nature of resistance beginning with an exploration of its inherently productive capacity.

The 1990 edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Allen, 1990:1024) defines resistance as the "impeding, slowing, or stopping effect exerted by one material thing on another". Alternatively, resistance is "the ability to withstand adverse conditions". Resistance, in short, is the "refusal to comply", a reactive type

of behaviour aimed at minimizing or eliminating demand. Historically, political, feminist, and social movement theories alike appear to have embraced this notion of resistance. Yet they have also tended to assert that a more proactive quality is equally basic to its construction. Far from a deeply entrenched struggle to prevent oppressive forces from gaining ground, resistance, they would argue, is also about change. It is about challenging ascribed meanings and asserting new truths.

It is this concept of resistance which informs Scott's writings (1985) on the daily vicissitudes of Malay peasant life. Here he argues that pilfering, false compliance, arson, and slander -- the routinely defiant behaviours in which Malay peasants engage -- serve as strategies for protecting against the elite's appropriation of peasant resources. At the same time, however, these acts serve as an attempt on the part of the peasant, "to seize each small advantage and press it home, to probe the limits of existing relationships, to see precisely what can be gotten away with at the margin, and to include this margin as a part of an accepted territorial claim" (Scott, 1985: 255). Thus, according to Scott, while the peasants continually struggle to withhold their scant resources from the elite, they simultaneously work to assert their own perspective of a just world, and to alter community power relations to their maximum advantage.

Some feminists similarly grasp this twofold notion of resistance. Chandra Mohanty (1991), for instance, speaks of the efforts of Third World women to resist the Western, male-dominated, ethnocentric and classist biases which tend to characterize the discourses of, among others, the political, economic, and sociological

disciplines. Increasingly, she writes, this resistance is manifest in the public documentation of women's experiences. While these stories clearly serve as an attempt to validate women's experiences, as an effort to raise awareness of, and end, women's varied oppressions, they stand also as a forceful challenge to existing analyses of social reality. They work at once to destabilize hegemonic perspectives and to reconstruct historical experience. Mohanty writes:

The very practice of remembering against the grain of 'public' or hegemonic history, of locating the silences and the struggle to assert knowledge which is outside the parameters of the dominant, suggests a rethinking of sociality itself (1991:38).

Indeed, feminists suggest, as an act of resistance, such stories serve as part of a larger and more concerted endeavour to challenge traditional "scientific" and "objective" notions about what constitutes Truth and what is considered normative. They represent, in sum, a set of pointedly defiant acts, aimed not only at minimizing the oppressive effects of the dominant ideology, but also at affirming the marginalized's own social reality. By placing the oppressed's own experiences front and centre, they suggest, the world and its citizens are rendered answerable to it. Here again, then, the reactive and proactive nature of resistance is revealed. It is this complementary set of qualities, moreover, which is reflected in all forms of resistance, whether overt or furtive, collective or individualized.

If through challenging assumptions about resistance, alternative forms can resurface, and if through exploring the nature of resistance its productive capacity can be affirmed, similar investigation into long-held notions of power -- into how power is constituted and articulated through society -- can be equally revealing. Such a

deconstruction is necessary to enable us to understand the dynamic and reflexive relationship between power and resistance, and the process through which the oppressed negotiate for change. It is to this task, then, that we now turn.

Pervading the works of a variety of contemporary theorists including Carla Risseuw (1988), Scott (1985,1990), Michel Foucault (1979, 1980a, 1980b) and Arlene MacLeod (1991), is a notion of power as a two-way unarticulated process in which oppressor and oppressed are simultaneously transformed (Risseuw, 1988:181). Such a construction clearly parallels the dual-nuanced notion of resistance described above. For, it is power, in all its tangled and immense complexity, which is being steadfastly resisted while simultaneously feeding and enabling acts of defiance. It is the systemic formations of power as exemplified by the racist, classist, and patriarchal state, which serve as the target of the defiant protestors who, in seeking to challenge the legitimacy of their oppressors, are themselves empowered in spirit, consciousness and ideology.

It is a notion which assumes that power is not something to be wrested from the elite, but rather, a force inscribed in, and produced by, each individual (Foucault, 1980a:94), "one induced in the body and produced in every social interaction" (Martin, 1988:6). Power is a strategy which, while implying domination, is nonetheless forever being challenged and reconstituted (Foucault, 1979:29). Relations of domination, then, are simultaneously produced and undermined by power, both the subordinated and the dominant forever implicated in their re-creation (MacLeod, 1991:19).

Such a conceptualization of power as a dynamic process, equally oppressive and enabling, stands in stark contrast to that which obtains in much political and, indeed, early feminist theory. In these, power is viewed primarily as an all-encompassing force, emanating from some central point on high, with its tentacles threatening ever outward and downward. It is seen as an inanimate object vigorously fought for by some and jealously guarded by others. Here is a notion imbued with traditional dichotomies -- of those who wield power, and those who wish to escape it, of the forbidden and permitted, the licit and illicit, of the superordinate and subordinate, the powerful and powerless (Foucault, 1980a:83).

Feminists have not escaped such a facile rendering of power. With their traditional tendency to equate power with the control of political, economic and social resources, for example, feminists have narrowly pitted men against women, thus simultaneously constructing the powerful and the powerless. Similarly, when issues of race, or Third World women are introduced, they become equally dichotomized and overly-simplified. Third World women have thus been popularly portrayed not only as the powerless victims of a universal patriarchy, but also as the ultimate losers in an exploitative political and economic world system (Mohanty, 1991; Moore, 1988). The image of Filipina migrant as Victim emerges directly out of this essentialist logic. The effect of this bias has been that questions of women's power, Third World or otherwise, have tended to revolve around the extent to which women can gain access to international social, economic and political resources.

It is hardly surprising, then, that women's relation to power is seen primarily

as a negative one, that is, as one in which women have been denied access to those resources (Dubisch, as cited in Ilcan, 1988:12). It is precisely this negativism which, theorist Michel Foucault argues, characterizes and weakens traditional analyses.

Traditional theory, he writes:

. . . only has the force of the negative on its side, a power to say no; in no condition to produce, capable only of posting limits, it is basically anti-energy. This is the paradox of its effectiveness: it is incapable of doing anything, except to render what it dominates incapable of doing anything either, except for what this power allows it to do. And finally, it is a power whose model is essentially juridical, centred on nothing more than the statement of the law and the operation of taboos (Foucault, 1980a:85).

The traditional propensity to render power essentially prohibitive, combined with the tendency to view power as external to, or independent of, most social interactions, has meant, as Biddy Martin notes, that resistance can be articulated only "in terms of the demand for transgression of, or an end to, external prohibitions" (1988:6). With such a negative, top-heavy, external rendering of power, clearly, the enabling, productive qualities of power are overlooked. With these aspects of power lost or denied, not only are the dynamics of social change equally obscured (Ilcan, 1988:2), but also, new visions of the world have no room to emerge. Such an emphasis holds out little for those concerned with exploring the origins and character of everyday resistance, and the oppositional discourse which such defiance expresses.

Through the works of, among others, Foucault (1979, 1980a, 1980b), Martin (1988), and Scott (1985, 1990), it is possible to attempt a broader conceptualization of power, one which reveals not only the ever shifting and unceasingly negotiated nature of power relations, but also the tenacity and ingenuity of human spirit and resistance.

We begin with Foucault, whose theorizing on power reflects precisely this animation.

Foucault's analysis of the nature of power appears rooted, first and foremost, in the belief that power is not an organized system of institutions and rules which cohere to ensure the subservience of one group to another (1980a:92). Instead, Foucault writes, power comes from everywhere. Power is omnipresent, "not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another" (1980a:93). Power, Foucault writes somewhat poetically,

seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people (quoted in Sheridan, 1980:217 as cited in Martin, 1988:6).

Human agency is clearly asserted in this constant play of power. For, while power is employed and exercised "through a net-like organization" (Foucault, 1980a:101), "not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation" (Foucault, 1980a:98). By locating power in innumerable points -- inherent not only within individuals but in all social interactions as well -- Foucault allows for an interpretation of power which simultaneously asserts both its dynamic, productive character, along with human beings' role within that production. Foucault goes on to show that all forms of power relations are highly transient, that they are forever engaged in bringing forth new alignments and convergences. One begins to sense here the dynamic nature of power.

At the same time, in arguing that power relations are continually open to challenge and change, Foucault tacitly creates a space for resistance. It is a point which calls for further explanation. Foucault argues that power and resistance are intrinsically linked. Resistance, he writes, is not a force which exists outside, and in contrast to, some immense web of power. Rather, it is immanent within it and essential to its continued reproduction (1980:95). Like power, resistance is inherently productive in nature. It is inscribed in power as "an irreducible opposite" (Ibid) and, as such, is party to the varied constructions and reconstructions of power itself. Foucault mirrors his notion of a multiplicity of force relations with that of the plurality of points of resistance. This resistance, like power, takes on many forms. Foucault puts it this way:

These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial (1980a:96).

Within such a theory of power and protest lies the possibility, then, of moving beyond the traditional assumptions of what constitutes resistance. Indeed, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault makes it clear that collective, revolutionary struggle is potentially only one form of resistance. Just as force relations simultaneously converge and compete, continually being codified into specific forms of power relations (as embodied in the state and judicial apparatuses, or in various manifestations of social hegemonies [1980a:92-93]), points of resistance are similarly strategically codified,

one form of which makes revolution possible (Ibid).

Biddy Martin is quick to grasp the significance of such an analysis. Because neither power nor resistance operate from a single point, she writes,

a very different form of political organization and struggle suggests itself, an alternative to the frontal attack on the state led by the One revolutionary subject, local struggles that undermine institutional power where it reveals itself in ideology under the mask of humanism, or as it operates in homes, schools, prisons, therapists' offices and factories, wherever the work of normalization is carried on (1988:9-10).

When one links this characterization of power and resistance to Foucault's analyses of knowledge and discourse, this theoretical approach becomes even more significant.

To Foucault, power and knowledge are inextricably linked. Knowledge is both a determinant and indicator of relations of power in society (Faveri, 1992:31).

Foucault describes the relationship between power and knowledge in this way:

(P)ower and knowledge directly imply one another; . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (1979:27-28).

Foucault engages in discourse analysis to understand not only how knowledge is produced and controlled, but also how this knowledge comes to be legitimized as the dominant discourse or worldview (Faveri, 1992:31). Within society, Foucault says, there is a 'regime of truth' and a complex interrelated set of mechanisms for producing that truth (Diamond and Quinby, 1988:x). Foucault thus views knowledge as an ordered social construct whose production is imbued with relations of power (Faveri, 1992:31). Truth or knowledge, in this view, is "subject to constant economic and political incitement . . . (and) is produced and transmitted under the

control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)," (Foucault, 1980b:131-32).

Yet there is no single discourse, no universally accepted set of truths or ways of knowing (Foucault, 1980a:100). Instead, knowledge emerges out of the struggle between competing discourses -- that is, between varying interpretations of reality or claims to Truth. Together, discursive elements compete to produce an ever-contested Truth, and, as such, discourse represents "the struggle or negotiation over meaning" (Stamp as cited in Mackenzie, 1992:693). What we know, who we are, our subjectivities and our identities are a product of the interpretation of reality or discourse which pervades our knowledge-systems, institutions, habits, and rituals. That various structures, processes and social relations -- all codifications of existing relations of power -- work to privilege particular discourses and to subjugate or silence others must be acknowledged.

These subjugated knowledges or 'reverse discourses' are, nonetheless, significant for they revolve around particular claims to power and knowledge. Their significance is reflected in this excerpt from *Power/Knowledge*:

By subjugated knowledges one should understand . . . a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity . . . It is through the reappearance of . . . these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work . . . With what in fact were these buried subjugated knowledges really concerned? They were concerned with a historical knowledge of struggles (Foucault, 1980b:80-83).

It is here at these "local centres of power/knowledge" (Foucault, 1980a:98), that the

dominant discourse, and what Martin calls "the work of normalization", are challenged (1988:10). Here, at last, one sees concretized the notion of resistance as the efforts of the oppressed to assert their own set of truths -- efforts grounded in their personal interpretation and experience of the quotidian. By focusing on how power and resistance operate at this level, how the "the personal is truly political" similarly comes into view (Diamond and Quinby, 1988:xvi).

MacLeod's notion of the dominant's and subordinate's mutual implication in the construction of power relations also finds resonance here. Elizabeth Janeway explains it this way:

(Power's) steady existence derives from ceaseless shifts in tension; its balance is maintained by thrust and response, hope and frustration, and by the practical actions that grow out of confrontations and compromises among its myriad components (1981:3).

Thus, while the persistence of inequalities may point to their essential permanence (MacLeod, 1991:19), in fact, "there has never existed one type of stable subjugation" (Foucault, 1980a:97). Foucault's analysis of power and resistance, and indeed, knowledge and discourse, thus provides us with the theoretical basis both for understanding the origins of the oppressed's oppositional stance (as rooted in their own truths and daily experiences), and for acknowledging that its assertion implies the negotiation of power relations which themselves revolve around the construction and manipulation of knowledge.

Scott's theorizing on the dynamics of power and resistance, if somewhat less abstract, appears to parallel Foucault's own postulating in the area. It thus proves equally valuable to this project of both uncovering struggles of resistance and

observing how social change is effected from below. Scott's challenge to traditional theories on the hegemonic operations of power proves particularly insightful.

Theories of hegemony have been articulated by a range of political thinkers beginning with Antonio Gramsci (1971) and including John Gaventa (1980) and Barrington Moore, Jr (1978). Through their works, various ideas about hegemony, or about how power is constructed and systematized in society, have emerged. These speak of how ideology is articulated and widely propagated -- of how the interests of the dominant are communicated through society's innumerable institutions of socialization including government, schools, family and church. Through these theories, each hotly contested, these thinkers attempt to explain how it is that the powerful are able to maintain their hold on the dominated -- how, in the absence of coercion, ordinary citizens including the working class, peasants, and migrant domestic workers are made to quietly conform or silently acquiesce (Scott, 1990:70-71). The acquiescence of the weak is the fundamental assumption around which hegemonic theory revolves. In challenging this assumption, Scott reveals the weakness of hegemonic theory. In so doing, he both affirms the oppositional spirit of the oppressed, and offers a more materialist view of how that spirit comes to be expressed. Space prohibits a detailed examination of the tenets of hegemonic theory and the multifarious debates which have ensued. A few further words of clarification are critical, however, in order to grasp fully the significance and import of Scott's analysis.

Why does a subordinate class or group seem to consent to an economic or

social system that is manifestly against its interests (Scott, 1990:71)? Hegemonic theorists offer roughly two explanations. The first contends that the dominated are essentially mystified or hoodwinked; that they are somehow magically persuaded into believing in the values through which their subordination is explained and justified (Scott, 1990:72). In *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (1990), Gramsci outlines this perspective. Hegemony, in this view, is a concept of moral and intellectual domination involving, indeed dependent upon, securing the active consent of the dominated (Gramsci, 1971:12). Such spontaneous consent revolves around a "philosophy of common sense", a "conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed" by society's varied cultural and social environments (Ibid:419). The production of this common sense and thus the securing of spontaneous consent are directly dependent upon the dominant's ability to create a sense of common interest and shared goals among all members of society. Or, more precisely, hegemonic control rests firmly upon the ability of the dominant to dictate that common sense, to convince the subordinated that their interests and needs are identical to the dominant's. The state, education systems, the courts and the family, and the innumerable institutions and sites of social interaction are the vehicles through which hegemonic control is firmly established (Gramsci, 1971:258).

In Janeway's reading, this hegemonic world is Orwellian in nature. In such a world, she writes, "tyrants want to remake the minds of their subjects, to subvert their will, secretly, silently and irresistibly" (1981:201). In a society given over to absolute hegemonic control, then, resistance to the existing order can neither be

imagined nor realized.

The second theory offered to explain the apparent quiescence of subordinated groups argues that the dominant ideology has convinced the oppressed that the current social order is either natural or inevitable or both (Scott, 1990:72). Regardless of the extent to which that order is perceived unjust, the dominated, in this view, are helplessly (and hopelessly) resigned to it. Here, the dominant are seen to have less of an ideological grip on the subordinated. Rather than magically lulling the dominated into a false reading of their subordination, ideological domination works instead to establish a clear sense of limits, to suggest what is possible and what is not, to block alternative interests from emerging, and to drive certain ambitions "into the realm of idle dreams" (Scott, 1985:326).

It is precisely this notion which is reflected, for example, in Eugene Genovese's analysis (1974) of the hegemonic slave economy of the antebellum South. In this case, he explains, to speak of the slaveholders' hegemony in the Southern United States was "to speak of their ability to confine the attendant struggles to terrain acceptable to the ruling class" and "to prevent the emergence of an effective challenge to the basis of a society" which revolved around, and was rooted in slave ownership and trade (1974:658). In this view, then, appropriate behavioural results (that is, consent) can be achieved without having to change or inculcate a particular set of values (Scott, 1990:74).

Moreover, as in the perspective articulated above, coercive measures are not necessary to ensure quiescent behaviour. Hegemonic control emerges as a function of

the tendency of the oppressed to view the existing order as natural. The historical persistence of inequalities, theorists argue, contribute to that sentiment. Scott elaborates on their argument by way of an illustration:

(I) imagine the situation of an untouchable in eighteenth-century rural India. In the collective historical experience of his or her group, there have always been castes; his caste has always been most looked down upon and exploited, and no one has ever escaped his caste -- in his lifetime. Small wonder that in such circumstances the caste system and one's status within it should take on the force of natural law (1990:75).

With no alternative experience outside the caste system, the social order is perceived by the oppressed as inevitable. That sense of inevitability in turn leads to resignation. Thus, while revolutionary thought may not necessarily be blocked, revolutionary action remains outside the realm of the possible.

Whether arguing spontaneous consent, or helpless resignation, the conclusion for those concerned with how resistance is born and articulated is the same: resistance from below is simply not possible (Scott, 1990:78). Revolutionary thought and action are equally blocked, and change can come only from some external shock.

Scott neatly challenges each of these assumptions and in so doing reclaims the human agency of the oppressed. First, he states, there is little evidence that the oppressed, whether under feudalism, slavery, early or late capitalism, have ever been ideologically incorporated to the extent that 'grand' hegemonic theory claims (Ibid:74). To the contrary, there is much evidence, Scott is at pains to point out, that the oppressed are neither lacking in oppositional imagination nor action. Nor do they perceive the social order as natural or inevitable. Drawing from his research on Malay peasant farmers, he writes:

This argument (of inevitability), as I understand it, asks us to believe that for subordinate classes, the larger structure of domination is typically experienced in the same way a peasant might experience the weather. . . (Yet), the inevitability of the weather has not prevented every group of traditional cultivators from personifying this natural force or from developing rituals to influence its course or, when their efforts have failed, from cursing their fate. Thus, far from removing it to the realm of the inevitable, the peasantry has historically considered even the weather to be amenable to human manipulation. If there is any "mystification" of natural laws in traditional societies, it is in the direction of bringing them under human control, not the reverse (1985:324).

For the subjugated, then, even the truly 'natural' can be challenged.

Moreover, embedded in the daily experiences of the oppressed are precisely the desires for a new world order that hegemonic theory so casually dismisses. Calls for justice, for equality and for broad social change are at the centre of the rumours of heroism exchanged by slaves and Malay peasants, and of the stories of liberation which resonate in their religions. It is in these rituals endlessly enacted -- in experiences of story-telling, gossip mongering, religious worship and others -- that proof of resisting subcultures can surely be found. In exploring one such ritual -- that of weaving stories and legends -- writer Honor Ford Smith (1987) eloquently illustrates this point. She says:

The tale-telling tradition contains what is most poetically true about our struggles. The tales are one of the places where the most subversive elements of our history can be safely lodged, for over the years the tale tellers convert fact into images which are funny, vulgar, amazing or magically real. These tales encode what is overtly threatening to the powerful into covert images of resistance so that they can live on in times when overt struggles are impossible or build courage in moments when it is . . . They suggest an altering or re-defining of the parameters of political process and action (as cited in Mohanty, 1991:35).

That the 'common sense' of the dominant is not wholly absorbed by the oppressed is

made obvious through tales such as these -- stories woven around and between the walls of an hegemonic order, tales continually seeking to turn the world on its head.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon similarly challenges the assumption of the ignorant passivity of the dominated. The organized masses of the colonized in Africa, he writes, endlessly challenged the supremacy of white values, mocking them, insulting them, and "vomiting" them up (1963:43). To be sure, he adds, this phenomenon is usually masked for strategic reasons. The desires for freedom, the rejection of colonial rule, the challenge to white dominance and to the colonial discourse, are most often expressed through daily rituals like dream and dance. Fanon writes:

the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning (1963:52).

Captured within rituals as diverse as dreaming, tale-telling, and spirit worship, then, is clear evidence of the oppressed's 'oppositional imagination'.

There is much evidence that the oppressed regularly act on this imagination -- if oppositional thought is not blocked, nor is its articulation. Even for those caught up in traditional notions of resistance, history offers striking examples of violent and non-violent struggle -- slave revolts, peasant uprisings, walk-outs and sit-ins are all manifestations of such confrontation (Scott, 1990:77). Given the degree of violence with which such efforts have been suppressed, and given the often hopeless odds

against which the dominated often array themselves, Scott argues, the social phenomenon to be addressed here is not that of the apparent 'naturalization' of domination, but rather, that of its apparent 'denaturalization' in the eyes of the weak (Scott, 1990:79). Scott further addresses this irony:

It is not the miasma of power and thralldom that requires explanation. We require instead an understanding of a misreading by subordinate groups that seems to exaggerate their own power, the possibilities for emancipation, and to underestimate the power arrayed against them (Ibid).

Surely the oppressed continue to resist not only because they perceive the current order to be unjust, and not only because they understand it to be open to challenge and change, but also because, in however minimal way, their interests are served in the process of such struggles. This point will be made more decisively in the following chapter.

What concerns us here, however, is the conclusion that regardless of the pervasiveness of the dominant discourse, ideological challenge is never precluded. From where, however, does oppositional thought and action arise? What accounts for the oppositional spirit given the strength of the dominant discourse and the extent to which it pervades social, political and cultural institutions?

In *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), Scott argues that no hegemonic order, no system of dominance, can be so encompassing or controlling of the subordinate's social life, as to completely prevent the emergence of a resisting subculture or to check fully the imaginative powers of the 'weak' (1985:331). It is a sentiment echoed by theorist Raymond Williams who similarly suggests that, "no dominant culture ever

in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention," (as cited in Cocks, 1989:64).

To be sure, the dominant are the purveyors of "an awesome affectivity", enjoying a greater influence on collective life than those with fewer resources (Cocks, 1989:182). Still, as Joan Elizabeth Cocks states (1989), it is a huge leap from the claim that one group has mastery over another in a system, to the assertion that that group is master of the entire system itself. This latter assertion implies that the dominant group "has conceived and designed and implemented (the entire system, wholly and that it has craftily inculcated the group it oppresses and exploits with appropriately submissive beliefs, tastes and preoccupations" (Ibid).

And, herein lies the irony. For, as Cocks astutely notes, with the very establishment of parameters of acceptable thought and action, a near infinity of alternative principles are systematically shut out (Cocks, 1989:63). Thus, she adds, any system is no more than a "contingent reduction of a much greater possibility" (1989:64). The very existence of limits, then, points analytically, at least, to the "boundaries beyond which thought and action can venture out," (Cocks, 1989:64). In Gramscian terms, if hegemonic power is defined by the established limits of "common sense", then counterhegemonic resistance lies in all that is shut out. It is in the possibility of transgressing the limits of hegemonic society that a space for resistant consciousness and behaviour is tacitly created.

This possibility in itself, however, does not guarantee transgression. As MacLeod and Cocks point out, while it may be possible to think and act against the

grain of an established order, everything in society conspires to make it unlikely (MacLeod, 1991:7; Cocks, 1989:187). What, then, makes it possible to transgress the limits of an existing hegemony? In short, how does rebellious thought and action arise?

In *Powers of the Weak* (1981), Janeway suggests that the resistance of the dominated is predicated on the power to mistrust – that is, on the ability to doubt the meanings and truths defined and assigned by the dominated. This mistrust, she writes, constitutes the "first power of the weak", and serves as the basis for the development of any alternative ideology or discourse (1980:162). Cocks similarly suggests that resistance is rooted in the ability to move from the uncritical acceptance of received ideas to a reflective consideration of the same (1989:68). Under what conditions, then, does mistrust arise? How and why do popular standards of what is acceptable come under scrutiny (Ibid). How, indeed, does reflexive thought turn into what Moore suggests is a shared sense of moral outrage among the oppressed (1978:462)?

That resistance is often born out of major socio-economic change is reflected historically in countless examples of revolution, democratic challenge, social unrest, and the birth of new parties. The spread of capitalism through Malaysia, the industrial revolution in Russia, the rapid Westernization of Middle Eastern society, have all been clearly challenged with counter-hegemonic protest. This challenge arose not simply out of the insecurities and uncertainties these changes engendered, but also out of the human tendency to glorify the past (Cocks, 1989:64; Scott,

1985:179). Though the past may have been exploitative in a very different way, society being "under the sway of a different conceptualization of the world, a different regime of truth", elements of that past live on in tension with the present (Cocks, 1989:64). These reminders, Cocks contends, are evoked in times of great stress and change, going "off like a bomb . . . suddenly becoming proofs of, and pointers to, a different way of life" (1989:65). It is this reality which leads theorist de Certeau to conclude that memory is one of the strongest tactics of the weak for it "allows exits, ways of going out and coming" (as cited in MacLeod, 1991:106). The evocation of these memories, then, creates a potential space from which to reexamine existing power relations and challenge the legitimacy of the dominant world view (Ibid).

Significantly, disparities between the dogma and practice of the dominant discourse can also give rise to ideological challenge. Moral outrage is often born out of a keen sense of injustice -- that is, out of a recognition that an unspoken social contract between the dominant and the dominated has been violated (Moore, 1978:18). Moore (1978) writes of the social contract not as a 'Platonic Charter' "to which all members of the society except the socially obtuse and politically deaf appear to subscribe," but rather, as an un verbalized, implicit set of mutual understandings prescribing not only the limits of what both rulers and subjects can do, but also, the mutual obligations binding one group to the other (1978:18). When the oppressed transgress these limits, retaliation is swift -- it comes often in the form of punitive measures, coercion, and a heightened exercise of authority in general. When the

dominant transgress these limits -- by failing to perform the tasks it claims it should perform -- resistance can be equally quick to arise.

Moore argues that among the many obligations the dominant are expected to fulfil is that of guaranteeing at least a minimal level of material (and status) security to subordinates. The forms of this obligation are varied indeed, ranging from the efforts of a pimp to secure uncontested territory for a prostitute, to the travails of a prime minister struggling to ward off a recession (1978:22) to the duty of slaveholders to feed their chattel. Violation of this contract takes on equally diverse forms. It is manifest in the absence of adequate food, clothing or shelter, and in a reduction of, or attacks on, the symbolic status a group experiences.

Judith Rolin's study of domestic workers and their relations with women employers offers one concrete example. In *Between Women* (1985), Rollins shows how the failure of employers to offer gifts on special occasions, to proffer second-hand clothes and toys for the women to send home, or to pay an adequate wage and to do so promptly, led to a shared feeling of moral indignation among the women, providing fodder for endless grumblings and feeding defiant strategies of revenge. Similarly, in Scott's Malaysia, the failure of village elite to fulfil traditional obligations including the hosting of village feasts and the offering of sacks of rice during religious holidays -- donations which in many cases constituted a sizable portion of a household's seasonal diet -- led to innovative and daring strategies which undermined the moral authority of the landowning class (1985).

The admittedly brief survey which appears above represents but a few theories

on possible conditions which can give rise to the subordinated's spirit of resistance. Significantly, while Moore and Scott agree that the praxis of the powerful leaves the dominant discourse open to challenge, they differ markedly in their political interpretation of this resistance. Moore suggests that such resistance neither reflects nor poses an ideological challenge to the existing social order. "Such criticism," he writes, leaves the basic functions of the dominant stratum inviolate" (1978:84).

Alternatively, Scott argues that, "to conclude that slaves, serfs, peasants, untouchables, and other subordinate groups are ethically submissive merely because their protests and claims conform to the proprieties of the dominant class they are challenging would be a serious analytical error" (1990:92). He notes that because the forms resistance takes are heavily influenced by strategic considerations, it is impossible to derive the essence of the challenge without contextualizing the acts through the voices of the dominated themselves. It is this point which underpins his theorizing on everyday resistance and which is central to his critique of theories of hegemony. Exploring it further will better prepare the ground for our analysis and interpretation of migrant worker resistance documented in ensuing chapters.

Clearly the oppressed are possessed of both an oppositional imagination and the power to act upon it. What is equally apparent, however, according to Scott, is that given this convincing evidence, hegemonic theories retain their currency. For Scott, explanation for this popularity is found in the simple fact that, on the face of it, the evidence of ideological incorporation far outweighs evidence of its opposite. The nature of power relations is such that public behaviour will always provide "a constant

stream of evidence" in support of an interpretation of ideological hegemony (1990:92). Yet the appearance of quiescence can be born out of strategic imperatives -- out of the fear of retribution, for example, or the basic need to subsist. It can also equally easily reflect outright accommodation. The challenge remains, then, to scrutinize more closely the myriad subtleties of quiescence.

Scott's concepts of the public and hidden transcript serve as effective analytical tools for this project. Scott refers to the entire realm of open interaction between the dominant and subordinate groups as the public transcript. Because of the power relations at play in this realm -- that is, because in reality the dominant control this domain -- the public transcript overwhelmingly tends to reflect the discourse of the dominant. In short, the powerful set the tone of public encounters (1990:28). In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), Scott writes that the dissembling of the weak in the face of power is so ubiquitous that it appears even in situations where it is difficult to recognize the power being exercised. Everyday social intercourse, for example, requires an exchange of pleasantries and smiles with those whom we may not like nor respect (1990:1). In this instance, Scott suggests, "the power of social forms embodying etiquette and politeness" demands that we often sacrifice candour to ensure harmonious relations with those around us (Ibid). Whether out of fear, out of prudence, or out of the desire to be thought well of, the public performances of the weak will be, with a few significant exceptions, shaped to conform to the expectations of the powerful (Ibid:2). It is the kind of acting that has been imposed on those subjected to systematic forms of subjugation, however, that concerns us here.

Such 'acting' is apparent, for example, in the discourse between genders. It is hardly surprising, Robin Lakoff has pointed out, that given the history and prevalence of patriarchal domination, women are much more likely to adopt the syntax of men (replete with its tonal and grammatical idiosyncrasies, and its tactics of control) while the reverse (expressed through rising tones aimed at seeking consensus, or through the use of 'linguistic hedges', like 'sort of' or 'kind of', aimed at weakening declarative statements) is seldom the case (as cited in Scott, 1990:30). Such tactics, whether or not consciously employed, serve as "damage-control manoeuvres in the face of power" (1990:30-31). Such behaviours extend beyond the realm of verbal interaction.

For domestic workers, for example, ensuring smooth employer-domestic relations (and hence foreign exchange to send home) might require a public performance which includes enacting various rituals of linguistic and spacial deference -- smiling and nodding at requests for unexpected and unpaid overtime, wearing clothes which might reflect their lower-class designation, or spinning tales of personal poverty or hardship to fulfil employers' racist and voyeuristic curiosity (Rollins, 1985:165). For those working in an environment whose conditions are determined in large part by the arbitrary nature of personal rule, such behaviours effectively minimize open challenges to the dominant -- challenges which can lead to an intensification of the dominant's discursive practices aimed at demonstrating and justifying their domination -- and thus enable domestics to work in a non-acrimonious environment. Slave narratives like this one similarly reflect this imperative:

I had endeavoured so to conduct myself as not to become obnoxious to the white inhabitants, knowing as I did their power, and their hostility

to the coloured people. . . . First, I had made no display of the little property or money I possessed, but in every way I wore as much as possible the aspect of slavery. Second, I had never appeared to be even so intelligent as I really was. This all coloured at the south, free and slaves, find it particularly necessary for their own comfort and safety to observe (Lane 1848, as cited in Scott, 1990:2).

This art of dissimulation, and the ends it achieves, will be explored more fully in chapter two. For our immediate purposes, however, it is important simply to recognize that all that appears on the public stage is not necessarily what it seems.

Scott suggests that the public transcript with all its staged and elaborate performances works to the advantage of both the dominant and the weak. For those in power, the public transcript successfully communicates the state of existing power relations. More crudely put, it conveys exactly who is in power and what are their terms. It thus serves as a show of 'discursive affirmation' which in turn acts to further legitimate the social order in the eyes of others (Scott, 1990). To the subordinated the public transcript can be equally beneficial. By offering to the dominant the appearance of unanimity and consent, subordinated groups can avoid experiencing the more harsh and threatening exploitative relations which the dominant could most certainly bring to bear upon them if they perceived the need.

Yet if it is true, as argued earlier, that the dominated do possess an oppositional imagination, how and where is that spirit of defiance expressed? Scott argues that every subordinate group creates out of its ordeal a 'hidden transcript', a set of discursive practices which represent a damning critique of existing power relations (1990:xii). Expressed behind the backs of the dominant, criticism is rendered through myriad forms including gossip, slander, rumours and folk songs. It

is woven into whispered stories of heroism and revenge and shouted out within the walls where folk religions are practised. It is here where the dominated safely vent their spleen -- where women voice their pain and anger, where slaves fantasize about revenge.

The hidden transcript comprises both linguistic and behavioural practices. Poaching, vandalism, graffiti, the underground economy and tax evasion, each expresses resistance to existing relations of power. Through such acts the dominated attempt to reclaim what is theirs, whether it be material (as in land, money or food) or symbolic (as in their identities as honest, intelligent and skilled individuals). These varied practices, moreover, represent ideological challenges and suggest the existence, if only partial, of an alternative world view. It is a point to which we return in chapter five. What is apparent at the moment, however, is that if one looks behind the calm surface that public accommodation is meant to present, one is confronted with a storm of defiant speech and action which, though unavowed and surreptitious, directly contravenes the public transcript (Scott, 1990:14). Scott explains the relationship between the public and hidden transcript in this way:

If we think, in schematic terms of public transcript as comprising a domain of material appropriation (for example, of labour, grain, taxes), a domain of public mastery and subordination (for example, rituals of hierarchy, deference, speech, punishment, and humiliation), and, finally, a domain of ideological justification for inequalities (for example, the public religious and political world view of the dominant elite), then we may perhaps think of the hidden transcript as comprising the offstage responses and rejoinders to that public transcript (Ibid:111).

The hidden transcript thus reveals the extent to which public behaviours are staged.

It would be misleading to suggest that the defiance of the weak is restricted to this terrain. Indeed, the hidden transcript regularly makes an appearance on the open stage. Because of the power relations at play in this domain, however, resistance here is often masked or ambiguous. While it might occasionally be expressed through overt rebellion and protest, dissent will more often be expressed in varied gestures and facial contortions. Here, then, the fluid relationship between the public and hidden transcripts can be seen. It is only through recognition of this relationship between them that quiescent behaviour can be interpreted and understood.

Scott's theorizing implicitly embraces Foucault's own musings on power and resistance. For it is in the hidden transcript that the subjugated knowledges Foucault implores us to uncover are found. These knowledges are born out of the lived experiences of the weak and through them we learn of how the oppressed routinely interpret and shape the exploitative relations in which they are immersed. It is in the hidden transcript, then, that the non-hegemonic voices and practices are lodged -- that the ideological negation Scott insists must be present is revealed.

Through the concepts of the public and hidden transcript, Scott helps to open up the vast terrain between quiescence and revolt. And it is on this terrain that the political life of the oppressed is confirmed. By exploration of these 'infrapolitics', and the knowledges contained within it, it becomes possible to observe one way in which the oppressed struggle to effect change. In doing so, it also becomes conceivable that the narrow, victimizing tendencies of power and resistance theory can be shed, and that, instead, the human agency of the oppressed and their immense

capacity to resist can be affirmed.

The above survey of various concepts of power and resistance with all their inherent strengths and weaknesses has attempted to prepare the ground for a theory of resistance through which the dominated's determined efforts to bring about change can be affirmed. Though by no means exhaustive, such an analysis has, it is hoped, helped us to move beyond traditional understandings both of how power operates and of what constitutes resistance. We have challenged, for example, the popular biases about the character and goals of resistance and thus removed the blinders obscuring our vision of alternative forms resistance can take. We have also countered traditional notions of power and how it is seen to operate -- those which tend to view power as an unidirectional, hierarchically-organized, prohibitory force -- with one which posits power as a dynamic, omnipresent, and productive set of relations. At the same time, clear evidence of the oppositional imagination and spirit of the oppressed have allowed us to challenge the truths professed through theories of hegemony -- truths which in assuming that the dominated are quiescent or consenting, ultimately deny the oppressed any ideological space. Finally, by introducing Scott's conceptual tools of the public and hidden transcripts, we have been led onto the terrain where everyday resistance is overtly manifest and where proof of the human agency of the oppressed is so obviously evident.

Many questions, however, remain unaddressed. To what extent does such defiance pose an ideological challenge? What is the nature of this challenge and how coherent does it tend to be? Moreover, what is the process through which such

defiance brings about change -- how are power relations truly rendered fragile and reconstituted? In answering these questions it becomes necessary to look first at the myriad forms such resistance takes, to explore the sheer brilliance, innovation, and resourcefulness of its character, and to examine the nature of the gains it appears to make. This is the task to which the following chapter is devoted.

Chapter Two

Exploring the Sites of Everyday Resistance

Denver thought she understood the connection between her mother and Beloved: Sethe (her mother) was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it. But there would never be an end to that, and seeing her mother diminished shamed and infuriated her. Yet she knew Sethe's greatest fear was the same one Denver had in the beginning -- that Beloved might leave. That before Sethe could make her understand what it meant -- what it took to drag the teeth of that saw under the little chin; to feel the baby blood pump like oil in her hands; to hold her face so her head would stay on; to squeeze so she could absorb, still, the death spasms that shot through that adored body, plump and sweet with life -- Beloved might leave. Leave before Sethe could make her realize that worse than that -- far worse -- was what Baby Suggs died of . . . That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. And though she and others lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing -- the part of her that was clean. No undreamable dreams about whether the headless, footless torso hanging in the tree with a sign on it was her husband or Paul A; whether the bubbling-hot girls in the colored-school fire set by patriots included her daughter; whether a gang of whites invaded her daughter's private parts, soiled her daughter's thighs and threw her daughter out of the wagon. She might have to work the slaughterhouse yard, but not her daughter . . .

No. Oh no. Maybe Baby Suggs could worry about it, live with the likelihood of it; Sethe had refused -- and refused still.

*Toni Morrison
Beloved, 1987*

In Toni Morrison's aching tale of an ostracized black woman who is haunted by the choice she made to take her own child's life, the ambiguities and complexities, varieties and subjectivities that define the very nature of the resistance of the 'weak', is at once revealed. Murder or salvation? Resistance or capitulation? Which does

the act of one desperate woman refusing to surrender her child to the grasping hands of white slave drivers reveal? Clearly, the slaughter of a child, an helpless infant, no less, is murder of a kind one can hardly imagine. What must be equally recognized, however, is that the murder itself is far from senseless. Indeed, it is a desperate, if not brave act of defiance -- resistance perhaps in its most horrific manifestation. Faced with the prospect of having to release her child into the soul-destroying white world of the antebellum South, she chooses to deny the white slave owners yet another strong-backed labourer for their fields and plantations, yet another vibrant individual rendered nameless and broken. In so doing she effectively saves the soul of her child, her act thus as much life-giving as it is destroying.

The excerpt from *Beloved* is particularly relevant to this chapter of my study into the varied nature of resistance. It points up just how complex the notion of resistance truly is, and how seemingly intangible are both its nature and its goals. At the same time, it further challenges the reader to move beyond traditional notions of resistance, shattering long-held assumptions discussed in the previous chapter. Morrison, in posing murder -- this highly individualized, isolated, and seemingly spontaneous act -- as a brave, albeit extreme, form of resistance, raises myriad critical questions, among them the most basic: What is resistance? What are its characteristics? What does one make of its ambiguities? How do isolated defiant behaviours compare with more collective, overt protest? Are the goals sought and achieved somehow different or less meaningful? What is it, exactly, that is being resisted? And how does such resistance succeed in bringing about social change?

The slaughter of one's child is not an everyday occurrence. But it does serve to illustrate the isolated, deeply personal, equivocal yet powerful nature of the resistance in which the most vulnerable engage. Such resistance is rarely as dramatic as murder; its beauty and strength often lie in its banality (Scott, 1985:27). As Scott suggests, justification for an exploration into what he dubs "the weapons of the weak" lies in the very fact of the banality of such resistance -- in the recognition that in a context where collective defiance and open revolt are neither desirous nor likely, daily life and its rituals serve as a more prominent and realistic arena of struggle (1985:27). In gossip-mongering and character defamation, theft and lying -- all common acts of everyday resistance -- in the deliberate refusals to comprehend simple instructions from employers, in the feigned ignorance of, or confusion about, arduous and merciless demands and orders, there lies a subtle yet direct challenge to the legitimacy of existing exploitative relations and a relentless negotiation of power through which the oppressed gain ground.

The previous chapter sought to lay the foundation for this construction of a theory about everyday resistance and its effects. Through the theories of, among others, Foucault and Scott, I attempted to locate the social spaces where the non-hegemonic voices of the dominated are born and thrive. This chapter invites us to look more closely at those spaces and to examine more carefully how these varied practices are played out. It aims to delve further into the nature and character of everyday resistance and to address, if only modestly, some of the complex questions raised above. Investigation into the everyday resistance of the weak, that jumbled

collection of behaviours as diverse as veiling and spirit possession, gossip and dissimulation, can reveal much about the steadily defiant and pragmatic efforts of the oppressed to both survive within, and emerge triumphant from, a multifaceted system of exploitation. Equally important, it can lend insight into one way in which power relations are continually challenged -- insight, that is, into the process of change.

As we proceed, it will become clear that the shapes and forms such resistance takes, whether expressed through the hidden or public transcript, will vary according to the specific social sites and set of actors. The defiant acts of migrant domestic workers will bear little ostensible similarity, for example, to the acts of Malay peasants struggling to till their land. Like Scott, I suggest, however, that some generalizations are possible. Scott argues that to the degree that structures of domination can be shown to operate in comparable ways, they will, other things being equal, elicit common patterns of resistance (1990:xi). He demonstrates that systems of slavery, serfdom, and foreign migrant labour, for example, do bear a family resemblance. Each represents an institutional arrangement for the appropriation of labour, goods and services while simultaneously denying the oppressed formal political and civil rights. Each is dependent upon ideologies which justify that exploitation and which revolve around discursive practices rooted in race, class and/or gender hierarchies. Such systems of domination usually also involve forms of personal rule and thus carry with them the potential for arbitrary, unpredictable and capricious behaviour on the part of superiors. Finally, as will be demonstrated in chapter five, subject groups within these systems are generally part of a broad social

network, one in which shared criticism and resistance can develop and be nurtured (Ibid).

These shared characteristics contribute to particular responses which manifest themselves both publicly and behind the scenes. The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate that, in spite of the particular histories and cultural specificities of oppressed peoples, predictable shared reactions and patterns of resistance do indeed arise. The preceding chapter made the case for exploration of the quotidian. It is only through close observation of human experience at this level, we said, that the knowledge or truths held by the oppressed become apparent. Exploration at this level may thus allow us to say something about how consciousness is formed and about how social change, however subtle, is made possible and achieved (Ibid). In the process, both the tenacity and ingenuity of the oppressed may, perhaps, be affirmed. It is to the realm of human experience, then, that we must now turn.

I have suggested earlier that the ability to resist rests ultimately in what Janeway has referred to as 'the power to mistrust', that is, in the ability to engage in reflexive thought and action. That this mistrust itself arises out of a clear sense of injustice, or out of the poor's conviction that current life is somehow not as good as it used to be, has also been argued. Scott's analysis, articulated at what is perhaps a lower level of abstraction, offers clear support for these notions. For Scott, everyday resistance emerges as an almost reflexive response to the host of indignities and humiliations which the oppressed regularly experience (1990:198). Scott organizes these experiences according to various practices of domination which he argues occur

in three interrelated spheres. In the first domain one finds material domination, that is, the appropriation of tangible resources including labour, taxes and goods. Indignities are also experienced, however, through what he calls status domination -- through character humiliation, insults, and blatant assaults on one's dignity. Finally, Scott states, domination is also practised at the ideological level, through the dominant's justification and promulgation of expansive worldviews which embody constructs based on the inequality of human relations (1990:198). It is these indignities which form the crucial link between an individual's condition and her consciousness (1990:113).

The oppressed resist these vicissitudes in countless ways and identifying them poses critical challenges. Rejecting the narrow traditional definition of resistance as overt, collective and principled defiance, for example, some students of resistance have embraced the opposite extreme. They suggest that any behaviour deviating from society's accepted norms -- suicide, addiction, multiple personality disorder -- should necessarily be considered an implicit form of protest. To these could be added incidents such as illness, crime, or the breaking of a teapot. To be sure, there are countless ways in which individuals interpret and respond to a situation. Still, how the responses cited above serve to challenge structural inequities, indeed, how they push for social change in however subtle ways, is not certain. Such a panoramic view of resistance also raises myriad questions about intentions and consciousness, or about the human agency behind these incidents. Resistance literature does examine these issues in fair detail. The fact that the resistance which this thesis explores is

more obvious in intention, however, suggests that such an exploration need not be undertaken here. It is with Scott's theorizing on resistance that we can more confidently proceed.

For Scott, any act by a member of a subordinated group which either mitigates or denies claims made by the dominant class or group, or pushes an alternative vision of what the world should be like, constitutes resistance (1985:290). Thus, any attempt to negotiate and redistribute inequitable power relations, is resistance. The advantages of such a notion of resistance are multiple, Scott suggests. First, it focuses on the material basis of struggle thus affirming the choice to target immediate sources of oppression. Such an interpretation also allows room for ideological forms of resistance as will be demonstrated in the latter part of this chapter. Equally important, this definition embraces both collective and individual action (Ibid). Armed with such a notion of only resistance or protest, it becomes possible to move away from the study of revolutions and strikes, and to focus instead on less dramatic kinds of resistance.

Admittedly these forms are both multitudinous and diverse. From foot dragging and feigned ignorance, dissimulation and deference, to tall tales and gossip, theft, arson and vandalism, these are the chosen "weapons of the weak" (Scott, 1985). These are the means through which the oppressed both survive and effect change. Scott has described this type of "garden variety resistance" as, "less a pitched battle than a low-grade, hit and run guerilla action" (1985:241). Despite this diversity and apparent lack of continuity, these varied forms of resistance share particular

characteristics. These, when taken together, hold out powerful advantages to the oppressed and make obvious their choice to engage in these less dramatic forms of protest.

Among these, the clandestine and anonymous qualities so often inherent in such acts offer the clearest advantage; in the absence of overt and blatant confrontation, the safety and protection of the dominated are more assuredly guaranteed. Moreover, dissimulation, feigned ignorance, veiling and even vandalism all carry with them a distinct air of ambiguity, a point to which we will return in later chapters. It is behind this intentional ambiguity that the oppressed can retreat even as they seek to further their own material goals. Everyday acts of resistance are often also solitary and spontaneous, in little need of logistical support or resources. This reality, in turn, circumnavigates other difficulties associated with collective organizing including not only those factors mentioned in chapter one, but also barriers to participation such as gender, class and culture. These characteristics, along with their obvious advantages, are reflected in the assorted tactics we explore in the pages which follow.

Given both the diversity of the historical and cultural circumstances in which structures of domination operate and the varied subjectivities of the individuals who navigate across them, it is hardly surprising that strategies of everyday resistance can be as innovative and varied as the individuals engaged in them. Organizing these according to Scott's three domains of domination -- that is, according to the material, status and ideological oppression experienced by the 'weak' -- offers one coherent

way of proceeding with this exploration.

Just as material domination takes on many forms -- the demand for land, grain and taxes from the Malay peasant, for example, or for sex and nightly income from the prostitute or 'entertainer' -- resistance at this level finds multiple expressions. In *The Tyranny of Work* (1975), for example, James Rinehart writes of Canadian factory workers' reactions to the alienation and powerlessness they experienced on the assembly line. In the 1920s, in response to the gradual erosion of worker control over both the productive process and their daily scheduling, individuals employed in automobile, appliance, textile and other industries, began to engage in seemingly senseless acts of sabotage. Cars and fridges rolled off assembly lines with scratches, dents and rattles. Critical components were left off and bolts fastened insecurely. In textile factories, clothes were routinely ripped or sewn badly and workers in breweries were known to cut beer with water. In printing shops, typesetters smattered their work with obscenities while in food processing plants, workers poured colourful dyes into baked goods (Taylor and Wilson, 1971:219 as cited in Rinehart, 1975:78). Slowdowns were brought about by "choking" equipment with clothes or tools -- one worker in an auto plant brought the line to a halt by locking a steering column on a car and throwing away the key (Ibid:80).

While tactics were cleverly and pragmatically tailored to work environments, some strategies appear to have been shared cross-sectorally. Indeed, in response to the imposition of mechanical rules of worker management -- rules which dictated not only hours of arrival, of rests, of meals, and of departure, but also strict quota and

pace targets, and punitive measures for those who missed them -- workers established their own formal, though unstated, set of workplace guidelines (Ibid:74). And through these rules employees creatively regulated the workplace. Among these were imperatives neither to overproduce, nor underproduce and never to 'squeal' on a fellow worker. Mutually agreed upon quotas meant workers could 'goldbrick', or run out of stock while not jeopardizing their jobs. At the same time, employees would often direct their creative energy toward the development of techniques aimed at easing their work and extending their leisure. These they would conceal from the eyes of floor managers and owners, determined to deny employers any additional fruits of their labour (Ibid:77).

And the effect of such actions? As Elton Mayo revealed in his study of the Hawthorne Works electric company, the informal rules together with these subversive tactics of resistance "often interfered with the attainment of managerial standards" (as cited in Rinehart, 1975:73). They forced a realignment of expectations and renegotiation of production levels. Perhaps the most immediate consequence of such covert strategies was the lowered productivity levels of workers across sectors. Hence, such strategies inevitably denied employers their workers' full labour, while simultaneously extending employees greater time for leisure.

Such resistance crosses geographic, cultural, and gender barriers as is evident in the work of Malaysian theorist Aiwan Ong. In *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline* (1987), Ong shows how women in Malaysia have responded to the phenomenon of industrial labour -- that is, to the "rigidity of the work routine,

continual male supervision, and devaluation of their labour" which has accompanied women's movement from the rural areas to the urban factories -- with a variety of culturally- and gender-based strategies (1987:7). Thus, the women claim to be plagued with uncomfortable 'female problems'. Or they demand leave to follow the requisite five-times daily prayer schedule. Through such tactics women have found 'legitimate' ways of removing themselves from mind-numbing assembly-line work, and of finding rest and solitude off the factory floor. Equally cleverly, women have played on stereotypical assumptions of the vulnerable woman, shedding tears when reprimanded in an effort to mitigate punishment (Ibid:203).

More interesting, perhaps, has been the phenomenon of spirit possession in which spirits have invaded one or many workers leaving them in a state of what Westerners might call hysteria. In Malaysia, where women are seen to be "weak in spiritual essence" (Ibid:88), and where young women's movements into factories have violated deeply religious cultural norms, such possession has been accepted as logical or common sensical; the women are seen to have angered the spirits. While it is not known whether such possession is intentional or involuntary, the effect has been the same -- either a brief leave of absence for those workers affected, or the shutdown of entire factories until male spirit exorcists can be summoned (Ibid). In 1978, for instance, one high-tech factory was forced to halt production after 120 of its microscope operators became possessed by spirits (Ibid:204). Production resumed three days later after a spirit healer was summoned to slaughter a goat on the premises and thus exorcise the evil reigning on the floor. The deep cultural roots of

such practices of resistance are reflected in one comment from an American factory director who, after being forced to shut his factory for a brief but significant period, pondered how he would "explain to corporate headquarters that 2,000 hours of production were lost because someone saw a ghost" (Ong, 1987:204).

By employing their own gender- and culturally-based form of worker management -- juxtaposed with the 'official' scientific management principles which ruled the floor -- workers also succeeded, if only in part, in reclaiming control of their labour and production. As such, their work was rendered increasingly humane (Ong, 1987:7-8). Ong underscores this point when she states that spirit possession is highly symbolic of the "violation, chaos, and draining of one's essence" that Malaysian women experience on the factory floor (Ibid:209). She writes that spirit possession is a singularly powerful form of protest against the loss of autonomy and dehumanizing effects of Western capitalist accumulation (Ibid:196). By countering the capitalist ethic with such an innovative form of resistance, women both show up the cultural barrenness inherent in capitalism, and reclaim a sense of humanity denied them through that ethic.

Such innovative strategies aimed at mitigating material domination are not restricted to the arena of the modern urban factory. Eugene Genovese (1974) recounts equally creative strategies of resistance among slaves on the plantations of the American South. Through the burning of harvests, the slaughter of livestock, the feigning of illness, among other tactics, the slaves sought to counter the appropriation of their material and human resources. Among this vast array of strategies endlessly

employed, deceit and dissimulation appear to have been the most common.

In an attempt, for example, to fill daily harvest quotas, slaves routinely falsified the weight of cotton sacks either by wetting down the cotton or by tossing in stones. Workers also tried to lessen the pace of work in an effort to set standards they felt were reasonable. To that end, Genovese writes, some slaves would even abide an overseer's whip knowing that inevitably the overseer would be forced to re-rationalize quotas (Ibid:621). Lying and dissimulation proved equally successful in furthering the slaves' efforts to avoid doing work. Feigning ignorance, playing dumb, as well as weaving intricate falsehoods, were among many vexing strategies employed by the slaves. As Reverend C.C. Jones said at the time,

Duplicity is one of the most prominent traits in their character, practised between themselves, but more especially, towards their masters and managers . . . The number, the veracity, and the ingenuity of falsehoods that could be told by them in a few brief moments was astonishing (as cited in Genovese, 1974:610).

To the endless consternation and frustration of the slaveholding community, "puttin' on Ole Massa" became a way of life (Ibid). As is reflected in the following excerpt from *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, this tactic could be used to secure the ultimate denial of domination -- freedom. In this passage, the author recounts a story he heard one former slave relate of how he cleverly escaped to the Yankees by tricking the white Confederates into revealing their enemy's location. The conversation, Colonel Higginson writes, went as follows:

"Den I go up to de white man, berry humble, and say, would he please git ole man a mouthful for eat?"

"He say he must hab de valeration ob half a dollar."

"Den I look berry sorry, and turn for go away."

"Den he say I might him dat hatchet I had."

"Den I say," (this in a tragic vein) "dat I must hab dat hatchet for defend myself from de dogs!"

[Immense applause and one appreciating auditor says, chuckling, "Dat was your arms, ole man," which brings the house down again.]

"Den he say de Yankee were nearby, and I must be very keerful."

"Den I say, 'Good Lord, Mas'r, am dey?"

Words cannot express the complete dissimulation with which these accents of terror were uttered -- this being precisely the piece of information he wished to obtain (as cited in Genovese, 1974:610).

If dissimulation served as a powerful means of furthering the interests of the slaves, pilfering, plundering, or outright theft were strategies no less effective. "The plundering of the hogpen, the smokehouse, the chicken coop, and the corncribs," Genovese writes, "was a normal part of plantation life" (1974:599). The practice was so widespread, he adds, that "to the slaveholders and whites generally, all blacks stole by nature" (Ibid). Or, from a former slave's perspective, "We stole so many chickens that if a chicken would see a darkey he'd run straight to the house" (Ibid:602).

Interestingly, few slaves considered their actions theft. An act constituted theft, according to Genovese, only if it involved taking the property of another slave (Ibid:602). Stealing from their master was simply an act of laying claim to that which was already theirs by right. Moreover, they reasoned, if they were in fact their masters' chattel, how could their actions be considered theft? As one former-slave justified it:

If they didn't provision you 'nough, you just had to slip round and get a chicken. That easy 'nough, but grabbin' a pig sur 'nough problem . . . That ain't stealin', is it? You has to keep right on workin' in the field, if you ain't allowanced 'nough, and no nigger like to work with his belly groanin' (Ibid:603).

In their eyes, then, slaves were simply involved in the transformation of property -- just as the chicken was fed the corn of his master, so too could the slave take that corn to feed herself (Ibid).

Whichever way it is labelled, their acts of resistance were successful. While theft provided for the survival of slaves and their families -- ensuring their reproduction in a decidedly cruel world, and enabling them to further their own needs and interests -- it simultaneously denied their masters a significant portion of their wealth. Thus, through such a vast array of tactics, the slaves in the American South posed a significant threat to the slave economy. Cumulatively, they shook the complacency of the dominant white elite by relentlessly challenging the material base from which that elite derived its strength.

At the same time, this ability to survive both by cunning and by wit served to strengthen the self-esteem of both the slave and her community. It is revealing, for example, that the slaves found a moral distinction between their acts of theft and those of others. Such is reflected in the following observations of one ex-slave. He said:

Dey allus done tell us it am wrong to lie and steal but why did de white folks steal my mammy and her mammy. Dey lives clost to some water, somewhere over in Africy . . . Dat de sinfulles' stealin' dey is" (Ibid:605).

Given that all slaves appeared to engage in such covert behaviour, Genovese writes, these actions tended also to build a sense of moral social cohesion (Ibid:607). In the end, such resistance served not only to counter the slaves' material exploitation, but also to challenge the basis of white status domination as well. Such acts clearly extended beyond the realm of material domination to address attempts at status

subordination or humiliation. The struggle to counter continual assaults on one's dignity, to recover and reassert or to redefine identity, to challenge assigned status definitions that confirm the dominant's racial superiority, thus similarly fuelled the daily resistance of these oppressed.

MacLeod's insightful observations of the new veiling in Cairo and the subtle yet direct challenge it poses to domination at both the material and status levels, is further illustration of this kind of resistance. As in Iran, the veil or 'higab' in Egyptian society has been used by women to challenge not only Western imperialism, but class and gender oppression as well. For the women of Cairo, this is an oppression experienced clearly at the level of material appropriation -- through increased taxes, lower wages, and heightened poverty in general (MacLeod, 1991:113). Yet it is a subordination experienced also at the level of status humiliation -- through character assassination, accusations of religious impurity, imputations of sexual licentiousness, and assaults on dignity in general. And indeed, material and status domination are inextricably interlinked. Economic disparities widened and class distinctions deepened as Egyptian society increasingly embraced the Western capitalist ethic. As Egypt opened itself more widely to foreign imports and Western culture, establishing industries which might propel the nation more centrally into the international arena, benefits accrued primarily to the upper-middle, and elite classes (Tohidi, 1991:256).

Subsisting in the face of spiralling inflation and slashed wages became an increasing challenge to many in the lower-middle class in Cairo. With women

traditionally responsible for ensuring the survival of their families, it became but a logical step for them to move from their households to the paid labour force. It was a matter-of-factness, however, not universally shared in Cairo. Viewed by elders and more orthodox relatives, and particularly by males, as a violation of cultural norms which equated women's role with their households, the feminization of the labour force became the subject of ridicule. As a result, it was women's reputation as responsible caregivers, good wives, caring and honourable family women -- a reputation upon which their status had been carefully constructed -- which slowly began to crumble. The women of Cairo were faced not only with this erosion of their traditional role and identity, but also with a barrage of images of the "free and independent" Western woman. In the absence of the emergence of positive alternative images, women found their identities not simply challenged, but also confused (MacLeod:1991; Tohidi:1991:256).

It was out of this determined assault on their identities and dignity, and out of the need to define a new respectable sense of womanhood, then, that women in Cairo began to redon the veil. Through this traditional form of dress, through this "easily accessible, immediate, and even quintessentially female communicative medium," women began to resist this assault on their status (MacLeod, 1991:131). Because of the traditional focus on women's body "as a locus of morality", and because, MacLeod writes, "dress is a key designator of class" and prestige in Egyptian society, it proved to be a brilliant strategy of resistance (Ibid:100). The new veiling allowed women to reclaim community respect by declaring their family values in an

exceedingly subtle yet public fashion (Ibid:4). It lent credence to their claims that their movement into the labour force arose as a natural extension of their roles of caregiver and family matriarch. Their appeal to traditional values as reflected through the higab also stood as an implicit disavowal of Western imperialist culture, and as a direct challenge to the image of licentious Western women it sought to impose on the women of Cairo (Ibid:135).

At the same time, the higab presented a twofold challenge to the growing class distinctions in Cairo society. Cloaked in their veils and in the air of respectability they lent, women could venture more confidently into the paid labour force and, through their augmented household incomes, purchase the goods which in turn narrowed the material distinction between the lower and middle classes (Ibid:134). By reducing both the number and style of dress lower-class women were forced to purchase, and thus by allowing them to dress much like their middle-class compatriots, the higab also served to further blur, in a truly symbolic fashion, the material differences distinguishing lower and middle class women (Ibid). While its overt and public nature distinguishes the donning of the higab from other forms of everyday resistance and struggle, it remains, nonetheless, a subtle, unstated challenge to the material and status disgraces rendered through Western capitalist expansionism.

Studies of everyday resistance reveal countless such tactics -- though many to a greater or lesser extent disguised. All are aimed not only at checking further material and status humiliations, but also at narrowing, or eliminating the structural hierarchies through which such humiliations are made possible and executed. That they also pose

a challenge to the entire ideological foundation upon which such hierarchies are constructed and articulated is critical to note. Such resistances are rendered possible only because they are reasoned (albeit often automatic and spontaneous) actions rooted in a clear oppositional, ideological discourse. This discourse, we have seen, constitutes Foucault's 'subjugated knowledges' -- the truths born out of the everyday struggles and experiences of the oppressed. In his insightful analysis of the use of gossip and defamation in one small rice-farming community in Malaysia, Scott (1985) offers powerful support for this perspective.

Far from the idle chatter about the lives of the rich and famous, or from meaningless, but flavourful comment providing grist for endless story mills, the devastatingly critical observations made by one group about another serve as a powerful (if not colourful) instrument of social control and manipulation, and as a challenge to, and purveyor of, broad cultural values (Bailey, 1971; Haviland, 1977; Scott, 1985). In *Gossip, Reputation, and Knowledge in Zinacantan* (1977), John Beard Haviland argues that gossip is a forceful and primary metacultural force, revealing as much about a group's moral and cultural ethos, as it does about the goings on of others in a community (1977:10).

Max Gluckman (1963) is among many to emphasize that gossip is commonly wielded as a weapon of resistance aimed at countering dominant discourses embodying notions of superiority and inferiority (as cited in Haviland, 1977-78). Similarly, as Paine suggests, individuals or groups regularly use gossip both to protect and to forward their own material and symbolic interests (as cited in Haviland,

1977:8). In the process of its deployment, gossip not only prevents assaults by one group on another, but also asserts and supports strongly held cultural values (Paine, 1963:311 as cited in Haviland, 1977:7).

Gossip is not simply an appeal to existing predominant norms and values; nor is it an effort to validate or lend them legitimacy (Haviland, 1977:10). Rather, the propaganda of gossip, of rumour, and of character assassination, represents a sharply critical commentary driven by a separate and competing ethic. As Scott suggests, these stories comprise the "cornerstones of an ideological edifice under construction" (1985:23). They embody not simply a critique of an existing hegemony, but, more significantly, a vision of an alternative order (Ibid). It is from this vision of how the world should be that these strategies of resistance derive their power. And in Sedaka (a pseudonym for the village in which Scott conducted his study) at least, this power is not inconsiderable. As Scott explains, these "weapons of the weak" amount to, "an exchange of small arms fire, a small skirmish, in a cold war of symbols between the rich and poor" (Ibid:22). The nature of this struggle is outlined briefly below.

Scott writes of the "symbolic hegemony" of the elite, that is, of the discourse within which and through which landholders in Sedaka seek to legitimize their domination. It is a discourse which attempts to justify the economic and cultural losses of Sedakan villagers. These losses Scott attributes to the process of capitalist accumulation, that is, to the introduction of mechanization, tenure shifts, and the capitalist economic-imperative in general. Scott writes, for instance, that in the face of the increased poverty experienced by the majority of Sedakan villagers, rich

farmers defend their choice to use combines during harvest by citing their inability to find local labour to do the job (Ibid:236). They argue that the poor are sluggish and unreliable, that they harvest the paddy slowly and waste valuable amounts of rice. Similarly, they justify rent increases to tenants or preferential treatment of non-locals, by pleading that economic necessity leaves them with few alternatives.

It is a discourse articulated as well to address the erosion of traditional cultural and religious practices. Scott demonstrates that in attempting to legitimize their failure to fulfil traditional religious obligations -- rituals such as gift-giving and feast offering reflective of holy compassion and charity -- landowners argue that the poor neither want nor need their charity. The villagers are not trustworthy, they add, and thus are not deserving of such benevolence.

The effects of this discourse are felt both materially and symbolically by village poor. Not only do they experience the loss of income and land, along with fewer gifts of rice and invitations to feasts, but they also are the victims of constant degrading remarks and countless other attempts at status humiliation. It is directly out of the failure of the rich to meet their traditional obligations, out of these daily vicissitudes of Malay peasant life brought on by processes of capitalist expansionism, combined with the oppressed's belief that life could, should and indeed, used to be better, that the poor of Sedaka began to resist.

For the villagers of Sedaka who became the focus of Scott's study, gossip about the stinginess, arrogance and unholiness of local landholders was a regular and integral force animating daily life. Stories were woven and retold, embellished to be

sure, about the daily goings-on of this small village elite. From their work habits to their diets, their houses to their religious practices, nothing appeared too sacred to mock or lampoon. Scott captures well the vitality of this phenomenon. He writes:

Noticing what seemed to be a huge new warehouse on the horizon, I idly asked my neighbour what it was. He told me that it was a rice mill being built by Haji Rasid and his brother Haji Ani. At the mention of these two names most of the other conversations in the pavilion stopped. I had somehow, it was clear, stumbled upon a subject of lively interest. For the next hour or so the men regaled one another with stories about the two brothers and especially about their father, Haji Ayub. In fact, as I quickly learned, the name of Haji Ayub was a sure-fire conversational gambit in any company, sufficient to set off a small avalanche of tales (1985:13).

Significantly, the gossip which was spun around the local landholders and usurers, much of which gained mythic and legendary proportions, centred not so much on their wealth and holdings per se, Scott writes, as on the peculiarities of their lifestyle and on the unscrupulous manner in which each became wealthy (Ibid:14). Thus it was, for example, accounts of a landowner's "legendary cheapness", his obsession with frugality, that fuelled Sedakan villagers' fiery tales. Tales of Haji Ayub like that which appears below offer a prime example. Scott writes:

Like the poorest of the poor, Haji Ayub bought only a single sarong cloth a year and, if you passed him you would have thought he was the village beggar. Surpassing even Razak (who was the village beggar), he was said to have eaten nothing but dried fish, except on feast days. Although he could have afforded a luxurious car, and a surfaced road passed near his house, he travelled by foot or on bicycle. Haji Kadir, at this point, brought down the house with a pantomime of Haji Ayub on his ancient Raleigh, weaving back and forth, accompanied by an approximation of the loud squeaking noises only the rustiest bicycles could possibly have made (Ibid:14).

Villagers clearly and shamelessly revelled in these stories -- nothing appeared sacred, and none were beyond reproach.

That the stories were not simply about the eccentricities of the rich, but also about the elite's lack of moral and ethical values, is crucial to note. It was through these tales, however richly embroidered, that the most damning assessments of the elites' plundering, sacrilegious, and oppressive 'nature' were elaborated. Through these, we learned, for example, of how one wealthy landowner was so lacking in generosity, and in the ethic of familial sharing, that after 'generously' bestowing a gift of rice on his brother, he pointedly demanded a gift of greater value in return. In the same vein, villagers swapped tales of Hajis who stole water buffalo, and of those who shoplifted from district stores. Stories abounded about Hajis who harvested the crops of land rented to and planted by their impoverished tenants. And rumours flew about Hajis renting to the Chinese over locals, and about religious improprieties including their failure to extend charity.

The stories themselves embraced a "vocabulary of exploitation" -- suggestive metaphors, clever euphemisms, and revealing nicknames or pseudonyms, all assigned to the elite but known only to the poor. Haji Ayub, for example, was known more commonly as Haji Broom -- the baron who accumulated his fabulous wealth by sweeping up all the land (and its tillers) in his path. Conversations were replete with character defamations, accusing now one elite, now another, of phenomenal greed, stinginess, selfishness and unparalleled heartlessness. It is significant that the gossip and rumours exchanged by Malay factory women contain similar vilifications of their foremen's and managers' character -- of their seemingly 'unmatched' heartlessness, selfishness, and in this case, sexual perversity (Ong, 1987).

Even as endless hours could be spent delighting in this mean-spirited craft, gossip's value lay not solely in its power to entertain. Indeed, the sharp and cutting criticism contained within each devastating tale, proved an adeptly wielded weapon against varied forms of domination. Through these, the few resources at the disposal of the poor, the villagers could, however modestly, exert some form of social control. In short, with these weapons they attempted to bring the behaviour and attitudes of the landholders in line with their own moral and cultural ethic (Scott, 1985, 1990; Haviland, 1977).

The power of these tactics to effect such behavioural or attitudinal change does not lie solely in the words, however scathing. As Scott states, it arises also from the recognition that reputation and social prestige -- the desire to be thought well of -- are material forces in Malay village society (Scott, 1985:235). It is premised upon what F.G. Bailey (1971) calls a "shared moral ethic" -- a set of values through which all word and action is interpreted, "and individuals' reputations are "reckoned and constituted" (1971:7). Arising from an apparent transgression of this ethic, gossip can serve at once both to sanction the behaviour of those who transgress, and to reassert a set of values which have apparently been violated. And in these values are contained ideological criticism and challenge.

For Scott, then, the gossip of the oppressed represents a direct appeal by the poor to cultural and traditional norms of tenancy, generosity, charity, and human decency (1985:282). Yet if overt appeals to such norms had little influence on the rich, aspirations to an healthy reputation and to an honoured social status in the

community had quite the opposite effect. For, these desires could be realized primarily only through demonstrations of charity, sharing, and religious devotion. Thus, in Sedaka, each bit of gossip, each demeaning nickname, carried with it a direct and unequivocal imperative. Scott writes:

Should the rich be chastened by the tales about Haji Broom, they would not lend money at high interest, they would not make designs on the land of others, they would be generous with religious charity and feasts, and they would take on more tenants and workers (Ibid:24).

The aims and effects of these slanders extended beyond the material realm. Such tactics served to resist simultaneously countless status humiliations, skilfully challenging the hierarchies of inequality so implicit within dominant discourses (Ibid:236). By countering any evidence of a landowner's material 'superiority', for example, with blatant (albeit exaggerated) accounts of his ethical inferiority, the village poor effectively "undercut the moral authority of their enemies," (Scott, 1985:235). Through such tactics the subjugated question stated truths and assigned identities. In so doing, they continually undermine the legitimacy of the dominant discourse or ideology.

That tactics like gossip and defamation, and indeed all others discussed above, are pointedly set to strike at the material and status aims of the dominant, has been carefully demonstrated in this chapter. What must be made equally obvious, however, is that in the process, these tactics also challenge the symbolic and ideological hegemony of this group. Because everyday resistance, despite its subtle, often clandestine, and often non-confrontational nature, implicitly embraces an alternative set of values or worldview, it pushes at the parameters of hegemonic

structures. Thus, it forces a continual negotiation of existing relations of power. As Scott puts it, in the case of Sedaka, even if material or status gains remain minuscule or appear negligible, at the very least, the vocabulary of the poor presents a symbolic barrier to the dominant discourse, a discourse which seeks to legitimize the cold principles of capitalist relations (Scott: 1985:234). How coherent is this challenge? How informed by articulated political dogma? Clearly, much remains to be said about the nature of the ideological challenge and the process through which change is continually negotiated. These remain topics to be explored in ensuing chapters.

The above represents only a minuscule sampling of the immense universe of strategies upon which the oppressed draw both to survive and to challenge the domination of the elite. While some like spirit possession and dissimulation appear boldly on the public stage, others like theft, gossip and vandalism, are clearly more furtive. Together they represent the efforts of the oppressed to respond to and negotiate the grounds of their exploitation. Through this analysis I have attempted to show how varied, timeless and innovative these tactics are. Equally important, I have endeavoured to reveal how resourceful, knowledgeable, and endlessly defiant are those one finds inevitably engaged in them. It is in this latter reality that the continuity lies. For, underlying these numerous discrete and enormously diverse set of strategies, is as Scott suggests, a "history of the persistent efforts of the poor and exploited to define their fundamental material and physical interests, and to reproduce themselves" across time and geography (1985:301). As such, he writes, in a context where revolutions may come and go, these varied forms of everyday resistance may

represent "the only truly durable weapons of the weak both before and after the revolution" (Ibid).

While this survey has sought to explore the character and practice of everyday resistance, many issues remain unaddressed. To what extent do strategies which operate through existing stereotypes of the dominated -- those used by factory women in Malaysia, for example, or by the slaves in the American South -- work to subvert the aims of the oppressed and to further the subordination of these groups? To what extent does the fairly ambiguous nature of such resistance -- that is, the possibility of viewing veiling as a form of acquiescence, or of interpreting vandalism, or barn-burning as unfortunate and costly accidents -- serve to weaken the potential impact and obscure the goals of such resistance? How broad must those goals of resistance be? And how significant can such resistance be in effecting broader social change? In answering these questions it will be useful to draw from the rich experiences of the Filipina migrants interviewed for this study. Thus we must now turn our attention more directly to the lives of Filipino women, exploring the circumstances of their departure from their home in the Philippines, and examining their experiences in Canada as migrant domestic workers.

Chapter Three
Exploiting the Vulnerable:
The Story of Domestic Labour in Canada

"In Hong Kong, Filipina means Maid"

Sunday Inquirer Magazine, 1990

"Foreign maids, including Pinays, risk abuse in Singapore"

Manila Standard, 1990

"Hundreds of RP workers e.ploited in Singapore"

Manila Times, 1990

"Kuwait denies abuse of Filipina maids"

Manila Standard, 1990

"Filipino women battle abuse -- Victims urged to end silence imposed by cultural and language barriers"

The Toronto Star, 1990

♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

"Urgently needed, single mother or single woman to live-in and care for two small boys in exchange for room and board".

Classified
The Ottawa Citizen
November 30, 1991

There is indeed an urgency to the demand for live-in domestic workers in Canadian society -- on any given day, collectively hundreds of pleas for nannies, care givers, companions and housekeepers appear in the major dailies across the country (Flaveille, 1990:H1). And more are conveyed through the countless calls and letters which increasingly flood the offices of both Canadian and foreign employment

agencies. That there is also an urgency to the demands of domestics' workers themselves, for fairer wages and working conditions and for non-discriminatory immigration practices, is equally evident in just a small sampling of headlines from various media across the world. This chapter provides an overview of Canada's crisis of domestic work. It also explores the nature of the challenges facing foreign domestics today. We begin with an analysis of the growing demand for child caregivers in this country, and of the realities which have rendered domestic work so historically undesirable. Moving next to the state's efforts to recruit workers from abroad, we examine the succession of immigration policies and the racist and sexist biases underpinning them. Finally, we turn our attention to the Foreign Domestic Movement/Live-in Caregiver Programme which today regulates the entry of domestic workers from the Philippines, and establishes the parameters within which their exploitation is articulated. It is hoped that through this brief survey of the migrant domestics' experiences in Canada, the particular conditions of her oppression will be more clearly understood, and the grounds for exploring her resistance more carefully prepared. We begin, then, with a brief look at the forces behind the increased demand for domestic workers in this country.

As Canadian women -- those traditionally responsible for the 'daily and generational reproduction of the labour force' -- have rapidly increased their representation in the paid labour market, the demand for domestic services has risen correspondingly. This reality is reflected in countless studies of the child care crisis in this country (see for example, Beach, 1992; Luxton, 1983; MacDaniel, 1989;

Statistics Canada, 1990). In the past 18 years, the labour force participation rates for mothers with children under the age of three years has almost doubled. That of women with children between the ages of three and 12, moreover, has increased by more than 30 per cent (Statistics Canada, 1990). Admittedly, the number of regulated child care spaces in this country has seen a 500 per cent growth during that same period, rising from 55,181 in 1974 to more than 333,000 in 1991 (Ibid). The impact of that increase is significantly undermined, however, by the fact that there are far more children of working parents without access to regulated child care today than there were in the early 1970s (Health and Welfare Canada, 1974, 1992, as cited in Beach, 1992:7).

To this rapid transformation of the Canadian labour market and child care structure, Canadian society and the state have responded only sluggishly. The failure of men to shoulder the domestic burden is well-documented in studies like Meg Luxton's, "Two Hands for the Clock" (1983). These studies demonstrate men's creative and collective resistance to domestic work, and reveal that, while men's attitudes towards housework may have changed positively over the years, the actual number of men regularly sharing that work has changed very little (1983:36-37; see also MacDaniel, 1989). They also indicate that making child care arrangements remains the responsibility primarily of women. In one recent study on work and family issues, for instance, more than 75 per cent of women responded that securing child care was their responsibility compared to just 4 per cent of male respondents

(MacBride-King, 1990 as cited in Beach, 1992:7).⁴ At the same time, there is little social and material support for men with regard to domestic labour (Luxton, 1983:42; Arat-Koc, 1989:35). The response of the state has been similarly negligible. In February 1992, for example, then Minister of Health and Welfare, Benoit Bouchard, dashed hopes for a federally-funded national child care programme by announcing the withdrawal of his government's commitment to its development (Beach, 1992:11). This negligence is reflected in statistics which place Canada in the bottom third of all First World nations in terms of financial commitment to publicly-funded child care spaces and coverage in general (Cooke et al., 1986 as cited in Beach, 1992:12). According to Jane Beach, coordinator at the Child Care Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto, in the absence of a national policy ensuring reasonable access to regulated child care, such care in Canada has developed largely on an ad-hoc basis, inadequately meeting the needs of parents in the different provinces.

Canadian employers, whether private or public, have not facilitated the search for creative solutions to this crisis. Indeed in Canada, in stark contrast to most European countries, "there are no systems of extended child care leave, leave for care of sick children or other types of family responsibility" (Arat-Koc, 1989:35). Nor do Canadians have the right to refuse shift work, or overtime, or to work reduced hours or flexible work weeks (Ibid). This failure of both the state and society to respond collectively to the need to reorganize domestic work, has forced increasing numbers

⁴. This reality may explain the tendency of domestic workers to attribute responsibility for their work conditions to only their female employers and to discuss their relationship with employers in terms of their relationship with only the female head of the household.

of women across Canada either to cope with highly intensified work schedules and longer days, or to turn to unregulated, private solutions to their varied domestic needs.

Inexpensive domestic servants provide one such alternative and there is evidence that both the demand for, and employment of, domestic workers has risen steadily in recent years (Arat-Koc, 1989; Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990; Timoli, 1989). Among both high and middle-income families in particular, the hiring of live-in servants is the most desirable substitute (Task Force, 1981). Given that live-ins are those most able to provide the flexible, personal and, perhaps more importantly, inexpensive care traditionally rendered by the Canadian housewife, this reality comes as little surprise. Despite periodic slumps in the Canadian economy, the demand for live-ins appears unaffected (Arnopoulos, 1979:24; Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990). Plausible explanations for this phenomenon can be found in works like Saskia Sassen-Koob's exploration of recent changes in the international division of labour and the concurrent rapid growth of top-level professionals in Western countries (1988:22).

Rollins (1985) offers a different perspective. In ***Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers***, a book based on ten-months participant observation as a domestic worker in the United States, she argues that race, class and gender biases sustain the demand for live-in domestics. Rollins' experience as a domestic combined with discussions with other live-ins, led her to conclude that some employers clearly prefer non-white, female domestics because their presence makes the employers'

status clearer to neighbours. "Women of colour function better as contrast figures," she adds, "for strengthening employers' egos and class and racial identities" (1985:127). That live-ins are generally more available to work flexible hours and do overtime, and to perform countless tasks than those on more limited contracts are loathe to do, also contributes to their general desirability. We will explore these realities in greater detail later in this chapter.

Whatever the reason for the demand for live-ins, it is crucial to recognize that this demand has been consistently frustrated over the years by the unwavering refusal of Canadian workers to take on this kind of work. This position results from the low status, poor remuneration and exploitative working conditions which have historically characterized domestic service in Canada. The nature of this devaluation has been explored at length in the literature (see for example, Arat-Koc, 1989; Leacock, 1975; Jaggar, 1983; Seccombe, 1980). Essentially, theorists conclude, the roots of this decline⁵ can be sought in the physical, economic, and ideological invisibility which domestic labour, whether paid or unpaid, suffers under capitalism (Arat-Koc, 1989).

Its physical invisibility, for example, is a function of domestic labour's geographic isolation in the home. It also arises out of the work's maintenance and service-like nature, that is, out of the absence of the production of tangible goods which can be seen and/or consumed over extended periods of time (Ibid:37). This intangibility has in turn led to domestic labour's economic invisibility. Because domestic labour is excluded from the realm of capitalist production, that is, because

⁵. Domestic labour has not always been characterized by low status and low value -- see Eleanor Leacock (1975), for an elaboration of this thesis.

the products of such work do not carry surplus value, and because domestic labour itself is traditionally unpaid, such work is uncounted within capitalist production. It is thus unvalued in a capitalist system. At the same time, domestic labour tends to suffer from ideological invisibility. Because of the intimate personal relations involved in the private nurturing, maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, such work is considered more a 'labour of love' than labour which should or could be rewarded financially (Ibid:38).

While there is not room here to pursue this analysis, it is critical to understand that together, the physical, economic, and ideological invisibility of domestic labour has meant that this work is unlikely to command high wages. Moreover, poor working conditions and low status remain characteristic. It is no wonder, therefore, that few Canadians are willing to take on such work even in times of high unemployment (Arnopoulos, 1979:24; Wong, 1984:87; Canadian Advisory Council, 1983:25). As a result, the Canadian state has, for more than a century, been sourcing domestic workers from among the most vulnerable and impoverished employable groups outside the country. More than 8,000 women from the Third World entered Canada to work as domestic servants in 1990 alone (EIC, 1990:3). It is this phenomenon which has led some theorists to conclude that the state has become the main arbiter of oppression for foreign domestics, actively reproducing patriarchal, racist, and capitalist relations of domination (Timoli, 1989:12). To understand more fully this set of interrelated systems of power which help to set up the parameters within which the Filipina migrant's oppression is experienced, it is useful to examine

the history of Canada's immigration policies leading up to and including today's Live-in Caregiver programme.

From the earliest attempts of the state to source domestic workers from abroad, women have been considered the most desirable and appropriate labour force. From 1880-1920, for instance, immigration officials were sent to Scotland and England to find, as one agent wrote in 1898, "big, strong, barefooted lassies accustomed to outdoor work" (Leslie, 1974:98). These beliefs in women's apparent suitability for domestic labour, and indeed, in the notion that these skills come naturally to all women, have meant that women's learned domestic skills are rarely recognized and rewarded as such (for an elaboration of this theory, see for example: Leslie, 1974; Parikh, 1991; Elson and Pearson, 1981). Theorists demonstrate, however, that despite the fact that there is no biological basis for these notions⁶, they remain among the most prevalent assumptions governing whom we invite to Canada to do domestic labour (Arat-Koc, 1989; Leslie, 1974; Parikh, 1991; Timoli, 1989).

That invitation itself has not been extended to all women. At the turn of the century, recruitment efforts focused on women from only England and Scotland, a result, in part, of the influence of middle class women and social reformers. Armed with particular racist perceptions about Canada's demographic needs, organizations involved in female immigration struggled to ensure that recruits were of the right national and racial stock. They hoped that in the long run, these recruits would

⁶. In "Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers" (1981), Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson demonstrate that women's proficiency with work such as sewing and child care results not from the natural endowments with which womanhood is privileged, but rather from a process of learning and skill transfer which arises from the subordinated position women fill in the home.

become the "pure and virtuous mothers of the ideal Canadian home and foundation of the moral Canadian nation" (Roberts, 1979:188 as quoted in Arat-Koc, 1989:45).

Canadian immigration officials put these sentiments into practice.

In the period up to and including the mid-1950s, most requests by affluent Canadians to bring in Caribbean servants were denied on the basis of racist arguments that Caribbean women were either unable to meet Canadian norms of morality or unable to adapt to Canadian climatic conditions (MacKenzie, 1988:28). By 1953, these attitudes were formally embodied in the Immigration Act which allowed for the exclusion of people on the basis of, among other criteria, nationality, citizenship, ethnic group or class, "peculiar customs, habits", or "modes of life", "unsuitability, having regard to the (climate)", and "probable inability to become readily assimilated" (Ibid:128-129).

It is interesting to note that while Canada's immigration policy Stereotyping black women as the traditional *Aunt Jemima*, some employers in Quebec recommended the immigration of live-ins from Guadeloupe not only because they were exceedingly cheap, but also because they were "fond of children" and "knew their place" and "providing they remain in the country as servants" (Calliste, 1989:135). And there was little doubt that Caribbean women would do just that. In one memo to Cabinet, for example, the deputy minister of immigration, arguing in favour of a less exclusionary policy, wrote, "there is no reason to believe that these girls, once admitted, will leave domestic employment to seek higher wages in industry" (MacKenzie, 1988:133). While space and time prohibit a lengthier

discussion of these racist biases, their prevalence is clearly demonstrated through the works of others (see for example, Calliste, 1989; MacKenzie, 1988; Parikh, 1991; Timoli, 1989).

In the end, as immigration officials grew more conscious of the domestic crisis, and as pressure from the British Colonial office and West Indian governments mounted (Calliste, 1989:140; Timoli, 1989:38), legislation changed. The Foreign Domestic Scheme was instituted in 1955. Under the scheme, 100 Caribbean women were allowed to immigrate to Canada after signing employment contracts to which they were committed for one year. While the scheme did allow for the immigration of black women, it did not represent a victory for progressive forces -- the Foreign Domestic Scheme was easily as racist and sexist as its predecessors. First, the scheme applied exclusively to women, a reflection, as mentioned earlier, of the perceived appropriateness of women as domestic servants. Second, in an effort to eliminate the sponsorship of spouses and children, that is, in an attempt to restrict the immigration of more non-white people to Canada, the selection criteria dictated that only unmarried and childless women would be considered for positions. Moreover, notions about the promiscuity of black women meant the women were subjected to gynaecological examinations in Canada in addition to the thorough medical tests they underwent at home (MacKenzie, 1988:135). These practices were unheard of for women arriving from the British Isles or for men arriving from anywhere (Timoli, 1989:41).

As employers' enthusiasm for the scheme mounted, it was expanded to include

Guyana and other islands within the Caribbean federation; the number of Caribbean domestics began to steadily increase. Between 1955 and 1966, an average of 327 domestic servants entered Canada each year. And from 1967 to 1972, that average rose to close to 700 (Immigration Statistics as quoted in Timoli, 1989:43). By that time, however, it was clear that, unlike what had previously been assumed, Caribbean women did not 'enjoy' domestic labour. As different areas of employment became accessible to blacks, due in part to post-war social changes, and in part to legislation, black women began to leave domestic labour (Calliste, 1989:144). Moreover, soon after completion of their first year of employment, the women began sponsoring family to Canada -- a practice immigration officials argued was sociologically undesirable because of the "lower educational and economic background" of the immigrants (Ibid). To remedy this 'problem', the government began to push for tougher, more discriminatory measures for entry and control.

In 1973, the government created the Temporary Employment Visa Programme applicable to all foreigners entering Canada to work. The temporary visa system has been described alternately as a "bonded forced rotational system" or a form of "indentured labour" (Arat-Koc, 1989:46; Wong, 1984:87). It was a mechanism which guaranteed maximum flexibility to the government while simultaneously denying it to the migrant domestic workers. Workers were let into the country for the sole purpose of engaging in the job specified on the visa. When the job was terminated, the domestic was sent back. A change of employer was permitted only with the permission of immigration authorities. Until 1986, workers forced to leave

their jobs, whether because of sexual harassment, poor working conditions, violation of contract or simple termination, were required to show a release letter from the former employer (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:17). While domestics could, nonetheless, change their site of employment, they could not similarly change their field of employment. In short, foreign domestic workers who came to Canada on temporary visas were "good enough to work, but not good enough to stay" (Arat-Koc, 1989:46).

After 1973, the number of domestics entering the country steadily rose, from 1,800 in 1973 to more than 16,000 in 1981 (Arat-Koc, 1989:46). Filipinas began entering the country as domestics in large numbers during this period. By 1982, Filipinas and Caribbean women represented respectively 24 and 18 per cent of the total number of programme entrants (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990:4). Those from the U.K and Europe represented close to half (Ibid). It was clearly easier for domestics to enter the country through the temporary visa system than through the immigration point system which would lead to permanent resident status (Seward and McDade, 1986:41). Indeed, in 1973, when the earlier Foreign Domestic Scheme was dissolved, more than half of all migrant domestics were women with landed status. By 1981, however, only 5 per cent had landed status; a full 87 per cent were women on visas who at some point would be asked to return to their country of origin (Seward and McDade, 1988:40).

That year, in response to growing opposition voiced by women's organizations and advocacy groups, and to pressure exerted by the Advisory Council on the Status

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of Women, to the racist immigration practices of the Canadian government, Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced the creation of the Foreign Domestic Movement Programme, the programme which governed the entry of foreign domestics until 1992. This new plan permitted all temporary domestic workers to apply for landed status after two years of working in Canada. According to Employment and Immigration Canada, respectively 85 and 70 per cent of all Filipino and Caribbean women received landed status within one to seven years of applying. While this change represented a victory of sorts, the new programme did little to address the broader oppressive working conditions and dilemmas facing the migrant work force. Moreover, the victory itself appears to have been a hollow one.

In April 1992, Minister of Employment and Immigration, Bernard Valcourt, announced that a new Live-in Caregiver Programme would replace the FDMP immediately. The LCP is aimed ostensibly at responding to concerns about the (lack of) appropriate skills and experience of domestic workers being imported. As such, the new programme requires that applicants have both a grade 12 education and six months training in a caregiving field. These changes, the government argued, recognize, "the skills required to work independently in a caregiving role" and, "the increasing demand for higher education levels in the Canadian labour market" (EIC, 1992:2). To groups like the Toronto-based domestic worker lobby group, INTERCEDE⁷, however, the changes reflect the state's clearly racist fears aroused by the government's own statistics which indicated that by 1995, had no changes been

⁷. INTERCEDE is the acronym for the International Coalition to End Domestic Exploitation.

implemented, 24,000 Filipino domestics would be entering Canada each year, comprising 70 per cent of all new entrants to the programme. That the overwhelming majority of these go on to apply for landed status, and then to sponsor family members through Immigration's family reunification programme⁸, are realities, opponents argue, also contributing to those fears. It is no coincidence, they state, that in the one year following the Live-in Caregiver's inception, the percentage of Filipinas entering the country as a percentage of all entrants dropped from 6.1 in 1991 to 7.5 in 1992 (Bakan and Stasiulis, 1993:20).⁹ Significantly, according to an INTERCEDE survey conducted among 213 members, only 19 per cent of those currently working as domestics -- all of whom entered under the former Foreign Domestic Movement Programme -- would qualify for entry had they had to apply today (INTERCEDE, 1992:1-2 as cited in Bakan and Stasiulis, 1993:33).

Moreover, the new programme has not removed any of the most vexing obstacles frustrating domestics' applications for landed immigrant status. Instead, the application process, which carries no guarantees, continues to be convoluted, increasingly expensive, and exceedingly lengthy (it can take up to seven years). To become a landed immigrant a domestic must, during her first two years in Canada,

⁸. In the Spring of 1993, a restructuring of the family reunification programme -- part of broader changes to immigration legislation as embodied in Bill C-86 -- effectively narrowed the field of those eligible for preferential entry to Canada. While spouses and dependent children are still given highest consideration in application processes, for example, parents and grand parents no longer share that privilege.

⁹. In early 1994, the legislation was again revised. In response to the plummeting numbers of entrants to the programme (in 1991, 7,835 people came to Canada through the programme; by 1993, that number had fallen to around 1,500), the government dropped the requirement of six months formal training (Smith, March 4, 1994:A1).

meet seven criteria stipulated by Canada Employment and Immigration. She must demonstrate a satisfactory employment record, based on letters of reference; show language proficiency in either English or French; and offer a record of certificates indicating attempts to upgrade skills. It is both ironic and revealing of the devalued nature of domestic work that despite the clear demand for domestic labour across the country, immigration policy would further dissuade workers from this area of employment by encouraging domestics to learn new skills in an area not related to domestic work. Applicants must also demonstrate sound financial management by showing records of a steady pattern of savings and receipts from remittances sent back home (INTERCEDE, 1991a:C). They are also required to show evidence of both social adaptation and personal suitability, best demonstrated, it would appear, through community involvement. Thus, officials seek certificates or letters attesting to volunteer work served in various community-based organizations including hospitals, libraries, and senior citizens' centres. Finally, in any assessment of a domestic's suitability for landed status, immigration officials weigh the presence of the migrant's dependents and determine the ability of the domestic to support them (INTERCEDE, 1991a:C).

Rising costs make meeting those conditions increasingly difficult. As of 1994, for example, LCP workers were forced to pay \$100 to Immigration to be allowed to take the courses needed to demonstrate skills upgrading. Furthermore, by their third year in Canada, most domestics will have paid between \$650-850 to Employment and Immigration Canada, an increase of \$175-375 over the 1990 processing fees

(INTERCEDE interview, 1994). These expenses must come from the meagre \$667.42 minimum wage domestics net each month (Ibid).¹⁰ Many of these criteria do not apply to any other group of independent class immigrants whose occupations, like that of domestic workers, are in high demand in Canada (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:13). It is this set of interrelated biases and discriminatory practices which have lead INTERCEDE and other critics of the government's domestic worker policy to argue that racist biases continue to underpin immigration legislation, dictating who can and cannot gain entry to this country.

The new foreign domestic worker scheme, like the many programmes which preceded it, similarly capitalizes upon existing inequitable relations of class. It is no coincidence that impoverished Third World women comprise the vast bulk of all live-in domestic workers in this country. Nor is it incidental that despite the heightened restrictions, Third World women in general, and Filipino women in particular, continue to clamour for entrance to the programme. Despite the miserly wages and oppressive working conditions, and the onerous set of immigration regulations undermining domestics' sense of security, the situations of poverty and unemployment faced by these women back home leave them little choice but to accept these positions. While there is not room here to explore this reality fully, a few additional words about the Philippines' economic experience may serve to illustrate better why Filipino women continue to provide such a ready and steady stream of domestic labourers to this country.

¹⁰. While this figure represents the minimum wage earned by domestic workers, few in this study earned more than that amount.

The exodus of Filipinos to countries overseas is hardly a new phenomenon. It began at the turn of the century with the recruitment of young men (there is no record of the recruitment of women during this period) to labour on the pineapple plantations of Hawaii and Guam (Stahl, 1988:147-148). This international migration has increased steadily through the years. Today varying estimates suggest there are between 1.9 and 3.5 million Filipino women and men working in approximately 130 countries overseas (Aguilar, 1987; Padilla, 1989; Villasin, 1991; POEA, 1990).¹¹ Studies indicate that these migrants remit, on average, between 53 and 56 per cent of their income to relatives in the Philippines (Stahl, 1988:147), an amount which translates into between (U.S.) \$2-7 billion in foreign exchange each year. Estimates on these figures are extremely varied, a function of the inability to adequately monitor any money not remitted through official banking channels. It is, nonetheless, generally acknowledged that international migrants constitute a larger source of foreign exchange than any other Philippine export whether agricultural or industrial (Ibid). And it is this reality which led former Philippine President Corazon Aquino to honour Philippine migrants as "heroes of the nation". It is with the heroines of the nation, however, that this study is most concerned.

Among the most striking characteristics of the current migration stream is the dramatic increase in young, single women as wage-seeking migrants. Like much of the data on these migrants, statistics on the numbers of women leaving the Philippines

¹¹. Estimates vary so greatly because the statistics are compiled only on those workers who are officially registered through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. Moreover, these statistics do not adequately account for circular migration, for migrants who renew their contracts each year but are not counted in yearly migration statistics.

vary greatly. What appears to be consistent, however, is that in many of the same countries where Filipino men have traditionally outnumbered women in immigration streams, the reverse is clearly occurring today (Padilla, 1989; Estrada-Claudio, 1990; Anonuevo, 1990). That this phenomenon is rooted not only in the international economic and political realities of today, but also in the Philippines' specific history of colonialism, has been argued elsewhere (Parikh, 1992; Szanton, 1982). These studies focus on the relationship between women's migration and historical processes which involved the progressive political, economic and social disempowerment of women, and the consolidation of a gendered division of labour in which women's status was derived from their increasingly devalued roles as housewives. This complex set of processes, combined with post-war development strategies, constitute the particular historical and political backdrop against which present day realities can begin to be understood (Banzon-Bautista and Dungo, 1987; Bello, Kinley and Elinson, 1982; Calugan, 1991; Centre for Women's Resources, 1987; Eviota, 1986; Heyzer, 1986; Ofreneo, 1981; Parikh, 1992; Remolona, 1986; Sobritchea, 1981). These strategies include the introduction of new crops for the international market, the increased privatization and appropriation of land by foreign interests, and the 'modernization' of agricultural production through the imposition of foreign technologies (Ibid).

Today, these realities include a population in which fewer than 1.5 million peasants actually own the land they till while more than 10 million farmers are either tenanted or landless (Kamel, 1990). They include also a highly rigid class structure

in which the nation's poorest 20 per cent earn only 5.5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product while the richest 20 per cent secure almost 50 per cent of that total (World Bank, 1991:262). Moreover, in the face of declining growth in the agricultural, service, and manufacturing sectors, the Philippines finds itself mired in an international debt of more than \$30 billion.

More importantly, perhaps, for the purposes of this paper, these realities include an explicit gendered hierarchy in the plantation economy, and a differential wage for women's and men's work. Numerous studies have documented the processes of the marginalisation, impoverishment and disempowerment of women through the commercialisation of agriculture and the changing international division of labour (see for example Elson and Pearson, 1981; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Fuentes and Ehrenreich, 1984; Wolf, 1990). For many of the women, migration may represent the only possibility of survival outside of prostitution. It is no coincidence, therefore, that a 1991 study of Filipinas leaving the country to work as domestics abroad showed that 80 per cent were between the ages of 21 to 35, the age group which experiences the highest level of unemployment (61 per cent) in the Philippines today (Palma-Beltran, 1991:1). That the majority of these (94 per cent) are recruited from the rural areas, is similarly not by chance; rather, it is a reflection of the deleterious effects of the expansion of the process of capital accumulation to rural subsistence areas (AMIHAN, 1988; Tadem, 1981). It is also a result of the intense militarization of a number of the islands in the Philippines (Enloe, 1983). These processes are repeated in countries throughout the world.

While the above survey has attempted to explore the forces behind Filipina out-migration, why Filipinas outnumber, say, the Indians or Guyanese, or why the percentage of Caribbean women has fallen so drastically in recent years¹² -- even before the implementation of the LCP -- remains to be determined. There is little in the literature which would directly explain this phenomenon. While some research tends to suggest that employers may prefer Filipinas to Caribbean domestics, arguing that the former tend to be younger, are probably cheaper, and are more likely to show deference to their employers (Calliste, 1989:150), others point to a current backlash against Third World domestics in general as reflected in the refusal of Canadian employment agencies to place them (Bakan and Stasiulis, 1993). More research is clearly required to determine whether demographic changes are indeed a response to employers' stated preferences.

Further plausible explanations might include changes in the employment situations in the countries of origin. Or they might revolve around the strength of the Caribbean domestic organizing movement and of the Canadian Caribbean community in general which might serve to dissuade immigration officials from recruiting more Caribbean women. Alternatively, answers may arise out of differences in the recruiting processes in the countries of origin (in 1991, for example, there were more

¹². In 1981, when the FDMP was introduced, Filipinas constituted approximately 25 per cent of all entrants. By 1990, as stated earlier, that number had risen to close to 60. The percentage of Caribbean entrants has dropped steadily during that time from 18 to 5 per cent of all participants. The percentage of other Third World migrants (including those from Guyana, India, and Hong Kong) along with those from continental Europe remained fairly constant at about 15 per cent during the same period while the percentage of those from England fell sharply from 27 per cent of the total in 1982 to only 7 per cent by 1990 (Employment and Immigration, 1990:3).

than 1,500 agencies in the Philippines soliciting women for domestic service [Apostol, 1991]). While more research needs to be conducted in each of these areas, it is obvious, nonetheless, that women's entry into the programme represents a strategy of survival. As such, Third World domestic workers represent a particularly vulnerable group. The new Live-in Caregiver Programme, like the foreign domestic schemes before it, clearly capitalizes on class hierarchies, exploiting this vulnerability. Fear of being sent back home into poverty, with inadequate means of providing for one's family,¹³ coupled with an absence of citizenship rights and logistical barriers, have meant that foreign domestic workers do not often formally protest the abuse to which they are so regularly subjected. The extent of that abuse, and indeed the nature of the migrant's vulnerability, have been detailed at length in the literature (Arat-Koc, 1989; Parikh, 1991; Rans, 1988; Renaud, 1984; Silvera, 1989; Timoli, 1989; Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990). To appreciate the creative and varied character of migrant domestics' resistance, however, a brief overview of the context of their exploitation appears relevant.

The meagre wages domestics earn, the appalling conditions in which they labour, together with their treatment at the hands of Canada Immigration are among the most obvious manifestations of the migrant domestics' exploitation. Significantly, the perpetuation of these various material, status, and ideological humiliations -- to

¹³. Filipina researcher Lilian Trager has argued that the family is the most important institution in the Philippines today and that women's obligation to family members, parents, siblings, and children, appears immutable (1984:1273). That decisions to migrate are an outcome of a family's survival strategy, and that women are viewed as "more willing and faithful than sons in sharing their savings with the family" (Hart, as quoted in Trager, 1984:1274), then, must be acknowledged if the significance of Filipina migration is to be truly understood.

harken back to Scott's categories outlined in earlier chapters -- which migrant domestic workers experience on a mercilessly regular basis, is virtually guaranteed under the structure of the current programme. It is a point which demands further explanation.

Among the most frustrating requirements of the current foreign domestic migration scheme is its stipulation that domestic workers live in the home of their employers for at least the first two years of their employment in Canada. It is a stipulation which has characterized all foreign domestic worker schemes implemented in this century. At the base of the problematic is the fact that this requirement further blurs the boundaries between the domestics' work and private lives. This reality, in turn, has a number of implications for the work and the private lives of the migrant labourers, as well as for their personal privacy and safety (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:5).

In a 1990 survey of 592 domestic workers in Toronto, INTERCEDE researchers reported that unpaid overtime work is among the most serious problems experienced by live-in domestics (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990). The survey found that among the live-in workers who did overtime work (65 per cent), only 33 per cent received the legal compensation (Ibid:6). An overwhelming 45 per cent of those working overtime stated they received no compensation whatsoever (Ibid). The difficulties domestics face in protecting regular working hours and in asserting their demands for overtime compensation are reflected in the experience of one frustrated domestic who often went to the mall after work though she was not interested in

shopping. This, she said, was the only way to escape the burden of extra work which would inevitably be imposed on her if she were seen idling at home (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:6). The problem is endemic. Being asked during their 'off hours' to watch over sleeping children, or to stay home for the repairperson or to receive a delivery, were just a few examples domestics offered to illustrate this reality (1990:7). The extent of the overtime conflicts with other requirements of the LCP. Many domestics are forbidden or unable, for example, to put in their hours of community service. As a result, domestics often face the dilemma of either leaving their employer and hazarding a bad employment record, or risking an unfavourable assessment of their application for landed status (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:10).

A second major problem relating to the programme's live-in requirement involves the limited amount of personal privacy it extends to domestic workers. Few domestic workers have locks on their doors making it difficult not only to prevent children and employers from entering their room, but also to maintain even the most basic level of security. Indeed, one domestic worker reported she piled suitcases and furniture against her door so she would be awakened if someone tried to enter (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:8). The live-in requirement and absence of security make domestic workers particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment (Silvera, 1989; Villasin and Arat-Koc 1990; Timoli, 1989). In the INTERCEDE survey, 20 per cent of the respondents indicated they had been sexually harassed while 30 per cent refused or were unable to answer the question (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:8). While it is difficult to interpret the lack of response, it is clear that sexual harassment constitutes

a serious problem.

Also, many find their social lives restricted by their employers who tend to limit their phone calls and pry into private affairs (Rollins, 1985; Timoli 1989; Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:7). Several domestics surveyed by INTERCEDE emphasized the child-like status to which they had been reduced when in the evenings they were unable to come and go freely, forced instead to comply with their employers' regulations. Hence, in direct contradiction to the ideals of personal independence and rights to adulthood which underlie Canadian society, "the live-in requirement takes the powers of the employer beyond the sphere of work and makes possible their extension over the personal lives of their employees" (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:7).

Equally problematic is the absence of standards set out in the LCP guidelines. That is, while the programme requires domestics to live in, indeed, while it allows employers to deduct up to \$361 monthly for room and board¹⁴, it imposes no standards on the quality of the room or board to be provided. While some domestics have private rooms with televisions and a bath, others share their space with the employer's newborn infant (Rollins, 1985; Silvera, 1989). Food was another area of concern. During interviews conducted for the INTERCEDE survey (1990), domestics complained about not having enough to eat or about being forced to eat the same food as the employer. Indeed, one domestic indicated that every time her employer dieted, she was forced to do the same (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990:9).

¹⁴. This figure is effective April, 1994.

Contributing to the material appropriation and exploitation of migrant domestic workers is an oppression articulated through various status humiliations. Together, these serve to strengthen interrelated hierarchies -- to perpetuate, that is, the ideologies of class, race and gender inequality -- around which domestic service revolves. That status humiliations are endemic within the employer-employee relationship and are reflected in the demands for various forms of deferential behaviour, is demonstrated persuasively by Rollins. Based both on her own experience as a domestic worker, and on interviews she conducted with domestics and their employers, she concludes:

First and foremost, all domestics concurred that employers appreciated some forms of deference and outward signs of subservience. As domestics talked in detail about this aspect of the relationship, I came to realize this formed the essence of the employer-domestic relationship . . . employers did not like a domestic's being too educated or intelligent, too materially well-off, or too attractive (1985:147).

Status humiliations, Rollins adds, are subtly articulated through the structure of communication set up by the employer-domestic relationship. This structure, she writes, implies the domestic workers' restrained use of language, and the fact that domestics do not often initiate conversations with employers. Class and race hierarchies are clearly delineated also in the employers' allocation of the right to greater familiarity towards workers as manifest through a kind of 'verbal voyeurism', that is, through the non-reciprocated tendency on the part of the employer to ask endless personal questions about the domestic and her private life (1985:163). These are further accentuated through one common ritual of linguistic deference: the demand that domestic workers address their employers either by their last name or by

Sir or Ma'am, while the migrants themselves are addressed by their familiar first names (1985:158).

Rollins writes also of deference embedded in gestures and demeanour. In the unstated demand for the appearance of subservience, manifest through, for example, the domestic's averted eyes, unattractive clothing, and unchallenging stance, the domestic's presence serves to confirm the ideological superiority of the employer (Ibid:167). This hierarchy is further emphasized through what Rollins calls spatial deference -- through the unequal right and access of the domestic and her employer to the space around the other's body and around the employers' house. The domestic worker must thus restrain any kind of tactile instinct toward her employers. Playing music, changing channels, or moving freely through the house, are all activities which are similarly circumscribed by the primacy of the employers' claim to their space. In the end, the domestic's inferiority is both requested and asserted not only through the various forms of material subordination, but also through the practice of status humiliation. This reality is reflected in the regular demands for demonstrations of linguistic, intellectual, and attitudinal deference (Ibid:194).

One must acknowledge that escape from the worst manifestations of these myriad rituals of domination is possible. The Live-in Caregiver Programme does permit domestic workers to leave their employers and outlines clearly the route through which abuses can be channelled. Yet many domestic workers are unaware of their rights. This lack of familiarity may itself be a reflection of both the isolation of their job and their limited English or French language skills. Still others have been

fed misinformation by immigration officials both in Canada and in the Third World (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990; and Villasin, 1990a:15-16). More significantly, perhaps, many remain with exploitative employers for fear of either jeopardizing their landing process, or of being deported. Indeed, for those interviewed for this study, the absolute conviction that changes in employers adversely affect their applications for landed status, served as the primary and most compelling argument for their decision to stay. This reality has led many domestic rights advocates to conclude that the major effect of Canada's Live-in Caregiver Programme on domestic workers has been the creation of a captive and disempowered labour force which has guaranteed a low turnover in domestic service no matter how dismal the working conditions (Arat-Koc, 1989:48).

To what extent, however, are domestic workers disempowered? Clearly the history of domestic service suggests an unchanging pattern of exploitation, as manifested through the various oppressions outlined above. That this history is equally one of protest and defiance, however, must also be recognized. It is crucial to note that Third World women are more than just victims of a global process over which and beyond which they have very little control. They are also survivors. And they are empowered activists. The history of domestic service is one filled with persistent attempts to unionize, to standardize working conditions, to challenge immigration laws governing their status, and to increase the visibility and status of domestic work in general.

INTERCEDE, for example, with its membership of close to 700 domestic

workers, has become, over the years, a powerful lobby effective not only in its attempts to challenge immigration policy, but also in its efforts to organize and empower its members. Its activities include the publication of **Domestics' Cross-Cultural News**, a newsletter filled with information on everything from changes in immigration fees and names of legal counsellors, to advertisements for apartments and announcements of social functions. INTERCEDE also is a member of broader coalitions both in Canada and the Philippines (the Philippine Canada Human Resource Development Organization is one example) in an effort to change the course of current development practice which it argues is responsible for the migration of Filipinas in the first place. INTERCEDE, along with its sister organizations across the country, hold regular workshops and rallies in an effort to make the issue of domestic workers and their labour more prominent. Together, domestic workers have contributed to the Canadian women's movement by helping to "denaturalize" housework and child care and to reveal its many complexities. In the end, then, they have helped to politicize domestic relations, to make obvious that the personal truly is political (Arat-Koc, 1989:53).

The organizing efforts of domestic workers, however, continue to be circumscribed by their temporary status in Canada during their initial years here. The isolated nature of their work combined with the powerful ideology which maintains the division of the private and public spheres, and which perpetuates the belief that housework and child care are individual problems demanding individual solutions, mean the situation of domestic workers is not likely to change quickly (Silvera,

1989:105). At the same time, many of the oppressed fear being identified as politically active, and see little immediate benefit in open challenges to government. Indeed, while all domestic workers interviewed over the course of this study belonged to some form of domestic worker advocacy group, few indicated that political lobbying served as the basis for their participation. Fewer still saw these groups as vehicles for intervention in the personal exploitative relationships between themselves and their employers. To be sure, the value of these organizations to domestic workers cannot be understated. Through these, domestic workers learn of their rights and obligations, gain access to skills and language training workshops, and build strong social support networks facilitating an exchange of experiences. It is crucial to note, however, that the existence of such groups does not mitigate fears that challenging or leaving employers will lead either to their deportation, or to a denial of their application for landed immigrant status. As such, domestic workers appear frozen within clearly exploitative relationships which obtain between themselves and their Canadian employers.

It is nonetheless inconceivable that domestic workers remain passive in the face of the varied oppressions they experience. We argued earlier that overt collective struggle is only one form resistance takes. Chapters one and two demonstrated that in the absence of any recourse to overt intervention or safe alternatives, oppressed groups employ a host of covert, isolated strategies aimed both at minimizing the extent of their material and status subordination, and at pressing forward their claims to more egalitarian relationships. It is to an exploration of

migrant workers' tactics of everyday resistance, then, that we shall turn in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Of Turtles and Monkeys: The Routine Defiance of 11 Migrant Women

Have you heard the story of the turtle and the monkey? Well, the turtle found a banana tree and the turtle said to the monkey, 'Okay, we're going to plant this. So you should help me.' The monkey helped. After a few months, the tree bore fruit. But the turtle couldn't climb the tree. So he asked the monkey to climb the tree. And so, the monkey climbed. But he ate all the bananas. So what the turtle did? He put some thorns against the banana tree so that when the monkey came down, he would be pricked . . .

But the monkey threatened the turtle. He told him that when he came down, he would slice him up. And the turtle said, 'Fine. But I'll multiply and there will be lots of turtles here who will defeat you.' And then the monkey said, 'No. I'm going to burn you.' So the turtle said, 'Fine. If you burn me, I will be reddish. My skin will be beautiful and I will be more beautiful than you are.'

So the monkey said, 'No. I don't want you to be more beautiful than I am. So what I will do is to throw you in the ocean.' The turtle said, 'No! Please don't! I will drown. I will die!'

So the monkey said, 'Now I know!' And (he) picked up the turtle and threw him in the ocean. And then the turtle said, 'Ha, Ha, Ha! I outsmarted you. You've returned me home. I live here!'

*Zia
Filipina Domestic Worker*

We are with the employer, Zia notes, like the turtle is with the monkey. The stories related by 11 Filipino women who are the struggling underdogs in a game of high stakes, do indeed revolve around tales of strike and counter-strike, of calculated moves and equally measured side steps. Like the beleaguered turtle who cleverly endeavours both to rectify an injustice and to secure his survival, the domestic worker

also challenges her subordination, seeking both her personal liberation and broader social justice. Acts of repression are met with spirited opposition, the women strategically manoeuvring to outwit their employers. This chapter seeks to explore these varied behaviours -- to reveal and to celebrate, that is, 11 women's persistent and often brilliantly creative efforts to challenge and escape their oppressive daily environments.

That Zia's fable of the turtle and the monkey finds metaphoric resonance here will become clearer as the specificities of the women's lives are gradually revealed. As the 11 women's stories are, however partially, articulated, it will also become evident that the image of the migrant as only victim of exploitation reflects but one side of the lived experience of the Filipina domestic. To be sure, the vocabulary of exploitation with words like victimization and oppression, must be central to any elucidation of migrant worker life. But so too is the discourse of resistance and struggle critical to any elaboration of the domestic servant experience. To that end, this chapter centres on the richly varied strategies which 11 migrant women regularly employ both to minimize the material and status subordination they experience, and to challenge the very structures through which that exploitation is perpetuated.

This project begins with a brief overview of the methodological considerations around which the choice of interview subjects revolved. We move then to an introduction of the 11 women themselves, exploring the extent to which they fit with the portrait of the Filipina migrant painted previously. Next, we turn to the various strategies the domestic workers employ to escape demands for overtime and to ease

the burden of their work. How the women resist assaults on their self-esteem and status, simultaneously asserting and reclaiming their identities will serve as the focus for the final section. This collection of strategies ranging from lying and shirking to silence and displays of skill are the discursive practices through which the women make their claims. They simultaneously reflect the women's alternative worldview -- a point to which we return in the final chapter. Together these tactics offer powerful evidence that migrant women are keenly aware of how they are manipulated and exploited not only within the expansive system of global international capital, but also within the confines of the domestic labour scene. It is hoped that by giving voice to the stories of 11 Filipino women, by revealing them for all their powerful, defiant, and knowledgeable variety, the myth of quiescence will be debunked -- the oppositional imagination clearly confirmed. If in revealing the migrants as the empowered activists that they are, the victimizing tendencies of migration theory might be, however modestly, challenged, the justification for this study will itself be affirmed. To begin, then, we look first at the set of assumptions and limitations which served, at least in part, both to define whose voices would appear within this text, and to narrow the field of the study itself.

From the beginning, my search for interview candidates was driven by a few basic imperatives -- among them, the need to find women unsatisfied with their jobs. Because I am interested specifically in documenting the nature of everyday resistance -- that is, in exploring the varied, creative strategies employed by the most deeply oppressed -- and not necessarily in generalizing about the extent of that exploitation, I

focused on only those who considered themselves exploited, whose working conditions they themselves defined as frustrating and oppressive. Significantly, many women with whom I held initial discussions expressed a general contentedness with both their working and living conditions. While they proved unsuitable for participation in this study, many named others they felt would be more appropriate. One name led to another and that to several more.

Suitability was, however, determined by a few further limitations. Because everyday resistance tends to thrive, as we have seen, where recourse to overt defiance is generally not possible, I sought subjects who had yet to secure landed immigrant status, whose fear of being denied landed status left them particularly silent and vulnerable. I also insisted that the women meet the live-in requirement demanded of the Live-in Caregiver Programme.¹⁵ The majority of interviewees felt trapped within their jobs, fearful both of looking elsewhere, and of directly confronting their employers.¹⁶

Logistical considerations similarly played a significant role in determining who could or could not participate in this study. Given that the questions asked, and responses sought, would be both highly personal and risky, and given that the interviews would be exceedingly lengthy -- interviews often extended for three hours or longer -- my immediate presence made both strategic and common sense. Thus,

¹⁵. Some women, with the collusion of employers, secretly defy immigration's live-in requirements, opting instead to live with friends or family.

¹⁶. At the time of interviewing, two women had recently been fired, and one, at her wits end, had quit. Because the three women have since found slightly improved working environments, all three restricted their comments to their previous jobs.

all interviews were conducted with women in only Ottawa and Toronto. Limited resources to cover the costs of interpretation and translation meant I had to restrict my search further to those women fluent in English. Finally, the choice to centre this study around the experiences of Filipinas is a function not only of the fact that, throughout the 1980s, Filipinas dominated the migrant domestic scene, but also of my own academic and personal interest in the country and culture.

Time restraints -- specifically the number of hours required to record and interpret each interview -- further delimited the scope of my study, contributing to my decision to focus on the experiences of only 11 women.¹⁷ With such a narrow field of study, it must be recognized that I make no claim to speak definitively about the oppressed's responses to exploitation. Nor am I endeavouring to offer sibylline information on how the subordinated will behave within set parameters. Rather, I seek to explore the specificities of the migrant labour experience as told by 11 Filipina migrants themselves. Then, by refracting a particular set of behaviours through the broad lens of resistance, one adjusted through observations made in previous chapters, I will attempt to apply to them one possible interpretation. Ultimately, then, my intentions are modest: to endeavour to say something about how oppression is experienced, and to offer some insight about how social change can, and does, occur.

Preparation of the question guide (see appendix one) proved fairly straight-

¹⁷. In total, 15 interviews were conducted. Two were eliminated, however, as the interviewees proved reticent in their discussion of resistant behaviours. A miscommunication with two others meant I learned they had already secured their landed status only mid-way through the interview.

forward. INTERCEDE's 1990 report detailing the exploitative conditions in which the majority of its members live and work, offered guidance on questions about the tactics employed both to ease work demands and to gain leisure time. Moreover, Scott's insightful analysis of status and ideological subordination, coupled with Rollins' participant-observation study on the employer-domestic relationship, led naturally to questions on self-representation and esteem. After an initial trial interview, one which threatened to continue for close to five hours, the question guide and focus were narrowed considerably. It is with this more focused version that I conducted the remaining interviews. It should be noted that the question list served as no more than a guide. Interviews were conducted in a fairly free-flowing manner, moving easily across topics as each discussion warranted. This approach was taken to ensure the broadest range of responses, and to create a more open environment for the relating of what I expected would be highly personal and risky stories.

Armed with these criteria, and a comprehensive, if not weighty, list of questions, I ventured in search of appropriate participants. Finding Filipina women to participate in this project was, as I had anticipated, neither straightforward nor easy. A few phone calls to the various domestic worker organizations -- in Ottawa, the Canadian Organization of Support Workers (Ottawa-Philippines), and in Toronto, both INTERCEDE and the Parkdale Domestic Workers Organization -- yielded names of three Filipinas particularly active in their communities. The door they threw open led me to many others, and gradually I found myself in the heart of the domestic community. Through word of mouth, women learned of the nature of my research,

and, more significantly perhaps, of the lengthiness of the interviews. Hence, the response, to say the least, was decidedly underwhelming. Trading a rare evening of leisure, and for many, escape, for three hours of reflection on the woes of one's existence, proved understandably to be a poor draw. At the same time, only a small fraction of domestic workers fit all the criteria outlined above -- many had already acquired landed status and others were no longer required to live in. Of those who did fall within the rough guidelines of this study, many saw little point in discussing their experiences with a student and were pointedly sceptical of being the subject of academic investigation. Others, as mentioned earlier, were clearly satisfied with their jobs. Indeed, the number of women who maintained their employers were fair, and that their working conditions and pay left nothing to be desired, was so considerable that I initially questioned the entire premise of this thesis. The fact that every satisfied woman could name three others who were not, however, reaffirmed for me the legitimacy of this study. In the end, it is these women with whom I eventually managed to connect and it is around their stories that this chapter revolves.¹⁸

To the extent that Samantha, Grace, Lisa, Linda, Ceta, Mary, Janet, Lean, Dominica, Vallie, and Zia (pseudonyms), are exemplary of the new trend of Filipino female out migration (a phenomenon detailed in the previous chapter), their motivations for leaving the Philippines are comprehensible. The women fall between the ages of 28 and 47, all but the youngest having worked first in either Hong Kong or in Singapore. Fully half hail from the islands, or from villages neighbouring

¹⁸. All interviews were conducted in the spring and summer of 1993.

Manila and nine of the 11 are either single or separated. Five of the women are the main or soul providers for their children (the majority of whom reside in the Philippines), while all but three regularly contribute to the material support of other family members. This need to augment the household income, and to ensure a stable future for their children proved the single most compelling force behind the women's decision to leave their country. It is an onerous obligation, the women's narratives revealed, and one tinged with more than a hint of desperation. For Zia and Vallie, for example, ensuring a university education for their children is a critical imperative. In these times of political and economic unrest and instability, they say, it is "the only thing that can't be stolen," and "the only thing that I can give them". Educating their children, or their brothers and sisters is seen as the "gateway to a greener pasture" and as the ticket (albeit costly) to a decent job in the future. This education serves, the women believe, as perhaps the best hedge against forces threatening to undermine their material or economic status.

Interestingly, this status is decidedly middle class. All the women interviewed had completed post-secondary education or training, a privilege which only the middle and upper classes enjoy in the Philippines. While seven women had secured a university-level degree, in subjects ranging from commerce and economics to science and education, others had successfully completed two- or four-year vocational programmes. This training covered the professions of health care, midwifery, and international affairs. Only Samantha -- a trained health care worker with a baccalaureate degree in commerce -- was unemployed before leaving the Philippines.

For most others, work in the Philippines met their immediate financial needs.

Whether serving as a midwife, teacher, accountant or radio announcer, or whether engaged in various entrepreneurial pursuits, the women state they earned a living wage. Only for Grace was migration justified in terms of survival and basic needs. With her meagre teacher's salary, after expenses for transportation and uniforms were deducted, little money remained to buy food for her family. She migrated to Canada, she explains, to ensure her parents' survival. At the other extreme perhaps, at least two women cited their major reason for migrating to Canada, as the desire for "adventure", and for "exciting" and "exotic" experiences.

For the others, however, providing the material conditions necessary to maintain their middle-class status in the Philippines -- through the purchase of land, a car, a television, and other material goods -- and, as mentioned earlier, securing the finances to put their children and siblings through university, were among the primary motivations for their decision to leave. It is important to recognize that this decision was taken within the context of growing economic insecurity. Indeed, while their jobs allowed them access to at least some of these middle-class spoils, the persistent devaluing of the Philippine peso, along with the general climate of economic instability, threatened their job security and undermined their earning power. In the end, land, cars and education -- the material goods symbolic of this class -- were becoming increasingly distant possibilities.

It is hardly a coincidence that the women all chose Canada in their efforts to realize their dreams. Since 1981, with the inception of the FDMP, Canada has stood

alone among migrant receiving countries in its policy of extending to domestic workers the right to apply for landed status. And most domestic workers interviewed intend to exercise that right, many with the broader aim of later sponsoring their families. Most women have already embarked on that lengthy, expensive journey struggling to stay afloat amidst immigration's sea of red tape. Clearly, the growing economic instability of the Philippines which threatens the Filipinas' families' current and future security lends a sense of urgency and even desperation to this rocky voyage. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in every instance the women stated they felt their power to better their conditions by directly confronting their exploiters was seriously undermined by their fear of being sent back home.

The extent to which such behaviour will in fact effect their landing process, is, to some degree, irrelevant. For the migrants genuinely believe that quitting their jobs or seeking legal recourse are actions which immigration officials and potential future employers will hold against them in the future. That belief in turn serves as a material force effectively circumscribing the women's realm of possible responses and actions. This reality is further exacerbated by the migrant women's reliance on positive letters of reference to secure alternative employment. The "better the devil you know, than the devil you don't" syndrome -- that is, the absence of any expectation that they might be treated differently elsewhere -- further contributes to their decision to remain with exploitative employers.

Finally, and equally important, underlying every nanny's debate about whether to leave or to stay is the simple necessity of having to ensure her daily survival

(despite the rise in demand for live-in domestic workers, Filipina nannies who change jobs are often unemployed for months at a time). Together these factors serve to further secure the trap within which domestic workers become ensnared. In this respect, then, the women interviewed conform well to the profile of the vulnerable domestic worker constructed in studies like those cited in the previous chapter (see for example, Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990; Parikh, 1991). Like the women who formed the basis of INTERCEDE's study (Villasin and Arat-Koc, 1990), the Filipinas I interviewed spoke of forced overtime and gruelling work schedules. Miserly wages, verbal abuse, and relentless attacks on their self-esteem were similarly among the common experiences articulated by the women. These realities will be further evinced in the remainder of the chapter as the details of the women's lives are more fully revealed.

Earlier I argued that oppression is never statically articulated. Instead, I maintained, resistance exists in tension with all forms of power, rendering power structures themselves ever fluid and dynamic. It follows, then, that human experience must be a product of both power and resistance. To what extent are these women actively shaping their environments? To what extent are they at once exploited victims and empowered activists? The answers to these questions can be found, at least in part, in the ensuing exploration of everyday strategies of resistance. It is to this discussion that our attention now shifts.

The innovative ways through which the 11 women interviewed regularly seek to, and often succeed in, minimizing and challenging their subordination, are as

diverse and creative as the women themselves. In an attempt at coherence, however, I once again rely on Scott. The tactics are thus divided loosely between the interrelated spheres of material and status appropriation or domination. Their significance at the ideological level will be more fully examined in chapter five. This exploration of the daily tactics invoked by Filipina domestic workers begins in the realm of the migrant worker's material subordination.

Among the most bitter sources of malcontent voiced by all the women interviewed is their employers' unrelenting, uncompromising and inflexible demand that the women work overtime, and that their hours remain flexible. Samantha's day, for example, begins at 7:30 sharp when she prepares the children's breakfast and packs them off to school. With the daily laundering, ironing, and vacuuming also demanded of her, along with the countless other domestic chores she is required to perform, Samantha is lucky, she says, if she finishes by 6:00 in the evening. Her work day is further lengthened when her employers arrive home late or when they show up unexpectedly with guests in tow. On these occasions, Samantha is expected both to attend to the children, and to help prepare dinner and clean up. While her experience is extreme, it is hardly exceptional. Mary regularly labours through a 14-hour day and has worked every Saturday without exception. Lisa's day similarly begins at 7:00 a.m when she cooks a hot breakfast for the children and dresses them for school. Though she breaks for lunch and relaxes from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. each day, her work day is extended usually to between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m..

Weekends and evenings often prove the most frustrating as the women are

regularly recruited to do last-minute child care work or kitchen-centred chores.

Samantha explains: If you stay in the house, "they always think that they need you.

You have to answer the phone in case it's your friend calling. The little boy asks you to play with him and you can't send him upstairs. I tried staying there once . . . I cooked dinner for them, and because I had to eat too, I had to work in the kitchen."

Employers wanting child-free time to run errands, to socialize, or simply to relax, appear to barely hesitate before telling their nannies they have to babysit. Vallie's experience is illustrative:

I noticed that at 10 in the evening, if they know that I am not going out, she would bring the child for me to care for. She would tell me that she was doing work in her office (upstairs). So, the first time, the second time, I did it. (But), the third time, it was 12:30 a.m. and the child was still with me and I went upstairs and saw that she wasn't working, but that she was watching t.v. And so I . . . brought the baby to her crib and the baby woke up and the employer, because she was watching t.v., asked me to give her a bottle. And so I gave the bottle.

That these hours are seldom negotiable and are even less often remunerated, that the nannies' labour is so blatantly and thoughtlessly appropriated and exploited, is the common experience driving the women's separate acts of resistance.

Escaping this relentless demand for unpaid overtime has become a constant challenge. And the tactics are varied. Securing a weekend apartment, one shared usually by three or four other migrants, has proven among the most effective and accessible routes to escape. Getting away from their employers and out of their line of sight, ensures that they can't, "call you as they want, and work you till 1:00 or 2:00 a.m.," Lisa says. The apartments generally cost each domestic about \$100

monthly. Though this figure represents about an eighth of their monthly income, it is a small price to pay, they say, for the freedom that accompanies it. Indeed, nine of the women interviewed spoke happily of the enjoyment, leisure and rest their weekend apartment afforded them.

Fleeing the nightly overtime that women like Ceta experience, is somewhat more challenging. Having realized that the more often she stays home, the more often her employers go out, Ceta forces herself out several evenings each week. Most often she finds respite in a fellow domestic's home next door. Occasionally, however, she enrolls in swimming or computer classes which offer a legitimate excuse for leaving her home on those evenings. Pragmatically, they serve also to fulfil the upgrading requirements necessary for her application for landed immigrant status. It is also significant, however, that long after the term is over, and the last class has been attended, Ceta continues to use the class as a convenient excuse. Vallie takes a different approach. "I am wise myself too," she says. "I turn off the light if I hear the footsteps on the stairs. Sometimes they open the door and check in to see if I am sleeping. They wouldn't knock. But I pretend I am sleeping."

Some domestic workers who view their options as more limited, attempt to reclaim their lost hours in their employers' absence. Thus, Grace says, "Since I work long hours, when (my employer) is not in the house, I take my time and have a rest. I'm not going to work for those long hours straight. For us, it's not easy -- we sneak around." Others say they feign illness or cite various medical conditions. Vallie, for example, secured a doctor's certificate indicating she was on medication and thus

unable to work for longer hours. The fact that she had had an operation recently lent legitimacy to her claim, and further convinced them to check the demands they place on her. Linda, on the other hand, cleverly plays on stereotypes of women, using the pretext of painful menstrual cramps to beg off extra work. That each of these excuses carries with them some element of truth, cannot be denied. Yet, it is often precisely that veracity which guarantees these strategies their success.

It is not only against overtime, however, that the migrant women's resistance is directed. Many tactics are also designed to ease the daily burden of child care. To this end, domestic workers often seek out other nannies in the neighbourhood, preferably those responsible for children of a similar age. Sometimes with, sometimes without, the knowledge of their employers, Grace and neighbouring domestics will leave their wards in the care of others. "The domestic workers agree that one is going to look after the others' kids," Grace explains. "And then we drop off the kid at 10:00 a.m. and come back at 3:00 p.m. And then we go do whatever we want." These relationships serve as an informal 'babysitting' network with escape and leisure coming through favours requested and exchanged. Release, however temporary, from the demands of pre-school child care, is also sought through a plethora of art and sports classes for the children. Domestics workers enthusiastically recommend swimming courses for the children, and enrol them in programmes offered at local libraries and community centres. Through these simple, pragmatic tactics, the women manage to win at least a few hours of leisure and respite each week.

Demands for unpaid overtime occupy just a section of the juggernaut around which the migrant women carefully manoeuvre. The sheer volume of work looms equally oppressively. Employers' expectations of service, all the women noted, far exceed the terms to which domestics put their signature. Playing secretary and answering business calls for self-employed employers, caring for more children as employers' families expand, and doing the weekly grocery shopping and laundry for the household, are but a few of the unexpected chores the women regularly perform. Tending the garden, washing windows, walking the dog and picking up after it, are similarly among the more unpleasant, resented, and unanticipated tasks relegated to at least a few of the migrants interviewed. For Mary, this burden of work extends beyond her home as two nights each week she is forced to clean the video store her employers own.

The interviews suggest that much of the work is highly idiosyncratic or obsessive in nature. For Vallie that obsessiveness means washing the kitchen floor each night, while for Mary it implies vacuuming the entire house each day. Ironing everything from face cloths to underwear, is one of the bewildering chores Mary also attends to daily. Most employers are adamant, the women say, that every shirt be ironed and meticulously put away. Endless loads of laundry also appear to haunt most domestic workers -- in Samantha's home, for example, towels must be washed each morning after use. That many of these chores would be ignored, and expectations somewhat diminished, in the absence of the easily exploitable live-in, is reflected in one story Grace relates:

My employer, the man, used to send his shirt to the drycleaners. Every time. I never had to wash them. And they would come back pressed. Then one time when we were out at the cottage and he couldn't send them out because it was too far, I washed them and ironed them. Two shirts. And he said how much he liked my ironing. I remember he complimented me. And from then, I have been washing his shirts and ironing them every night.

Grace is not alone in this experience. The women were unequivocal in their conviction that employers forever attempt to push the boundaries of the permissible, taking a mile for every inch the domestic workers cede.

It is against this logic first, then, that the migrants' battle is pitched. Their well-grounded fear of having their labour increasingly appropriated, and their awareness of the extent to which they are manipulated and taken advantage of, have meant domestics continually struggle to assert and protect their limits. For some, like Leah, those boundaries have been asserted through a 'work to rule' campaign. She explains:

I knew my contract was 7:30 till 4:00 p.m., but if they were preparing dinner, I would play with the kids and would only go down after dinner. Now, I go to my room. Sometimes I feel guilty but what I am thinking also is that this is fairness. Before I didn't care what time I finished. But now I feel that it is so unfair.

Attempting to enforce contract regulations, however, fails miserably for most. When Samantha tried the same strategy, for example, her employer swiftly and pedantically restated the 'rules' of her employment demanding that Samantha remain in the kitchen until after dinner each evening.

As a result, other women have responded to the burden of overwork by attempting to undermine a basic practice around which the employer-domestic

relationship revolves. Janet explains the nature of this practice:

It's not really the money that binds employers and employees; to develop a good relationship with the employer, it's give and take. You have to give some consideration to them -- so sometimes (when) they are late, you have to be a little more considerate with them. You can't just take and take. You must give as well.

Because for many, "it's just take and take" (Zia), however, the women I spoke with consciously hold back on the 'give' half of the practice. Such resistance involves withholding from the employer any extra, voluntary, and unrequested favours, regardless of how minimal and easily performed they might be. Thus, the women said, fearing that offering a cup of coffee in the morning, or answering a telephone in the evening, might easily be transformed into yet another required task, the women "cut all extras off" and "don't let them expect anything" of them (Zia).

At the same time, domestic workers regularly resort to less direct and more covert tactics, all aimed at winning more leisure for themselves, and at negotiating with their employer the grounds of their exploitation. Once again, these strategies vary, the benefits and risks carefully calculated and weighed. For Grace, for example, respite from her daily regimen of washing down the bathroom -- a chore whose frequency she resented and found "ridiculous" and "unnecessary" -- came with her deliberately reckless use of expensive, household cleansing agents. Bottles of Comet and Fantastic were quite literally flushed down the toilet and dollars swirled away with the Drano poured down the sink. It is a tactic, Grace says, commonly employed by domestic workers. She states:

We use as much of the cleaning products as we can and the more expensive the better. Sometime we throw it away. . . and if they ask

us why (it) is finished, we say, we are cleaning. And we say, if you want us to use less, we should clean it only once or twice a week.

Grace's employers clearly looked askance at such obvious wastage. Though they offered Grace no direct or immediate concession, they refrained from questioning or reprimanding her on days the bathroom was not cleaned.

Cutting corners also serves as a low risk yet effective strategy aimed at minimizing work loads and at gaining precious leisure time. Knowing the children she cares for are generally untidy, for example, Vallie seldom folds their washed clothes or takes care to put them neatly away. Instead, she tosses them 'topsy turvy' into dresser drawers, or throws them haphazardly across the closet floor. Grace sometimes uses shampoo to make a tub glisten or shimmer, rather than expending the greater effort demanded when using abrasive cleansers. Samantha does away with detergent all together, simply wiping down counters with a tissue or cloth. And Ceta is no different. Once, when asked to clean the fridge -- a task not listed in her job description -- she simply wiped down the inside neglecting the door with its assortment of condiments. Her employer, Ceta believes, was so unimpressed with her work that she never asked her to clean the fridge again.

Efforts to cope with seemingly endless mounds of laundry similarly revolve around minor forms of deception. For Samantha, whose employers expect her to iron and wash towels and clothes each day, "skimping" where she can significantly eases her burden. She says candidly:

To make it more simple for me because they always give me more laundry and more ironing, I smell the clothes and if its okay, I just fold it and put it back . . . And I just iron on the top . . . Towels, I just put

them in the dryer -- I don't even wash them. I just iron the jeans and put them back without washing them.

That these efforts to retrench most often remain undetected, indeed, that their very success is contingent upon this certainty of non-detection, is clear. Recognizing that her employers would be loathe to climb a ladder to inspect her work, for instance, Mary can confidently minimize at least one of her regular chores by cleaning the chandeliers monthly instead of weekly.

Some migrant women appear to go a step further, simply refusing to do the work they know is expected of them. These refusals are carefully measured against the risk of incurring an employers' wrath. -- domestic workers seem aware of individual employer's thresholds of tolerance, and are sensitive to the factors (stress levels, time, moods, etc.) which inevitably shift those levels about. The women recognize that pointed refusals most often force open confrontation. Knowing that employers are usually as eager to avoid tension as the domestics themselves are loathe to invoke them, the women cloak their refusals in ambiguity or disguise, masking or softening them through varied excuses. Often these excuses play on existing stereotypes of foreign domestics -- that the women are stupid, slow learners, and lacking in basic skills -- making them appear that much more believable.¹⁹ In an effort, for example, to avoid having to cook for the entire family, and having to prepare foods she didn't particularly like eating, Grace simply claimed that as a

¹⁹. Rollins argues that employers often display a "surprisingly high tolerance" for behaviour that in other occupations would lead to immediate reprimand, if not dismissal (1985:201-202). She accounts for this reality by suggesting that such actions support the negative racist and classist stereotypes employers already hold, and serve to further affirm their sense of superiority and to justify their exploitative behaviour (Ibid.).

Filipina, she had never eaten or prepared such foods, and that as a result she was incapable of preparing them for the family. Moreover, racist notions that Third World domestics are somehow 'technologically challenged', that they need special instructions in the operation of even the most basic household appliances have served women like Grace with a clever, surefire ruse enabling her to escape demands like taping television programmes for her employer.

Lying, when done delicately, appears to be equally effective. Both Samantha and Linda plead a poor memory when their employers ask them why they have neglected to complete their chores. "But I hadn't forgotten," Linda says adamantly. "I just say I forgot, just to make excuses." Significantly, it is one of the few excuses Linda believes her employers are likely to accept. The women can be creative in the tales they weave. When questioned about her failure to iron her employer's white shirts, for example, Ceta said that in the interest of the environment, that is, in an effort to conserve electricity, she had decided to wait until a pile of shirts had accumulated thus avoiding having to heat and reheat the iron. While Ceta had not technically succeeded in reducing the amount of work demanded of her, she managed, nonetheless, to assert some form of control.

Such resistance can involve more blatant forms of deception as well. When questioned about why she had neglected to iron a child's shirt, for instance, Samantha brazenly lied claiming that she had in fact ironed the shirt and that the children had crumpled it. The employer accepted the excuse and dressed the child in the wrinkled shirt. Samantha similarly proffered lies about failing to answer the phone, claiming

either that the phone hadn't rung, or that she had not heard it ringing. The call display and message service her employers soon acquired meant Samantha was rarely ever again expected to answer phone calls or take messages.

Vallie, on the other hand, cleverly turned her employers' own lies and logic against them in her refusal to act as secretary by answering their phone and taking messages. When her employers explicitly forbade her to use the phone, claiming that their phone was for business purposes only, Vallie promptly responded by ignoring all calls on that line. When her employer one day asked Vallie if anyone had called, Vallie said, "yes but I didn't answer it because I'm not allowed to use the phone." My employer turned her back and I thought: 'I scored a point.'" After that incident Vallie was never asked about messages, her employers relying instead on the answering machine.

Such tactics often lead employers to either adjust their expectations, or to seek alternative solutions to their domestic and child care needs. Vallie's employers, for instance, not only absolved her of responsibility for answering phones and relaying messages, but also ultimately hired another woman to do household chores once a week. Grace's employer similarly hired another Filipina to clean the bathrooms and the floors on a weekly basis. Alternatively, many employers simply opt to do the work themselves. Such was the case with Ceta's employers who swept the outside steps and wiped down the railings themselves after Ceta failed to do these chores herself. Grace shares a similar experience. When her employers refused to address their children's finicky eating habits -- habits which often forced Grace to prepare two

or three separate breakfasts each morning -- Grace responded by refusing to accommodate any further, making herself appear busy with other areas of work. Ensuring the children ate their meal then became her employer's responsibility. And she reacted swiftly both by packing a boxed breakfast and feeding it to them in the car, and by reprimanding them for not eating what Grace had prepared. Grace's burden was thus measurably lightened.

Vallie's victory is no less significant. Unable to balance the demands of caring for three small children with those of attending to all the domestic chores her employer assigns, Vallie has dealt with what she can, prioritizing tasks in order of importance. Choosing, for whatever reason, not to confront Vallie outright, her employer has, nonetheless, made her displeasure apparent. Thus, Vallie says:

One time I noticed she went to the kitchen and inspected the drawers and cupboards. I hadn't cleaned them because of the kids and she noticed that I didn't clean it. And again, she got the cleaning materials and began to clean and she would even run her fingers on surfaces to inspect dust. Then I didn't say a word because that would lead to a big discussion. I am happy to let her do it because that lets her know that I cannot do all the stuff in one day.

The women recognize that their employers' ostentatious efforts to do the work themselves are aimed both at insulting the domestic workers (whose sense of pride is derived, at least in part, from their work), and at imploring them to do better and work harder in the future. But the women reject these veiled reprimands outright, interpreting the tactics instead, as a victory of sorts. On one occasion, for instance, while Janet was relaxing after a full day's work, her employer pointedly grabbed a broom and began sweeping the floor. "I just laughed and in my mind said that they

can help me. He just wanted to make me feel guilty. But I ignored them and I didn't get offended and I didn't react and I didn't apologize," she says. And, more significantly, Janet did not do the work.

Interestingly, one of the most effective, and most common strategies for challenging such exploitation appears to be the non-spoken, but very pointed, use of facial expressions and body gestures. All 11 women stated that a stony silence, a "hard" look, an angry face, or a turned back, conveyed, perhaps even more clearly than words, their feelings that expectations were too high, and work demands unjust. Dominica's story is illustrative. Dominica had not complained openly about being forced to babysit each Wednesday evening with no offer of payment -- though she considered it unfair and understood it to be exploitative, she felt it was a small price to pay for what she believes is, in many ways, a satisfactory working environment. It did not take long, however, for her employers to push further their advantage, staying out later and later as each week passed. Finally, one evening, they telephoned Dominica at 10:30 p.m. and informed her they would not be home for at least one hour. This news was met with a cold silence. That that silence spoke volumes, however, is reflected clearly in what happened next. Dominica says:

They could tell I was upset on the phone and they were home 20 minutes later. And they said, you sounded upset (though she hadn't spoken a word). I said I didn't mind if they stayed out late if they told me ahead of time. And they responded with, 'You shouldn't make plans on Wednesday night'. I didn't say anything.

The next Wednesday, however, her employers were home by 9:00 p.m. and the following week she was given both Thursday and Friday off. Dominica employed

this tactic again to escape having to clean up after the dog. Her refusal to speak, or to engage in the normally cheerful banter which characterizes her daily communications with her employer, conveyed instantly to her employer her displeasure with this task. After that incident, her employer no longer asked.

It was that same stony silence that suggested to Zia's employers that being forced to change her plans in order to babysit the children -- because her employers had failed to arrive home from work as scheduled -- was not an occurrence Zia was willing to have repeated. Her one-word closed responses as her employer drove her to her bus stop further served to ensure that her employers did not similarly take advantage of her. This strategy of silence proved effective in other situations as well. Indeed, Zia says:

They know that I get easily upset; they can easily see it in my face. (And then) they're going to smile to make me feel at ease. And they take (what they asked) back and say, look, if you have time, then do it.

Similarly, when Grace is silent and retreats to her room -- a behaviour which so contradicts her typically buoyant disposition -- she signals loudly to her employers that they have pushed her too far.

Part and parcel of this widely-employed strategy of silence are a host of facial expressions and body gestures whose message is equally direct. On one occasion, unable to find ten minutes to run to the store, Vallie neglected to purchase milk for the household. Late that evening when her employer noticed its absence, she demanded that Vallie go out (walking) to buy it. Vallie complied. Vallie's behaviour which followed, however, unequivocally relayed to her employer that behind her

apparent quiescence was anger and resentment. She says:

On my face I showed that I was angry. I didn't give a word and I didn't smile. I just turned my back and prepared the milk for the small child. The next morning, we didn't talk.

The next day, in what Vallie believes is recognition of the excessive demands her employer places on her, she relented slightly. Thus, she advised Vallie that, "if you cannot finish this job, just leave it and if you have the time, just finish it another day." Giving her employer a 'bad reaction', did not lead her, Vallie believes, to diminish her overall expectations of the work she was to perform. Still, the tactic did serve to effect a compromise of sorts and to allow Vallie to assert at least a modicum of control.

Ceta's experience is similar. One story she cites came after the birth of her employers' third child²⁰. In response to the added work, Ceta was forced to cut down on the amount of cleaning she had been doing. Her employer's immediate reaction was to draw up a cleaning schedule and to post it in the kitchen -- this after two years of employment with this family. Ceta says she was furious. "Am I not doing anything in the house with the kids? I just didn't talk to her. I went silent. And I pasted (this) schedule in front of my door so she could see it." The next day Ceta continued to work in silence, her face completely void of her usual cheer. Her reaction was not lost on her employer. Like Vallie's employer, Ceta's employer responded by telling her to "just finish the cleaning later. It's a nice day, she said.

²⁰. One complaint commonly cited by a number of the women is that employers rarely recognize the added burden additional family members place. When negotiating contracts, the women are seldom told that employers are planning to enlarge their families. And rarely after a birth are these contracts renegotiated.

Just go out." Now, although the schedule remains posted on the wall by her room, Ceta goes about her work according to her own routine. It is a tactic she employs to effect other minor compromises as well. When her employer saw Ceta was clearly not delighted with the prospect of having to spend yet another evening babysitting, for example, she delayed her departure saying, "but don't worry, Ceta. I'll put the kids to bed."

The spoils of such skirmishes are thus twofold and calculable. Not only are the women relieved, if only for the day, of the burden of yet another task which further weighs them down, but they are also able to convey in a subtle, indirect manner, the parameters beyond which they feel their labour cannot be appropriated.

The weapons the women employ to resist the countless status humiliations they experience are no less skilfully and pragmatically wielded. As mentioned in chapter three, domestic workers are regularly made to feel like third class citizens. Indeed, all the women interviewed indicated that through miserly wages, restrictive living conditions, patronizing treatment, and regular insults, employers routinely succeed in overtly or subtly humiliating them. This subordination revolves around race and class hierarchies. Class distinctions are perpetuated for example, through the horrendously low wages domestic workers are paid. While the top dollar earned by the 11 women interviewed amounted to \$1,200 monthly after taxes, for the majority, remuneration was limited to between \$650 and \$850. Given that not one woman worked the standard 44-hour work-week²¹, that, in fact, most worked a minimum of 56 hours or

²¹. For domestic workers, gross wages are based on a 44-hour work week with no overtime.

longer, these salaries amounted to far less than the provincial minimum wage.

Moreover, eight of the 11 women regularly remit money overseas -- most sending between \$250 and \$500 home monthly. The minimal wages the domestics receive serve to maintain the material differences not only between the domestics and their middle- to upper-income employers, but also between Canadians and citizens of the Third World.

Knowing that employers are loathe to offer them higher wages, many of the domestics have resorted to an extremely direct, but highly camouflaged, series of assaults. The targets are the symbols of their employer's class status. And if money is viewed as perhaps the most prominent of these symbols, it is hardly surprising that this attack is aimed precisely at their pocketbook. Thus, Grace's liberal use of cleansing agents, "the more expensive the better", serves not only as a means through she minimizes her work, but also, simply, as a way of squandering her employers' money. Grace summarizes this attitude succinctly when she says, "We waste as much as we can . . . if they don't want to spend money on us, we have to be the ones who are wasting their money." It is this attitude which is reflected in one woman's choice of the most expensive cleaning products when she does the household shopping. Similarly, Lisa rarely 'comparison shops' when she buys the weekly groceries. Instead, she shops at cheese stores, bakeries, and speciality delicatessens, feeling smug instead of guilty, as she pushes the bill higher. Perhaps because these are stores the employer once recommended herself, Lisa has yet to be cautioned about these expenses.

Leah similarly attempts to push the food budget to its limit. Frustrated at being forced to eat 'Canadian' food, and at not having the money or the freedom to cook what she enjoys, Leah will occasionally ask her friends over for dinner. This, in the absence of her employers, but clearly at their expense. "This is the only way to take advantage," Leah says. "If I knew how to drive, I'd make use of their car all the time. They are fortunate I don't know how to drive." Like the slaves discussed in Genovese's *Roll, Jordon, Roll* (1974), these domestic workers seldom view their actions as unjustified or unfair. This sentiment is reflected in Leah's assertion that, "I don't think I am cheating them because of all my friends, I am getting the lowest salary." And indeed, Leah does not get paid for the months of July and August.

Mary's tactics, though employed with similar aims, are of necessity, highly covert. Recognizing that her employer wears vast quantities of perfume and hair spray, Mary has, on occasion, thrown these beauty agents away. She has also taken to pouring her employers face cleanser down the sink. "I did it little by little," Mary says. "They can't ask me (about it) because they know that I never use make-up." Such tactics are all the more brilliantly strategic given that these items are ones for which Mary is not required to shop.

While miserly wages are the main means through which lower class status is imposed, a host of other discursive practices combine to ensure that domestic workers know and recognize their place. Among these, various linguistic or communicative rituals are commonly employed. Direct insults and verbal assaults are not uncommon as Rollins also discovered in her American-based study (1985). Mary, for example,

has repeatedly been reminded that to her female employer, she is "just our housekeeper" and thus clearly not welcome at family outings. Vallie's employer accused her of being "dumb" and "brainless". Other attempts to denigrate are often more subtle.

Four of the 11 women stated that while they regularly refer to their employers as Mrs. M___ or Mr. P___, or, alternatively as Ma'am and Sir, their employers unfailingly refer to them by their first name. It is a practice established both formally and informally -- employers either avoid suggesting alternatives when their domestics use these common honorifics, or they go out of their way to correct them demanding a more formal mode of address. While the former was the case with three of the women, the latter was true in the case of Lisa. For others like Janet, Grace and Zia, the employer's self-ascribed higher status is articulated and emphasized when their employer introduces them as "my nanny" when speaking to friends. "They want to imply that they are superior and that's . . . how they think of nannies," Janet says.

For Linda that humiliation is further heightened when her employer yells at her in front of others. She offers an example:

One time, I was at school, picking up the kids and they had an appointment so the employer came to the school and she stood in the street shouting, Linda! Linda! Come on, let's go! I was so embarrassed because my friends were there and they all thought she was mad at me.

Linda speaks also about her employer's commanding tone, her barked orders imploring her to "obey all the time". Mary similarly tells stories of being yelled at by her employer, and of having her judgement and intelligence questioned and

insulted. Samantha says her employer's repeated reprimands are aimed at making her feel inferior. Linda echoes this sentiment in her comments about her employer's continuous efforts to berate and belittle her as she rigourously corrects her oral and written English.

The nannies determinedly resist these attempts at status subordination. While Linda easily admits, for instance, that she needs to improve her English language skills, she rejects the implication that her errors reflect a low level of intelligence. Thus, she justifies her 'mispronunciation' to her employer by arguing that she is a Filipina and not a Canadian woman. Similarly, the women reject the legitimacy of their employers' self-ascribed superior status through their refusal to afford employers the respect they desire. In the company of other domestics, or in the privacy of their minds, domestics issue forth with a plethora of invectives, replacing honorifics with names clearly less than honourable. Thus the women refer to their employer bitterly as "pig", "bitch", and "wicked witch of the West", effectively stripping their employers of the respect honorifics are meant to confer. Moreover, Grace says, employers are regularly compared to particular actors and actresses in the Philippines. "Because back home, there are actors that have certain characteristics and so we call them by these names. Sometimes we say bastard, idiot, when we talk in front of other domestics," she adds. At the same time, through gossip about the intimate aspects of their employers' lives, domestics further defame their good name, and "laugh at them behind their back" (Grace).

Status differences are also imposed, however, through various other patterns of

communication which appear to characterize the relationships between domestics and their employers. The practice of leaving notes to convey instructions and reprimands, for example, is commonly experienced by at least five of the women interviewed. Their employers regularly converse with them in this manner, leaving elaborate notes detailing what they are and are not supposed to do at a particular time. For Zia, this mode of communication is used not only to delineate her chores and responsibilities, but also to convey her employers' appreciation or disappointment with her work. "If I collected all the short letters that they left me," she says, "there would be about thirty." For Ceta, the most memorable note came two years after she began working with this employer and took the form of a detailed schedule outlining what was required of her and when they were to be carried out. Similarly, Dominica points to the inked and yellowing sheets which have remained fixed on the fridge for more than a year. These inform her that, among other obligations, she is to supervise the baby at all times, to have the children sit down while taking their meals, and to offer them no more than three cookies each day.

The practice of note leaving is humiliating at two levels. First, the women interviewed resent the mode of communication itself, finding it at once degrading and curious that their employers refuse to address them in person. The women also, and perhaps more strenuously, resent the notes' underlying implications -- that the domestics are too stupid, too inexperienced, or simply too lazy, to determine and fulfil their myriad responsibilities themselves.

The women's responses to these insults are interestingly varied. Zia has

retaliated note for note -- for every red-inked or pencilled instruction or criticism she finds, Zia brandishes her own carefully imitated response, its paper, pen-colour, length and placement identical to that which her employer patronizingly leaves for her. Ceta's and Dominica's defiant responses have similarly pointed up the inanity of this communicative form, while simultaneously deflecting the insults carried with it. Thus, each has left the most insulting of the notes (for both, these comprised a lengthy list of rules along with a detailed schedule for chores) in the spot most likely to serve as a visible and constant reminder to employers of the excessiveness of their demands. They then proceeded to openly defy the notes' outlined schedule, working to their own pace and deadlines and abiding by their own set of (often higher) standards. Vallie whose experience was not dissimilar, explains:

I don't want to show them that I have to do the things they ask all the time, but that I know how to do things my way. And that they are good things and different things, especially with disciplining the child.

These tactics, including using her own discretion to determine when and where the children can play, serve in the end, Vallie says, to earn her employer's respect. That they also clearly challenge her employer's bigoted assumptions about the capabilities and intelligence of her Filipina domestic, must also be acknowledged.

Efforts to denigrate, however, travel in more insidious and subtle ways. They are commonly transported through hierarchically-structured patterns of communication which appear prevalent in the majority of employer-domestic relationships. Among these is one governed by a kind of informal agreement which allows the employer's almost voyeuristic curiosity about her domestic to be routinely satisfied, while

simultaneously prohibiting the domestic from satisfying hers (Rollins, 1985:165). The majority of women said that while they had been questioned about their private lives - about their feelings for their families, their partners, their ambitions, and their country -- they had rarely, if ever, similarly questioned their employers. To be sure, details of their employers' lives are more easily available to the live-ins. Moreover, all women, when asked, said they had no desire to learn more about the particular intimacies of their employers' lives. It is the non-reciprocal, clearly hierarchical nature of the relationship, however, that is at issue. Indeed, when questioned about the extent to which she asks her employers about *their* private lives, Samantha says, "I don't because they are my employers." Dominica too has learned little of the intimate details of her employer's life despite the fact that she has talked openly with her about her homesickness for the Philippines, and about her grief at learning that her husband had been having extra-marital affairs. Vallie has similarly answered questions about her feelings towards her family, and about her educational background and her personal goals. These are details Vallie shared only reluctantly, she says, "because she was my employer", and because she felt she had no choice. It is for this same reason, Vallie says, that she never similarly questioned her employer.

The domestic workers I spoke with are clearly aware of, and resistant to, the inequity inherent in this relationship. Thus, Lisa says, "I want to be equal. I do all the work but it's very hard to be equal, because . . . the way they talk to me made me understand. It's not equal; they are the boss." Among the most popular tactics the women employ to address this form of subordination is the withholding of

information or the veiling of responses. Ceta puts it this way:

Sometimes I don't tell them all. For me, I don't think I have to share all my private life with them. It's for me and I don't want them (to know). So I don't tell everything. They don't share their private details with me, so why should I? Now they don't ask much about my life any more.

It is a tactic which the majority of domestics use not only to resist the oppressive communicative form, but also to resist other acts of humiliation. Leah's case is exemplary. Unlike the other Filipinas interviewed, Leah and her employer regularly shared their personal joys and worries. The sense of equality reflected in that relationship, however, was quickly undermined by various actions which betrayed her employer's capitalist ethic and insensitivity. These included the employer's refusal to extend an emergency loan to Leah when, after the death of her brother, she had to fly back to the Philippines suddenly. It also includes the failure to pay Leah during the summer claiming that as a teacher she had no source of income in July and August. Leah understood this to be an outright lie. The humiliation both of not being trusted with a personal loan, and of being blatantly lied to about her employer's economic status, combined with the emotional and physical suffering she was forced to endure during those long summer months without any salary, clearly demonstrated to Leah her status in her employer's eye. And she resisted accordingly. She says:

Sometimes I am offended and when they treat me like they do in the summer, I feel they are not part of my family . . . and I feel like I want to put limits on my relationship with them. Because I've changed now. I am no longer so open with them. I don't want them to know what I am doing. Before I would tell them what I was doing on the weekends; I am always sharing. Now even if she asks, I don't want to tell them. I don't reveal anything.

Leah says she employs this tactic to elicit feelings of guilt. She hopes that one day, "they will wake up in their mind . . . (and) realize that what they are doing is unfair."

Significantly, some employers obviously recognize the power of communication to both inflict and mediate status humiliations. When Linda's employer realized that she had humiliated and embarrassed her by yelling at her from the street in front of Leah's friends ("she could see it in my face that I am so sad or unhappy and when I am sad, I don't talk"), her employer proceeded to take Linda into her confidence by sharing with her some amusing and personal stories. It is hardly surprising, then, as Linda says, that trying "to please me by telling stories -- made me feel a little bit better." Grace's employer similarly endeavoured to make up for her maltreatment through efforts to establish friendship and intimacy. Rather than offering to share her own worries and concerns, however, Grace's employer attempted instead to invite Grace to share hers. In the face of the countless other forms of exploitation Grace experiences -- including the refusal to feed and to pay Grace adequately -- Grace could not help but view these efforts as anything but superficial and intrusive. Thus, she says:

It seems that she was just trying to be nosy about my life because if you ask someone you're living with about their relationship (with her boyfriend), she should be concerned about you. But if (she) were concerned, she would be concerned about my food . . . she's not really sincere (in asking) me about my private life. It's just a way of making up to me (for mistreating me).

Grace responded by refusing to disclose the details of her private life. "By not talking," she says, "I can show her that this boundary (exists) between us."

If the non-reciprocal nature of communication patterns serves to set up and articulate status subordination, the racist, classist and sexist biases underpinning them further contribute to this process. These biases are apparent, for example, in employers' surprise when they learn about the women's educational background and middle-class status back home. Vallie's employer "looked me over from head to foot" when she heard "that her nanny had an education". And Dominica's employer was mildly shocked when Dominica showed her a picture of her house in the Philippines. "They couldn't believe it because it's nice," Dominica says. Their surprise turned to disbelief, she adds, when she informed them she has a sister working (as a professional) in Houston. This information was offered up in response to her employer's curious examination of her attire one night as Dominica prepared to go out. "She was surprised to see me that way," Dominica says. "My sister used to send me clothes. Maybe (my employer) was thinking, 'How can she afford this?'"

Questions asked and responses sought thus sharply reflect, and attempt to affirm, the superior race and class status employers ascribe to themselves. The women's muted responses are aimed not only at addressing the inequity of the communicative form, but also at resisting the various racist and classist put-downs it inevitably conveys. Hence, when Grace's employers question her about the Philippines and her family back home, Grace refuses to indulge them with stories of her homeland. "For me," she says, "there is no point in discussing about my country because I know they are not interested. What they see about my country is poverty and that's it." Linda, on the other hand, is more selective with her silence; she

restricts her comments about her country to stories about its food, its rich vegetation, its architecture, and its fashions. She says:

I told her there are lots of people there and the people are very close. They are friendly and they are very accommodating. The food there is good. The mango there is excellent and the houses are very beautiful. are very tall . . . and the fashion there is advanced -- here they are behind.

Hence, Linda says, "I just let her think that I'm just a simple woman because . . . it is important to have secrets." For Linda, these secrets mean remaining silent about her family and about her middle-class background. The unspoken knowledge that "we're not poor," and that her employer "is only renting, but back in my home, we have our own home", serves to undermine her employers' claim they are "so superior", and to defend her against her employers' efforts to denigrate her status.

If withholding information serves as an effective form of resistance for some, offering detailed insight into 'life back home' works equally powerfully for others. When asked by her employer why 'all Filipinas who come to Canada work as nannies', for example, Grace took great pains to explain that not every Filipina in Canada works as a nanny and that those who do are often professionals "who don't have a choice. I told her that 20 years ago, when Filipinas applied here as a teacher, they could work as a teacher . . . and I told her that although we start as a nanny, we are not a nanny forever, though some choose to do that". Vallie, too, spoke at length about her life back in the Philippines because:

I wanted (my employer) to know that I had a background in my country. Also, because she will know not to put me down. I wanted her to have an idea where to put me, so they know I am not dependent on them because the more dependent one is, the more badly they can

treat you.

This assumption that Filipinos cannot fend for themselves is further reflected in employers' loaded questions about the women's families and aspirations. When Lisa's employer asked her if her sister would be following her to Canada, therefore, Lisa quietly informed her that her family in the Philippines is very well-educated.

And she added:

I said my brother and sister didn't want to come here. I said that . . . we're not all the same -- just because I'm here doesn't mean they will come . . . I said my sister has a life in the Philippines and she is proud of the Philippines and likes the Philippines.

Lisa also speaks out about her dream to have a travel agency and tells her employer about the tourism home study course she has recently completed. Similarly, Samantha makes a point of being overt about her studies, informing her employers in detail about the courses she takes, and about her efforts to write the TOEFL exam to qualify for university. It is part of a broader effort to ensure, Samantha says, "that they know that I don't want to be a domestic helper forever." Clearly, then, the manipulation of language and the communicative form -- through veiled responses and the withholding and extension of details and knowledge -- serves as one means through which migrant domestics deflect attempts to denigrate. On the flip side, such tactics work also to protect and affirm the women's sense of worth.

While the previous section has tended to focus on the communicative process through which status humiliations are both inflicted and resisted, status subordination can be experienced, and no doubt resisted, in myriad additional everyday ways.

Among the most humiliating and, sadly, most common experiences related by almost

all the women in this study is that of living in an atmosphere of deep suspicion and distrust. Either through direct communication, or through insinuating queries, the women have been falsely accused variously of theft, abuse and neglect. Thus, the women state, being woken in the night to search for an employer's make-up or cassettes is not only an annoying and inconsiderate disturbance, but also one loaded with insult and accusation. Hence, when Lisa's employer asked her repeatedly if she had seen her shoes, Lisa answered: "My feet are too small for your shoes." When Ceta is regularly asked, 'Did you see this?', she says she feels "that it's my fault that things got lost or misplaced. I feel like she's accusing me and in time, whenever she finds it, I feel relieved."

Dominica, Mary and several other women spoke also of regularly feeling as if they were being tested or baited. Employers' tendency to leave large and small sums of money lying about, for example, serves as a deliberate ploy designed to test their honesty, the women say. "They tried to test my trust -- every nanny goes through that. Most employers have that kind of test," Janet says. Employers' unexpected reappearance shortly after they've left the house, or in the middle of the day when they are meant to be at work, further heightens this sense that the women are not trustworthy.

That this experience appears to be so widely shared is, according to Rollins, hardly coincidental. She argues that actively seeking out and providing evidence of a domestic worker's criminality, not only confirms the worker's subordinate status in the mind of her employer, but also justifies the treatment of her as a third class

citizen (1985:166).

This distrust of the domestic workers extends beyond the material realm. The women are well aware that behind questions of concern about the children's welfare, are insinuations of maltreatment or physical abuse. Thus, Ceta responds with both anger and silence when her employer yells from upstairs, "What's going on down there?", when she hears the children crying as Ceta tries to feed them. Zia relates an experience which is similarly exemplary. She says:

One time (my employer) knocked on my door and asked if I put Zincofax in the girl's vagina. I said we were out so I put oil and powder. He said, 'she's got a sore bum and sore vagina.' So I said, 'Yeah, I cleaned her.' But it made me upset because of the way he knocked. He said she doesn't want to have her bath because its so painful; that night I didn't have dinner; the next day I was evading them. I made it very obvious that I was mad -- if they were downstairs, I was upstairs. He was implying that I didn't look after the baby. And the way he knocked at the door, it was so hard.

This assault on the migrant women's dignity and status is further elaborated through the rigid regulations governing virtually every aspect of their lives. The majority of women are either explicitly forbidden or quietly discouraged from using the phone, for example, and from entertaining friends. Others are given curfews and prevented from spending the night in the home of friends. Still others are informed, either directly or through subtle hints, of when their company at the dinner table is expected or acceptable, and when it is clearly more appropriate to stay away. Alternatively, some women are told they have to regularly seek approval not only for the various work-related chores they perform -- tasks like taking the children to the park, or answering a knock at the door -- but also for the activities which they chose

to engage in while off-duty. "Like children", "like animals", "like idiots", "like inferiors" -- these are the words the women use to describe their treatment by employers. These rules and behaviours serve as the less than subtle means through which employers effectively control and subordinate their domestics.

The assorted subversive strategies domestics routinely employ reflect their tireless resistance to these efforts. These are aimed both at demonstrating their own intellectual and moral integrity, and at minimizing or escaping their employers' attempts at control. Once again, domestic workers adamantly reject employers' self-representation as superior. Their unwillingness to afford their employers the respect they so desire is reflected in the defiant acts Grace so openly discusses:

If you could poison the food, you would -- they humiliate you. Everyday I had to make a cup of coffee for my employer and before I poured the coffee, I would spit in the coffee. And one day, when I knew I wouldn't be eating at home, I urinated in a plastic cup and poured it in the marinating beef. I was so mad . . . The humiliation they give us is unacceptable. They treat us like slaves.

On that occasion, Grace says, her employer had publicly humiliated her, essentially accusing her of stealing in front of her employer's guest.

Such tactics, Grace admits, are extreme even for her -- a reflection not only of the fact that her employer had truly gone too far, but also of the particularly high level of animosity which characterized the relationship between them at the time. Still, Grace says she is not alone in invoking such defiant behaviour. She speaks of nannies humiliated by being forced to wash employers' underwear and dentures, who then spice up their employers' lives by adding chili to the detergent. (The result, apparently, is an angry, burning rash.) She also tells the story of a friend who was so

humiliated by her treatment that she stirred a used feminine sanitary napkin into her employers' hot and sour soup.

Few of the women I spoke with admitted to employing such tactics. Most described their everyday relations with employers as less acrimonious and intense -- most found less extreme ways of mediating these indignities. As is clear from Zia's story cited above, muted comments and angry facial expressions are here, as well, frequently- and effectively-wielded tools of defiance. Zia's determination to avoid her employer following that particular incident brought about an earnest apology from her employer and assurance that it would not happen again. Tactical silence is popular with Ceta as well. When asked about the whereabouts of a particular lost article, Ceta's face turns stony cold and she quickly leaves the room. She also pointedly refuses to help her employer in her search.

Others attempt to prove their honesty in more direct ways. Dominica, for example, engages in a frantic search the minute her employer leaves the home, phoning her immediately after finding the misplaced article. Many women say they take great care to leave any money they come across exactly as they find it. Ceta explains:

When I see that money on the floor, I'll just leave it there. Why should I touch that money? My finger prints will be on that money. I always think maybe she's just setting me up with that money. So I go out of my way not to touch (it).

Similarly, if Janet's employer leaves Janet money to buy groceries or other goods, Janet, like several others, is careful to document and receipt each and every purchase. It is one way in which the women actively protect and defend their integrity.

Resistance is also enacted to gain control and assert independence. For the majority of women, this struggle for control is regularly played out in the arena of food consumption and preparation. While no employer has placed restrictions on the amount of food to be consumed, many have explicitly or implicitly dictated what can and cannot be eaten. Grace learned that her employers did not approve of her preparing Filipino food, for instance, after one occasion on which she cooked a typical Filipino meal. Her employers came home and, without a word, promptly opened all the windows to air out the house.

Many restrictions are often a function of the religious dictates of Jewish employers. More than half of the women have been forbidden to prepare or eat pork and non-kosher foods. They are also advised about dairy and non-dairy regulations. That the women, for the most part, respect these religious rituals, must be acknowledged. That they strongly resent their imposition on them, however, is reflected in comments like this one from Vallie: "I felt bad that I can't eat my pork because that's my food and it's as if they are belittling my food." Other women complain of being forced to eat what the children eat -- most often bread, juice and Kraft dinner, in Linda's case, and seldom any meat. Grace's diet equally inadequately revolves around bagels and cheese. Grace says she lost 25 pounds in her first year of work.

While some of the women respond by eating out and at friends' houses, or by waiting to go to their weekend apartment to satisfy their desires, most blatantly defy the dictates of their employers. Thus, Ceta cooks noodles and pork in secret, and

deliberately eats off the 'kosher' dishes of her employer. Vallie cooks forbidden foods at her apartment on the weekends, and then, storing them surreptitiously in her employers' fridge, proceeds to eat them throughout the week in the privacy of her room. Samantha cheekily asked for ham on her submarine sandwich when her Jewish employer offered to order take-out for dinner.

Grace, alternatively, makes no effort to hide the fact that she refuses to eat the food her employers desire. On one occasion when her employer went away for two weeks on holiday, leaving in the fridge for Grace four eggs and some fruit, Grace pointedly refused to touch any of the food. Instead, she deliberately and delightfully prepared the fried foods and Filipina dishes which her employer clearly frowns upon and forbids her to cook. Nor does Grace make an effort to conceal this kind of indiscretion. To the contrary, she is careful to leave a small portion of whatever she cooks in the fridge for her employer to see -- this, a blatant and overt act of defiance and protest. Grace explains her resistance in terms of a struggle for control and of a rejection of the dependent status to which her employers attempt to reduce her. She says:

I cook what I want. I felt that although this is your house, you cannot just control me. You can do that to other nannies but not to me. I'm going to fight for my rights . . . She told me not to deep fry anything and the excuse was that she was afraid of fire. I said in my head, 'Fuck you, Fire! I can put this house on fire if I want to!

. . . I don't like that they control my way of life. When I don't touch their food, I'm trying to tell them that although you don't buy me food, I'm not going to beg.

Grace is not alone in her adamant refusal to ask for more and for different foods.

For Vallie and Samantha, for example, asking their employers to buy rice and meat -- staples of their diet back home in the Philippines -- is tantamount to begging. "Why should I ask them to feed me," Samantha says. "They should have the courtesy to ask." In the absence of what domestics feel should be this basic 'common courtesy', then, the women refuse to 'lower themselves' by demanding more appropriate food. Instead, they cut into their already minimal salaries, buying for themselves the noodles and meats they need. For Vallie, buying her own food at her own expense is one way, she says, of shaming her employers into realizing not only that "there's no stock in the house", but also that they are avoiding their responsibilities. It is also a tactic which the women say they hope will implore their employers to do better in the future. As Samantha says, "if I buy my own rice, then maybe they'll stop feeding me . . . bologna, turkey slices and bread."

Buying their own food, or alternatively, eating and preparing forbidden dishes, thus serve as pragmatically defiant strategies for asserting control and independence. Securing a private phone line, albeit one they pay for themselves, is no less significant in this struggle against domination. Eight of the 11 women said they paid to have a separate phone line installed. All of these women also purchased an answering machine or service. At the same time, many of the women simply ignore their employers' phone rules, whiling away hours on the house phone when their employers are at work. Through these efforts the women reclaim their right of access to the telephone. That through them they also successfully navigate around, and ultimately defy, an excessively oppressive restriction, must also be recognized.

Deliberately challenging, either overtly or covertly, the often idiosyncratic, arbitrary, and tyrannical regulations employers impose, is common practice among all the Filipina women I interviewed. Zia describes this process as somewhat of a game. She says:

Whenever my employer told me to do something, I did something else; if she said hand wash this, I put it in the washing machine; if she said dust this, I vacuumed. . . (In Hong Kong), we were forbidden to use the phone, to sit on the sofa to talk while we were cooking because saliva might get into the food. (So), when she told me not to sit on the sofa, the moment she left, I lied down on the sofa. When she told us not to talk while we're cooking, I would put dust on her food rather than MSG. When she told us not to use the phone, I would use the phone when she is not there.

Thus, Zia says, "the monkey is clever, but somebody has to be more clever than the monkey". Outsmarting the employer, then, is one way in which domestics assert their intelligence and their sense of independence.

It is crucial to note that this form of defiance is poised not simply to accrue the benefits of whatever that act may produce -- whether it be gaining access to the phone, eating fried noodles and pork, or entertaining friends in the privacy of one's room. Nor is it employed only to escape the physical and psychological boundaries of employer control. Such resistance serves also, and equally significantly, as an effort on the part of the migrant domestic worker both to affirm the power of her own agency, and to prove her worth to her employer. Grace's experience is insightful. On one occasion while her employers were away on holiday, she says, she became frightened after repeatedly going to the door after the bell had rung, only to discover that there was no one there. That evening, too frightened to sleep alone in the house,

Grace asked a friend to spend the night. Grace was quite aware that she had violated a house rule (before leaving, her employers wrote out a detailed list of 'dos and don'ts' and proceeded to read it aloud to Grace "as if I didn't know how to read"). Still, Grace made no effort to conceal what she had done. Instead, she informed them out right when they returned home. Grace explains:

I could have asked Maria to sleep over without telling them, but I wanted them to know that I could break their rules -- that even though you gave me this list, I can break the rules.

In defying her employers' dictates, Grace not only succeeded in allaying her fears and in getting a full night's rest, but also in showing her employers that she is capable of acting responsibly independent of their comprehensive set of rules and restrictions.

Significantly, 'acting responsibly', cleverly, or simply demonstrating one's skills is one of the most commonly applied strategies of these women's everyday resistance. The women said that by doing their job well, by paying attention to detail, by bringing their own thoughtful (and experienced) input to the child care and house work they perform, they best demonstrate their worth and so win respect and favourable treatment. Linda puts it this way:

I wanted to show my employer that I am good and capable. I didn't want to do negative things. My purpose is to win them so that they will like me . . . before, my employer didn't respect me. But later on, everything changes because they see how I work with the kids.

For the women, such tactics serve as a means of reclaiming their identities -- that is, for challenging their employers' representation of them as untrustworthy, stupid, and lazy. This reality is reflected clearly in the comments of all the women. Samantha, for instance, does "the things that are right" and tries "to come up with good ideas"

to demonstrate unequivocally that "I am not inferior." Once again, these efforts are largely varied. While some cite as examples changes they have rendered within the household -- a better garbage can, a faster cleaning method, a more efficient technology -- others speak about their efforts to work innovatively with the children. For Ceta, for example, respect has been earned through her adeptness with solving mechanical problems, and through her ability to serve as the household "handyperson". Significantly, proof of this adroitness, in the face of her employers' limited skills finally succeeded in putting an end to the insulting, and patronizing exercise of being lectured to on the use of the simplest of household gadgets.

For Vallie, on the other hand, respectful treatment from her employers came, to some extent, in recognition of her obvious devotion to, and interest in, the children and their development. Vallie says she worked hard to find good stories, and to place the children in creative play groups. Moreover, her success in curbing the children's unruly behaviour when in the company of guests, and in reprimanding them without yelling or without bribing them with treats, earned from her employer more than a few grateful smiles.

Interestingly, children prove useful allies in the women's struggles to resist. At least five of the women stated that they speak openly with the children about their treatment as nannies, complaining about overwork, underpay, and about the lack of kindness they receive. In not a few cases, the women stated they are certain these stories are reported back to the parents. Mary's wards scold their parents when they hear them yelling at Mary, imploring them to stop and to "let Mary rest". While

these admonishments seldom result in any long term gains, they inevitably succeed in securing at least a few hours respite. At the same time, the children's open professions of love, and displays of affection -- particularly when demonstrated in the presence of their parents -- serve as affirmations of good character and attestments to their good work.

Lisa takes a somewhat different approach to demonstrating her abilities and to asserting her independence. Rather than focus on her work to prove and defend her status, she draws attention instead to the intense richness of her leisure life. Thus, she says:

I went to school, I went to church. Sometimes I went travelling. I take beautiful pictures with my video camera. I go out with friends . . . I show to them that I am not stupid. And I show to them I can make myself to stand on my own. I find my own way of life. I want to do what is best for me.

In a variety of ways, then -- through advice to employers on their dress, hair, or furniture, through efforts to converse with an employer's guests and relatives, or through instruction and guidance to children doing homework -- the women take pains to demonstrate their broad skills and intelligence. As Mary says, "Sometimes you have to show you are smart. Then they will treat you with respect." And that respect, the women's stories clearly reveal, serves to undermine the ideology of inequality employers embrace, and as such, directly challenges employers' efforts at status domination.

The strategies outlined above are obviously diverse. From lying, shirking and playing on stereotypes, to silence and hard work, they involve minor deceit and grand

deception, rely on creativity along with courage. They are alternatively mundane and decidedly undramatic, or humorous and colourful, both brazen and subtle.

Enumerating these varied, isolated behaviours in which the 11 women I interviewed regularly engage has been a lengthy and painstaking task. What to include? What to eliminate? What organization might I impose? In the end, it must be recognized that the various strategies outlined above represent but a minute sampling of the vast universe of behaviours which comprise their everyday resistance. The challenge is to make sense of that which we now know. Indeed, what significance do we attach to one woman's efforts to work hard? What meaning can we apply to another's spilling of detergent? Moreover, what do we make of the myriad ambiguities so evidently inherent in each of these strategies? While such tactics are clearly designed to achieve immediate gains, to what extent are they also aimed at effecting broader social change? In the end, what territory has been ceded as a result of these skirmishes? This set of concerns will be addressed in the fifth and final chapter.

Chapter Five

Shifting the Limits of the Permissible: Material Gain and Ideological Challenge

Suddenly, three paces from my enemy, I unexpectedly made up my mind -- I closed my eyes, and we ran full tilt, shoulder to shoulder, into each other! I did not budge an inch, and passed him on a perfectly equal footing! . . . of course, I got the worst of it -- he was stronger -- but that was not the point. The point was that I had attained my goal, I had kept up my dignity. I had not yielded a step, and put myself publicly on an equal social footing with him.

*Dostoevsky
Notes from the Underground*

. . . it was just that I hated confrontation. It didn't stop me doing things the way I wanted to. Quite early on I had discovered the overlooked space open to those of us with a silent life. I didn't argue with the policeman who said I couldn't cycle over a certain bridge or through a specific gate in the fort -- I just stood there, still, until I was invisible, and then I went through. Like a cricket. Like a hidden cup of water. You understand? That is what my (jailed) brother's public battles taught me."

*Michael Ondaatje
The English Patient (1992:200).*

Through the stories related by the 11 Filipino women, it is clear that they too have discovered the "overlooked space" in which to quietly advance their claims. That space, as Scott suggests, is the vast domain which lies between open confrontation and true acquiescence. By stepping onto that terrain, as we did in the previous chapter, we were able to explore the specificities of the lives of 11 migrant women. We saw how these unique social sites with their varying conditions elicited, in turn, particular tactics of resistance. Despite the highly individualized, isolated,

and diverse nature of these behaviours, they are redolent of a widely-shared spirit of opposition. This chapter takes a step back from that close level of examination in an effort to explore where the continuities surely lie.

It may be unwise, however, to begin to search out the commonalities of such behaviours without first attempting to account for the differences among them. We start very briefly, then, with a quick survey of the many odd variables which work to ensure that an equally assorted panoply of responses is elicited. How, amidst this apparent miscellany, there exists a shared discourse of resistance, will be demonstrated next as we peer behind the actions to the collection of commonly-held values that the oppressed, through such behaviours, are attempting to assert. We move then to explore the nature of the ideological challenge these value-imbued discursive practices present to the dominant discourse. To the extent that such resistance is heavily veiled and often ambiguous, it is capable of undermining the very change it seeks to effect. The dilemmas presented through ambiguous accommodating behaviour serve as the topic for the section which follows. Despite the dilemmas and ambiguities, however, a potential for change is clearly created. The final section of this chapter will demonstrate both the immediate material and symbolic gains which the women's strategies achieve, and the possibility for broader social change they inevitably raise. First, however, a few brief words about the rich diversity contained within the women's tactics of resistance.

There is indeed great variety among the tactics domestic workers employ to challenge and defy the domination they experience. The strategies chosen differ

widely in both their character and goals. While some are wielded to minimize the appropriation of time and labour, others are used to challenge status insults and indignities. To a degree, the nature of the exploitation dictates the nature of the response; it is common sense that everyday resistance will define as its practical goal that which will mediate a particular form of domination being practised. Yet the tactics also vary in the boldness of their challenge. Lying (unless detected) does not directly confront an employer in the way an angry look or stony silence so obviously does -- yet both may be staged to escape endless demands for overtime. The latter clearly carries a stronger signal to the employer that the oppressed are refusing to participate in a public ritual of subordination (Scott, 1990:196). Tactics may also be differentiated by the terrain on which they are located -- some strategies, as we have seen, must by their nature remain secretive. Others are only effective when played out in the public domain. What leads a domestic worker to choose one act of protest over another? What factors account for her boldness and directness in one instance, and for the veil of obscurity and anonymity behind which she hides in another? Indeed, what leads a domestic to respond, in either the public or hidden domain, to a particular indignity which another domestic might ignore?

Dictating the extent to which, and manner in which, domestic workers express their outrage are a host of variables which surfaced over the course of 11 interviews. These include previous experience as a domestic worker, and awareness of one's rights, coupled with knowledge of what others experience and of how they struggle for change. Linda's more positive experience as a domestic worker in Europe, for

example, allowed her to develop expectations around work hours and living conditions here. Her resistance was thus fed, at least in part, by her desire to shape her existing environment according to what she had experienced before. Zia's working and living conditions in Hong Kong, however, were far less favourable than those she is faced with in Canada. As a result, her anger at her employers tends to surface more rarely; while she rages about insinuations about neglect or dishonesty, she says little about the inequitable patterns of communication in her relationship, arguing that her 'employers are good people' and 'deserve' her respect, and that 'in any case they are not as bad as my employer in Hong Kong'. Almost all of the domestic workers stated that many of their actions, and the courage with which they employ them, grow out of long and earnest exchanges with fellow Filipina domestics and organizers within the various lobby groups to which they belong.

At the same time, the women's individual character or personality traits appear to account for differences in the way in which they demonstrate their resistance. Grace's outspoken and gregarious temperament, along with her recklessly, confident nature -- all reflected not only in the strength and quickness of her voice and gesture, but also in the absence of any equivocation in her analysis -- have meant that she risks more direct challenges to her employer's domination. Hence, she rarely disguises the fact that she has prepared forbidden foods; nor does she hesitate to lie more blatantly than others may dare.

Choice of strategy revolves equally around the vagaries of personal forms of control. The degree to which a domestic worker is subjected to humiliation factors

directly into her choice of whether, or in which way, to respond to that behaviour. For Giace, for example, being introduced as her employer's nanny to her employer's friend or relation was far less humiliating than being publicly (though indirectly) accused of theft and dishonesty. Thus, where the former humiliation led to behind the scenes name-calling, the latter elicited a deeper sense or desire for revenge -- it was that particular indignity which led to the urinating incident described previously.

The failure of a particular tactic similarly dictates a domestic's behaviour -- if a 'work to rule' campaign proves to be ineffective, as Amanda discovered, resorting to creative lies and excuses becomes a more pragmatic alternative. At the same time, the fear of expected retaliation or conversely, the knowledge of how far one can push -- each determined within the unique context of the individual domestic-employer relationship -- offers additional explanation for the diversity among tactics domestics choose. Domestics are clearly aware of the arbitrary nature of their exploitation and their strategies are sensitive to the idiosyncratic behaviours of employers. As risks are calculated, the veil of obscurity is held loosely or pulled tighter. Occasionally the veil is lifted altogether.

While this study has focused on everyday forms of resistance -- the kind of protest in which the oppressed are most likely to engage -- it would be misleading to suggest that overt confrontation does not occur. Employers occasionally do incur the full force of a domestic's wrath. Only Mary (whose job situation appeared to be the most oppressive and exploitative) said she had never openly challenged her employers control. Several women have either threatened to, or actually quit their

jobs. Most, like Janet, say they often attempt to raise and negotiate issues less acrimoniously. Again, the failure of other tactics, rising levels of anger, the intensification of domination and indignities experienced, can all serve to explain this occasional breach of limits. It is hardly surprising to learn, for example, that for Zia, Linda, Helen and Janet, the most openly acrimonious confrontations occurred when employers attempted to cheat them by neglecting to record deductions on the women's T-4 slips (with no deductions indicated, not only does the worker's gross or taxable income appear higher, but also the domestic is denied the opportunity to partially reclaim the money deducted). In their threats to call lawyers and Revenue Canada, and to reveal cheating employers to immigration officials²², Scott's notion that open conflict is more likely to arise when subsistence is most directly threatened, is borne out.

The perception that risks (of job loss, of deportation, or of worsening one's condition) are somewhat diminished can also lead a domestic worker into more overt confrontation. Similarly, domestics are quick to perceive and seize upon employers' moments of vulnerability, swiftly taking advantages of any cracks appearing within the dominant's practice of domination. The point is not to state that open protest does occur. Nor is it to restate that such resistance is significantly rare. The point is simply to illustrate that varying circumstances can, and do, elicit correspondingly differing responses.

Space and time preclude a more thorough enumeration of the panoply of

²². Lists of consistently abusive employers are left with staff running the Live-in Caregiver Programme, making it difficult, if not impossible to find an alternative migrant domestic in the future.

variables which set up the domestic workers' choices. The above does serve to illustrate, however, how particular social sites and the power relations implicit within them, engender equally specific responses revolving around a particular set of claims. The women's narratives demonstrate that like their overt, collective, counterparts, strategies of everyday resistance emerge through careful calculation and individual interpretation. It thus becomes impossible to predict the behaviour of any one woman -- to anticipate whether or not she will quit when insulted or cheated, or if (and how) she will subversively seek revenge. If the previous section has tended to emphasize the apparent differences among these strategies, it is time, perhaps, to explore the basis of their commonalities. One step back from this highly individualized level of analysis allows us to blur the specificities, bringing into sharper focus the continuities underlying them.

This continuity can be observed first in the process of change itself. One senses from the above the shifting context of the environment of domination and the synergistic interplay of relations of power and resistance. It is precisely out of this dynamism that opportunities for change arise. It is a point which merits further discussion. From the above it is clear that relations of domination do not persist of their own momentum (Scott, 1990:45). Because relations of domination inevitably elicit resistance, they must continually be sustained through adjustment and reinforcement. No one can know how many beatings or insults are necessary to maintain one's position of dominance over another (Ibid). What we do know, as we have seen, is that there is no secure and steady territory upon which the dominant

make their stand. Rather, as Scott notes, "any ground left undefended is likely to be lost" (1990:195).

In chapter four we saw how, just as employers endlessly seek to extend the boundaries of exploitation, domestic workers quietly work to shift the limits of the permissible. A stolen evening here, a captured hour there, an unkempt bedroom or bathroom which escapes the censure of an employer -- these are the signs of the weak's territorial advancement. And advances which succeed will inevitably lead to others, with domestics forever testing how far and how quickly to press their advantage. Encroachment will continue until it is somehow checked (Scott, 1990:193). At that point, the dominant's terrain may be ceded or swiftly reclaimed.

In concrete terms, such strategies of resistance involve a process of compromise in which the women force employers to adjust their behaviours and expectations. In Genovese's world of the Antebellum South, for example, slaves' relentless pilfering and plundering of hog pens and food crops came to be not only expected but also marginally tolerated by owners (1974:599). Indeed, it was a loss they came to factor into their calculations or forecasts of expected earnings. Acts of routine defiance, Scott argues, narrow the options available to the dominant, forcing them to realign what they hope to impose with what in the end they are able to enforce (Scott, 1985:257). This reality is borne out in the lives of the migrant domestic workers. In the previous chapter we saw how refusals to do work, angry gestures and stony silences, and the host of other strategies domestic workers employ, forced employers to relent, if only momentarily, on what they demanded of their

nannies and on when they wanted it done. Incomplete work was regularly overlooked; domestics were permitted to determine their own schedules. Occasionally employers completed tasks themselves, or alternatively, hired an outsider to perform them. Everyday resistance thus serves as a tool by which patterns are established and new behaviours and expectations, however nuanced, created. This is the process through which practices of domination are countered and through which, consequently, concrete gains are made.

Ideological challenge is implicit within this process and serves as a second source of continuity among the diverse strategies of resistance. Scott argues that ideological negation is embedded in each act of resistance (1990:187). This dissent is revealed when one looks beyond the particularities of routine defiance and sees the commonly-shared values such resistance both reflects and asserts. These shared values are apparent, we saw in chapter one, in the varied acts of defiance enacted by Malay peasants who are struggling to halt the advance of processes of capitalist accumulation. Everyday acts of resistance, in the case of the domestics, represent a silent yet urgent appeal not only to concrete material and symbolic gains, but also to the ultimately greater values of equality, dignity, honesty and fairness. Together these values pose an ideological challenge to the worldview which employers express and impose. If this hegemonic stance is rooted in capitalist ideology with all its tangled perceptions of race, class, and gender hierarchies, it is this set of beliefs that the domestic's value-driven resistance challenges.

Thus, to the logic of capitalism through which the appropriation of the

domestic worker's labour is justified, the women respond with behaviour calling for fairness and understanding. Confronted with the status inequalities so inherent in this logic, the migrants respond through actions appealing to relationships of greater equality and dignity. In resisting the dominant's varied discursive practices at either the material or status levels, the migrant women simultaneously negate the beliefs (of race, class and gender hierarchy) underpinning them. The conflict of values was made strikingly obvious through the interviews as the women attempted to rationalize and explain their acts of defiance. (To the extent that the interviews offer another forum for domestic workers to address their exploitation and to assert their varied claims, they too must be viewed as part of the hidden transcript -- as yet another strategy aimed at bringing about change. The words of the women are thus as integral to the tapestry of resistance woven in the previous chapter as are the varied actions themselves.) Vallie's simple yet eloquent statement reveals much about the belief system subscribed to by the domestics:

They are bad to me . . . They should not treat us like that. If they are hungry, I am hungry too. If they are sleepy, I am sleepy too. We all have the same sickness. I know I am a servant but we are all human.

Such sentiments are echoed by Zia as well when she speaks of her anger at one employer's refusal to give her time off to eat her dinner:²³

She never cared whether or not we had eaten. She was fussy . . . But (then) she refused to feed me. She said, 'Water the garden.' I said, 'I think our stomachs should be fed first.' But she said, 'You're not going to die of starvation.' And I said, 'No, but even machines need oil so they can function the next day. And we are not machines.'

²³. This anecdote pertains to an employer in Hong Kong who ultimately fired Zia after an argument arose.

This appeal goes beyond seeking recognition of the migrant's basic humanity to challenging the particular racist and classist biases which the dominant's worldview articulates.

The women spoke scornfully about their employer's self-ascribed racial superiority. Several inveighed against the television news programmes their employers watch which they say convinces them that Filipinos are poverty-stricken inferiors. Others, like Grace, spoke about similar cultural realities stating that, "sometimes in every colour, there are good and bad things, good and bad people,". Still others laugh bitterly about their employers' belief that the women have no aspirations beyond domestic work. Most comment on employers' assumptions about their intelligence levels and skills. At an absolute minimum, such expressions reflect the migrant women's belief that relations which obtain between employers and domestics could and should be different, and more specifically, more equitable.

At the same time, the women speak with sadness about their inability to establish a true 'familial' bond with their families. They speak of the isolation they feel when they are ill or homesick bemoaning their employers' failure to nurture or comfort them through their sickness or sadness. They speak also with bewilderment about the invisibility which seems to surround them -- about their employers' tendency to ignore them when they enter or leave a room, and about their failure to extend a hand when they are burdened down with groceries.

In their laughter and their sarcasm, their biting insightful remarks, the women's rejection of the values which employers seek to legitimate is evident. This

conflict of values represents an ideological challenge. And this ideological negation becomes apparent in the full range of strategies the migrant women employ. It is the driving force behind their communicative tactics, for example, including the withholding of information, or alternately the brandishing of details. It is the truth which lies buried behind the angered expressions and silences. It is not the abstract notion of the dominant discourse these women resist but rather the race, class and gender beliefs to which the ideology subscribes. It is their particular set of beliefs -- that as human beings they are deserving of fair wages and just work loads, and that equality, caring, reciprocity, and respect should characterize their relations with each other and with employers -- that feeds the everyday behaviour of the 11 migrant women. Only through reference to these beliefs, then, can the women's actions be understood.

From where, however, do these values emerge? In what, specifically, is the ideological challenge rooted? At no point in the interviews did any of the women speak in the lofty academic rhetoric of marxist or socialist theory. Nor did they articulate the dogma of a particular feminist agenda for change. Though their words and prescriptions may recall these abstract principles, the women's belief systems are clearly more concretely rooted. They arise out of the immediate experience of the quotidian. Values do not emerge from some abstract mental construct, or from a "normative order that is somehow outside and above" the world the oppressed know, Scott argues (1990:305). Rather, they are "anchored in commonplace material practices", in the "normative environment of conflict" and differing human

interpretations (Ibid). The values of the 11 women are tied, in other words, to their material interests as a class of poor women of colour who, as foreign migrant domestics, hold no citizenship rights in this country.

Because this is the site of relative discursive freedom where power relations present in the public discourse have less of a hold, it is here that the oppressed's "non-hegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident and subversive discourse" is formed (Scott, 1990:24). It is out of these daily relations, as mediated by their experiences in the Philippines, that the dominated's knowledge is shaped. And this knowledge or truth serves as the animating force behind the oppressed's efforts to challenge and reconstruct relations of domination. Here, then, are the subjugated knowledges Foucault implores us to recover, the point from which, he argues, resistance emanates.

The notion that everyday resistance need not be rooted in revolutionary consciousness was argued in greater depth in chapter one. There I suggested that ideological challenge can often arise from within the dominant discourse itself. The failure of the dominant to live up to its obligations -- to provide a particular level of symbolic or material support -- often provides the subordinated with the grounds for what may ultimately prove to be a radical, revolutionary and devastating critique (Scott, 1985:338). This reality does not preclude the possibility that the oppressed may clearly envision an alternative social order (Ibid). Nor does it suggest that resistance from within represents any less of an ideological challenge to the dominant. The point being made is simply that resistance is born not of the abstract mental

constructs social scientists espouse, but rather, out of the local sites at which knowledge is shaped and put forward -- that is, out of the daily lived experiences of the poor and oppressed.

If the ideological challenge presented through the 'reverse' discourses of the dominated cannot be said to be rooted in grand principle or theory, it is equally unlikely that their articulation could ever take on such a coherent, schematic form. Such ideological coherence is neither realistic nor necessary for everyday resistance to perform its work. In his analysis of the actions of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* - the bumbling pedestrian who, as we saw at the outset of this chapter, comically confronts Russia's ruling caste quite literally head-on -- Marshall Berman (1988) makes precisely this argument. He writes:

The point is that the lower classes are learning to think and to walk in a new way, to assert a new presence and power in the street. It doesn't matter if the nobility and gentry don't notice yet; they are going to be forced to notice soon. It doesn't matter either, if the poor clerk feels guilty and hates himself in the morning, as the *Underground Man* says he does . . . He has taken decisive action to change his life and no self-negation or failure to follow through can change it back again. He has become a New Man, whether he likes it or not (1988:228).

The resistance of the oppressed is not, in short, dependent upon either their elaboration of, or subscription to, a full-blown counter-hegemonic political vision. Indeed, chapter four clearly demonstrated that for 11 migrant women, resistance begins on the ground with highly personalized enemies, and pragmatic, tangible goals (Scott, 1990:348). The values they assert are equally locally-rooted. Though these values being defended are as modest as the goals (Ibid), it is through them, as we saw earlier, that ideological criticism is performed. The actions of the women, and their

comments expressed during interviews. unequivocally reflect their belief that they, like their employers, share a common humanity. Their everyday resistances push forward their claims for more equitable and respectful treatment on that basis. It is through this set of values that the women 'weigh and judge' their current condition. It is as a result of this process that the possibility of a new order emerges. Acts of everyday resistance with their roots in local knowledges, then, regardless of their diversity in both character and aim, represent a shared oppositional ideological edifice of sorts which in turn serves as a symbolic barrier to the discourse of the dominant (Scott, 1985:234).

If we accept that everyday resistance need not be rooted in, nor elaborate, grand principles and political theory, apparent contradictions which surface through the migrant women's narratives become somewhat more easily reconcilable. These contradictions are varied. It is ironic, for example, that while the majority of the women deplore the racist assumptions of their employers, many of the women are themselves racist. Thus, not a few of the women explained their low wages and wearying work schedules, and the insulting, degrading treatment they continually receive, as a seemingly natural function of the fact that their employers are Jewish. Others generalized that behaviour to all white Canadians, and in one case to the Chinese.²⁴ Several women also indirectly blamed themselves (and the apparent traits of their race) for their treatment. They argued that if they were white nannies, and not 'so obedient and quiet Filipinas', they would be able to 'stand up for our

²⁴. This migrant woman was referring to her employer in Hong Kong.

rights'. And one woman, when asked about her treatment by Immigration, and about the administration of the Foreign Domestic Movement Programme itself, said with a shrug, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do. I consider myself a foreigner here. If I don't like it, then (I can) get out."

The women also occasionally appear to share the classist notions through which their employers justify their exploitative practices. One woman stated she had no difficulty referring to her employers as Ma'am and Sir, stating that "they need respect because they are superior to me". Similarly, no one ever questioned the practice of hiring domestic workers in general -- in an effort to prove her equal status to her employers, one migrant even stated she had her own nanny back home.

To the extent that such comments contradict the oppositional stance from which the women resist, they may seem troubling. Yet the degree to which resisters' worldviews must be fully elaborated, and the extent to which their goals must be coherently envisioned and expressed, is, as we have seen, clearly questionable. Cocks is instructive on this issue. She agrees that resistance emerges out of locally-rooted, experientially-based knowledges. She adds that the ability of individuals to think reflexively about their world allows them to "achieve a distance from inherited ideas in order to weigh" and to judge them and, "opens up multiple possibilities of... new ways of thinking about the world, new visions, new possibilities for action," (1989:68). It is unrealistic, however, to expect those alternative orders to be fully envisioned. She says:

The history of consciousness is not, after all, the story of a single struggle to move from a limited to a more and more expansive view,

but instead, the story of multiple moves from orders of 'positive' thought to anarchies of criticism to new orders (Cocks, 1989:70).

Within this context, then, the women's apparently contradictory comments become comprehensible. And, in the end, it is through these continual shifts that society is transformed. It is this process of transformation, if only barely perceptible, which we saw unfolding in chapter four.

If the women's lack of ideological coherence is somewhat reconcilable, the difficulties which arise out of the accommodating character of such resistance are less easily so. The process through which ideological criticism is performed is not as straight forward as suggested above. For, the inherently ambiguous and accommodating nature of everyday resistance threatens both to subvert the ideological challenge and to consequently compromise the immediate and long-term gains sought. The paradoxical nature of routine defiance raises a number of questions: To what extent does recourse to stereotypes and quiescence actually further exploitation? Are lying and shirking ultimately more damaging than constructive? How does one reconcile the difficulties they present?

The appeal to stereotypes, as has been shown, is a common strategy of everyday resistance. Claiming to have forgotten to carry out an assigned task, excusing themselves from work on the pretext of menstrual cramps, seeking exemption from 'technical' jobs by pretending they lack the skills to perform them, are but a few of the racist, sexist and classist stereotypes the migrant women commonly exploit. The positive gains made through such behaviour have been discussed and witnessed in earlier chapters. Yet the exploitation of such stereotypes

is not without negative consequences. Such strategies can serve to reinforce existing discriminatory biases and thus be used to further justify the ill treatment the women receive.

Genovese (1974) writes that the lying and thieving in which the slaves so regularly engaged clearly secured for them the immediate material and symbolic gains they sought. At the same time, however, they worked to convince the white elite that slaves stole and lied 'by nature' and thus heightened the white's own sense of self-esteem and moral superiority (1974:607). Moreover, such acts worked to deepen the slave owners' sense that not only did slaves need to be fundamentally 'civilized', but also that, like children and the mentally-challenged, they were incapable of surviving outside the slaveholder's 'care'. With their racist assumptions strengthened, slaveholders could justify their paternalism and indeed the entire system of slavery by claiming that without them, "blacks would never survive the cutthroat world of the capitalist marketplace", and that "they would drop to the bottom of the social scale as unwanted and improvident unskilled workers" (Genovese, 1974:85). In the absence of slavery, in other words, blacks would surely starve to death. Such actions, Genovese argues, simply fed masters' claims that "they were saving slaves from a deprived existence" (1974:91). And this rationale allowed them to deny the fact that they were the ones ultimately causing the suffering.

In a similar fashion, the migrant women's manipulation of various stereotypes risks reinforcing employers' bigoted assumptions -- beliefs upon which the domestics' exploitation is both articulated and justified. The women are unequivocal about the

nature of these beliefs. Employers, the women say, are convinced they are stupid, lazy and untrustworthy. They believe the migrants are incapable of aspiring to other work and broader challenges. They are hired, the women add, particularly because they are Filipino -- Filipinas after all, they say, are seen as submissive and obedient. Pleading ignorance, claiming forgetfulness, performing the rituals of deference employers command, combine to confirm that migrants lack the wit, skills and professional acumen to survive in a competitive capitalist world. As a result, in the eyes of the employer, the Filipino women's suitability to domestic work -- work that they believe requires low intelligence, few skills, and thus commands few material and symbolic rewards -- is directly confirmed. This recourse to stereotypes also tends to underscore employers' (self-serving) belief that the migrant women are dependent on them for their survival. Their paternalistic, pedantic, and exploitative behaviour can thus be further legitimated and perpetuated.

Equally troubling is the accommodating or acquiescent nature of some tactics. Striving to work hard, to be resourceful, to develop innovative techniques, we have seen, serve as conscious attempts to win respectful and dignified treatment. Yet such tactics simultaneously appear to reflect accommodation to the dominant and, in the end, to perpetuate their exploitation.

MacLeod writes of this paradox in *Accommodating Protest* (1991). The material, symbolic and ideological gains and challenges expressed through the Cairo women's voluntary donning of the veil have been described earlier. Yet, if donning the higab extends greater freedom to women to move more confidently into the paid

workforce. it does so in part because it adjusts to existing conceptions of appropriate female behaviour. First, it lessens potential opposition from family and neighbours by appealing to the prevailing notions of women's appropriate role in society. With the veil, the women can be viewed as honourable family members, venturing out into the paid labour force to fulfil their familial responsibilities. The veil also deflects men's sexual gaze and is worn, the women say, to ensure that their public appearances do not arouse men's sexual desire. The veil thus ensures that street-level teasing and harassment are kept to a minimum (MacLeod, 1991:139). Society's patriarchal beliefs about women's place in the community are, significantly, not challenged here. Nor is the belief that women who work outside the home are somehow loose and morally questionable truly countered. Rather than contributing to the liberal feminist goal of a gender-neutral workplace, MacLeod writes, the veil simply removes straightforward reminders of gender (1991:134). The veil serves as an expression of women's belief "that going into the male world of the work place requires a special effort"; the veil can equally reflect resistance and accommodation (MacLeod, 1991:140).

In a similar fashion, the domestics' efforts to work hard or to show deference reflect, on the face of it, their acquiescence to the inequitable relations through which they are exploited. Creating imaginative projects and games with which the children can absorb themselves does inevitably win the respect, if not gratitude, of most employers. So too does rendering silver and furniture with a shine it never before possessed, or deferring to the various spacial and linguistic rituals set down by

employers. It is critical to recognize, however, that there is little indication that this hard-earned respect arises out of employers' newly-formed belief that the domestic worker is more skilled or intelligent than they had previously imagined. Rather, the respect is won, at least in part, on the grounds that the women are good nannies, and equally effective housekeepers. The leap to viewing them as rocket scientists, government bureaucrats, doctors, or other non-traditional workers is not made here. Like the veiled women of Cairo, respect for their work comes specifically because it is consistent with existing conceptions of their roles as women and, in this case, as poor women of colour. As in the use of stereotypes as a strategy of resistance, then, such tactics risk confirming existing ideas about Filipino women -- in particular, the notion that Filipino migrant women are submissive and naturally suited for such work.

This type of everyday resistance also invites cooptation, further deepening the exploitative relations of their work. MacLeod is once again instructive on this point. Veiling, in her reading, perpetuates existing relations of domination because it recalls "not only the values of dignity, respect, (and) settled identity, but also the less desirable ones of seclusion, constraint and lack of identity" (1991:152). It is not surprising, then, that in Iran, though women voluntarily donned the veil to signal their resistance to Western imperialism, they have since been forced to do so under the strict dictates of Khomeini's regime. While veiling remains essentially voluntary in Cairo, social pressure from peers, family, and the community are such that fewer and fewer women feel free to exercise their option (Ibid).

Similarly, migrant women's employers have seized upon their good will and hard work. The women cite numerous occasions upon which their extraordinary efforts have been so appreciated that they have been incorporated into the daily regimen of their work day. The women are the first to acknowledge that performing to the highest standard raises expectations accordingly. Volunteerism begets compulsion, they unanimously concede. Employers' continual efforts to take advantage of the women's cheap labour has been illustrated in the previous chapter. The risk of cooptation inherent in such tactics of resistance are very real.

The fact that everyday resistance is very often disguised, or that, at the very least, it is cloaked in ambiguity, presents a further challenge to those struggling for change. Genovese makes this point by demonstrating that slaves so disguised their struggles for material and symbolic gains that slaveowners were "puzzled", "hurt" and "personally wounded" when their slaves took up arms against them (1974:616). In short, it is difficult to respond to demands for social change when the demands themselves are seldom explicitly presented. The appearance of unanimity whether afforded through accommodation, disguise or ambiguity, can confirm the legitimacy of the dominant discourse and thus perpetuate the exploitative practices. At the same time, such quiescence, though only apparent, can obscure the points of conflict or dissent and thus make it more difficult not only for the oppressed to recognize the commonality of their oppression, but also for those in solidarity to identify points for collective struggle (Scott, 1990:56). The continued material and status subordination the migrant women experience must be understood, at least in part, as a function of

this reality.

Coming to terms with the paradoxical nature of what MacLeod dubs 'accommodating protest' is not straight-forward. Genovese notes that accommodation and resistance are interwoven in a single process by which the oppressed accept what they are forced to and simultaneously fight for their moral and physical survival (1974:658). In coming to terms with the quixotic nature of everyday resistance we must first reaffirm what was stated at the outset -- that strategies of everyday resistance are enacted in the absence of realistic alternatives. The set of circumstances which make covert protest more rational and attractive than overt defiance have been outlined in earlier chapters. We must simultaneously recognize that avoiding conflict which might threaten the already tenuous security of their employment is a material force driving the women's hard work and displays of deference. Precisely because of the ambiguous and accommodating nature of their strategies, and because of their covert, indirect, or clearly disguised character, the migrant women's risk of job loss and accompanying hardships are reduced. As a result, the Filipinas can continue to work in the absence of conflict with employers and enjoy the fruits of a relationship which is more or less amiable. The offensive weapons of the weak, thus also serve as effective weapons of pacification -- leaving the women free to make their (albeit modest) claims in peace.

Given the realities which set up accommodating behaviour, given, that is, the power relations which lead the oppressed to acquiesce in the public transcript, it is critical to note that though such defiance may serve to reinforce the dominant

discourse, it is in no way a signifier of the oppressed's ideological incorporation. In short, while one may question the degree to which such resistance cuts into a form of domination, one cannot infer from such behaviour the extent to which ideological domination or hegemony prevails (Scott, 1990:92). Clearly the women do not buy into employers' notions that they are inferior. Nor are they unaware of the unjust and humiliating circumstances in which they are forced to work. Accommodation or quiescence can be secured despite a very real conflict in beliefs (MacLeod, 1991:125). It is a point argued more persuasively in chapter one and one which is evinced throughout the body of this thesis.

Ultimately, then, reconciling the paradoxes posed by everyday resistance is possible only when one peers behind the calmness of the staged public performances to the mass of activity transpiring behind the scenes. It is there, as we have seen, that the oppressed's oppositional spirit is most overtly expressed and that the point from which ideological criticism performs its work is revealed. Moreover, the potential for change created through such (albeit compromised) defiance, must not be overlooked. It is time now to turn our attention to the potential victories and tactical gains. For, as MacLeod astutely notes, just as the acquiescent aspects of this kind of defiance can be singled out for cooptation and so deepen exploitation, so too can the protesting elements be recognized and nurtured (1991:156) in an effort to build and strengthen individual and collective efforts for change. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to this task.

The political openings and potential gains engendered through the women's

everyday resistance can be described in terms of the immediate and personal, and the long term and societal. We will look at each of these in turn.

Through their lies, excuses, shirking, and silences, through numerous other tactics the migrants' stories have uncovered, the women have made somewhat calculable immediate gains. Feigned illness or sleep, an invented swimming class or social function allow the women to escape overtime if only for an evening. Neatly folding unwashed jeans or drying damp, unwashed towels perceptibly reduces the heavy work burdens the women are expected to carry. Stony silences, pained expressions, pouting and even crying have similarly resulted in concrete successes. Greater leisure time and more manageable work loads are among the tangible victories won in varying degrees by the 11 migrant women.

Women's reticence in revealing the details of their private lives, or conversely, the careful emphasis they place on the information they do proffer -- in particular, that which directly points up employers' bigoted assumptions -- afford domestic workers the self-esteem and dignity employers assault. Gossip with other domestics about employers' bizarre idiosyncrasies, along with defamatory comments and invectives deflating employers' pretensions to superiority, combine to further reinforce the women's sense of worth and to protect against deeper incursions into their self-esteem and status. Their efforts to demonstrate their intelligence, their consciousness and their skills are rewarded with employers' respect and lead in turn, the women say, to more dignified treatment. Through such tactics endlessly and tirelessly repeated, the varied insults domestic workers are regularly forced to endure

are, however minimally, diminished.

Scott states that the "aggregation of thousands upon thousands of such 'petty' acts of resistance" can have dramatic economic and political effects (1990:192). Genovese's study (1974) offers support for this assertion. He writes that slaves' plundering of the hog pen was at times so extreme that slaveholders were occasionally forced to abandon hog raising all together (1974:599). In contemporary Malaysia, as noted earlier, spirit possession among Malaysian factory workers has meant collectively thousands of hours of lost productivity (Ong, 1987:204). The extent to which their resistance creates economic hardship for domestics' employers, or forces employers to alter their economic behaviour, is unknowable. Still, domestic workers do succeed in pushing their employers' budget; their tactics do occasionally force employers to hire outsiders.

The broader impact of the migrant women's everyday resistance may appear more significant when one looks beyond the individual to the community of migrant women in which she moves. The discussions with the 11 Filipina migrants clearly indicate that the women carry their experiences of both exploitation and resistance into the various formal and informal networks of which they are part. Afternoons in the park spent with other domestic workers, Filipino cultural events including dinners and dances, regular worship at a church where many Filipinas are present, and (as I witnessed) evenings spent with friends watching videos and eating popcorn -- all serve as occasions for the migrants to swap stories and compare notes. At cafés and at picnic tables, discussions of their rights, and of their progressive violation, are the

main fare. On park benches and church pews, the commonality of their experiences becomes clear. The women speak of good employers and bad employers, compare work places and duties. It is on these occasions that the women's anger is openly voiced, that their frustration and weariness is at last overtly expressed. Here the swallowed rejoinders to employers' humiliating insults resurface. Here, the gossip is uttered and defamatory remarks let fly.

Through the tears and the laughter, the scathing comments and earnest discussions, the women conspire and fantasize, comfort and strategize. Together they instill confidence and bolster courage; the women continually implore one another to act. It is through this expansive network of social affiliations, that the women are further consciencitized and empowered. This reality is confirmed by all the women interviewed as they speak of their reliance on these occasions for both moral support and strategic guidance. Here, one can begin to sense how the seemingly isolated struggles of a single Filipina migrant can be multiplied a thousand-fold in the houses of other domestics. While the extent of gains made may not be calculable, surely their impact cannot be negligible. Genovese argues that the various strategies of resistance in which slaves engaged contributed more to slaves' struggle for moral and physical survival than most other bolder individual and collective challenges they presented (1974:621). The immediate and personal victories born out of these struggles are similarly both real and important. These, then, are the assorted victories everyday resistances secure.

To be sure, these gains are neither dramatic nor revolutionary. All of the

women report that unpaid overtime, miserable wages, and overburdened work schedules continue to characterize the nature of their work. Employers persist in viewing the migrants with suspicion and distrust, treating them as children or as unintelligent inferiors. The women are still regularly subjected to myriad material and status humiliations. The Foreign Domestic Movement Programme continues to revolve around the racist, classist and sexist hierarchies upon which it was constructed. What, alas, do we make of the victories yielded through these skirmishes?

As Scott so persuasively argues, for those living on the margins, the reality of such gains is never trivial or too minimal (1985:258). One evening of respite from the wearying tugging of a child's hands, one hour of relief from washing, folding and ironing are not insignificant gains in the oppressive context of the women's lives. A week without an employers' sarcastic or hurtful remarks is a week spent without energy wasted on buoying dampened spirits. The women's tireless persistence with these everyday forms of resistance ensure these victories are themselves endlessly repeated. If the various strategies of everyday resistance described did not hold out a realistic possibility of change at some level, surely the oppressed would not risk engaging in them.

The women's stories do reveal, however, both the tangibility and particularities of these various gains. Through them, the direct link between everyday resistance and change at some level can be observed. It is a major leap, however, to move from a claim that a certain act of resistance secured a victory in

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these instances, towards a more general assertion that such resistances if enacted will bring about a particular set of advances. Clearly no such generalization can be made. Differing circumstances, varying personalities, assorted histories, changing realities all combine to ensure that this process of change is not formulaic. Employers' unchartable responses are among the most important of these variables. Where one employer might excuse her domestic on account of menstrual cramps or illness, another may respond less sympathetically demanding that the migrant fulfil at least a portion of her responsibilities. While one employer may attempt to return home more promptly after work in response to her domestic worker's angry stomping about the house, another might deliver her a patronizing diatribe on the need for accommodation and for 'give' in their relationship. A strategy which works brilliantly for one may fail miserably in the hands of another. Given the host of variables effecting the magnitude and character of possible gains, what can be said about the relationship between everyday resistance and change?

Assessing the significance of everyday resistance must not revolve simply around the nature of, and the extent to which, actual gains are achieved. What has been argued throughout the better part of this chapter must not be forgotten: that is, that these skirmishes inevitably signify the negotiation of power relations (MacLeod, 1991:129, Scott, 1990:190). The political significance of the acts must not be overlooked. For, entrenched in these struggles, buoyed by their victories, the women are making their political presence felt (Scott, 1985:36). To what extent is this presence felt outside the realm of the quotidian? What broader political openings, in

other words, do the women's strategies create?

Answers to these questions can be found by exploring the links between covert, individual, and overt, collective struggle. Berman suggests that even the smallest of confrontations, like that devised by the Underground Man, can grow to have significant political implications (1988). There is more than just a casual relationship being posited here. Implied in Berman's assertion is the notion that behind every overt act of defiance lies a prehistory of hidden defiance that "explains its capacity to produce political breakthroughs" (Scott, 1990:227). Scott, in fact, suggests that such resistance, or more precisely, the alternative discourse articulated through it, is a necessary condition for overt collective confrontation (1990:192). Genovese similarly argues that the slaves' overt resistance depended "upon those less dramatic efforts in the (slave) quarters which produced a collective spiritual life" (1974:598).

Open defiance, Scott further asserts, is only comprehensible if the "active social sites in which the hidden transcript (is) elaborated and nurtured prior to the outburst" are recognized (1990:212). Scott makes his point with reference to the uprising of the Polish labour party, Solidarity, in 1980. He writes:

Behind 1980, then, lay a long prehistory, one comprising songs, popular poetry, jokes, street wisdom, political satire, not to mention a popular memory of the heroes, martyrs, and villains of earlier popular unrest (1990:212).

Along with these songs, poetry, jokes and political satire, were the countless other expressions of everyday resistance -- including lying, dissimulation, gossip and theft. Together they generated the shared oppositional ideology which fed into the more

overt political challenge. This is true as well in the case of migrant domestics.

The everyday resistances of migrant domestic workers -- defiance one might suggest domestics have engaged in for more than a century -- have obviously not led to revolutionary uprising in this country. Yet they have led to, and been strengthened by, collective political organizing and that, in turn, has led to measured systemic change. Migrant workers carry the oppositional spirit that is born out of the processes described above into the meeting rooms of domestic lobby groups to which they all belong. To be sure, these organizations serve various purposes for the Filipinas interviewed. All the women say they joined these groups to make Filipina friends and combat loneliness. Most also became members to learn of their rights and responsibilities and to ensure they are clear on Immigration's convoluted requirements. They attend regular meetings and special workshops on a range of topics including sexual harassment, income tax, immigration laws and labour rights.

Still, it is through these organizations that the women's covert struggles are transformed. The migrants' stories are offered up as evidence of exploitation to researchers and lobbyists advocating change. Many women also lend their voices to these efforts directly, signing petitions, writing letters, and taking their claims to the lawns of parliament. The women engage in collective political activity in varying degrees. Some say they feel too vulnerable and fear being deported for their involvement. Others say they will wait until their status is guaranteed before engaging in anything more overt or collective. Still others state they have time for only petitions and occasional marches. A few like Grace are more active critics of

the Foreign Domestic Movement/Live-in Caregiver Programme, participating in sectoral and cross-sectoral coalition-building in an effort to widen the lobby advocating changes to the programme. Through these groups they also address broader political and economic issues lobbying, for example, against structural adjustment and foreign debt programmes which they say are impoverishing their country and forcing their migration.

These various efforts have, over the years, led to considerable changes both in the legislation governing the entry of foreign domestics, and in the employment conditions regulating their stay with employers. These include: in 1981, the right of migrant women to apply for landed status; the elimination of particular landing requirements including letters of reference and upgrading courses; and the right to strike in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia.

A discussion of these victories, and of further collective efforts, remain beyond the focus and the scope of this study. What is more relevant for the purposes of this thesis, however, is the recognition that overt struggle is born out of the more hidden non-dramatic battles fought by the women in the isolation of their homes. If the preceding discussion has tended to suggest that the importance of everyday hidden resistance is derived solely from its role in constructing overt collective struggles, one need only be reminded of the migrant women's innumerable personal victories -- both material and symbolic -- to realize the error of that claim.

Scott is quick to point out that overt struggles similarly feed into the hidden forms of resistance -- together, they are part "of the same set of mutually sustaining

practices" (Scott, 1990:184). News of slave revolts and escapes, for instance, fuelled slaves' fantasies and ambitions, affirming their sense not only that the system of slavery was inherently wrong, but also that it was neither divine providence nor inevitable.

Together, overt and covert resistance, and the systemic change they are geared towards, can open up the broadest possibility for transformation and for solidarity. Changes in society and in women's strategies of covert resistance, can lead "to a reevaluation of knowing and not knowing -- to new options appearing feasible, while others (seeming) less attractive," (Risseuw, 1988:342). Foucault makes this point with reference to formal liberation movements like those of gays and women. Martin summarizes his argument well writing that:

The creation of cultural and social supports for other relational forms goes far beyond the essentially liberal demands for homosexual or for women's rights. It has implications for society as a whole as it facilitates different conceptions and possibilities for relating. Ultimately, such shifts threaten that 'bedrock of existence' of which Foucault has spoken elsewhere and undermine the structures on which contemporary power alignments and their solidity depend (1988:12).

How the negotiation of power relations implicit in efforts to resist, create the possibility for broad political, social and indeed, ideological change is, perhaps, the ultimate victory of strategies of everyday resistance.

This chapter has surveyed both the nature of the challenge the women's actions pose, and the widely varied gains such tactics achieve. With their crafted excuses, furtive shirking, outright lying and dramatic expressions, the 11 women have succeeded, in varying degrees (but to a degree, nonetheless), in protecting themselves

against the further appropriation of their labour. With their quiet defiance they have undermined employers' assaults on their dignity, reclaiming their identity as intelligent, honest and capable women. Despite the paradoxes inherent in the accommodating elements of such resistance, these weapons are capable of waging ideological battle. With these tactics, the women negotiate power structures within the domestic domain, and ensure these efforts are transported into more public arenas. It is in this movement from individual to collective resistance that an opening for solidarity with the women's struggles, perhaps, lies.

Conclusion

In Solidarity

This study began out of an attempt to challenge the victimizing and objectifying tendencies of traditional theories of migration. Far from the helpless victims of an exploitative global economic system, I argued, Filipina domestic workers are empowered human agents knowledgably shaping their environments. By rooting this analysis in the vibrant words and stories of migrant women, I suggested, the relentless efforts of women to resist could best be demonstrated.

If women's narratives could reveal the social sites where resistance thrives, deconstructing traditional notions of both power and resistance would allow us to more clearly view the dynamic nature of that defiance. To that end, chapter one essayed to push us beyond popular assumptions about resistance, refuting suggestions that to be legitimate it need be overt, collective and revolutionary. In its place, a form of protest more realistically grounded in daily experience -- one rooted in self-interest and characterized by its furtive and isolated nature -- was posited. Given the extreme vulnerability of the oppressed, and given the minimal resources at their disposal, I argued, such non-dramatic, often ambiguous, highly routine acts of defiance serve as the most logical and effective means through which the dominated make their claims.

In chapter one, I sought also to challenge the prevailing conceptualization of power. Viewing power as an oppressive, hierarchically-organized, and essentially

static object to be contested, effectively denies human agency and leaves the oppressed no ideological space. Suggesting that power constitutes, instead, a dynamic, omnipresent, and fundamentally productive set of relations, would serve to demonstrate not only that power relations are forever being constructed and reconstructed, but also that the ability to challenge and to criticize is implicit within each of us. Foucault's theorizing on the connections between power, discourse and knowledge, I argued, would further allow us to observe the dynamism and frailty of power and to locate power at the discursive sites where knowledge is formed and constituted.

Drawing on Scott's theorizing then brought us onto the terrain of those discursive sites. In an analysis, which in the abstract roughly parallels Foucault's, Scott suggests that resistance is indeed grounded in what Foucault dubs, 'subjugated knowledges' -- in the everyday lived experiences of the poor and oppressed. Using the conceptual tools of the public and hidden transcript, Scott further chips away at the biases underpinning popular notions of power and struggle, in particular, those contained within hegemonic theory. Thus, we saw how power relations which obtain in the public domain can explain the quiescent character of the oppressed's public performances. In arguing that popular protest is of necessity driven off the open stage, we were compelled to look behind the scenes and to observe the oppositional spirit expressed there. In the end, through Scott's theorizing on the nature and significance of everyday resistance, we were able to reject hegemonic theory's irreverence of human agency arguing instead that neither counter-hegemonic thought

nor action are ever truly precluded by domination. Through such an analysis, as Scott maintains, we are saved from having to wait for popular insurrection and open conflict to confirm what we instinctively suspect -- that not only do the oppressed seldom buy into their own subordination, but that they also continually struggle to challenge oppressive structures and effect change.

Chapter two invited us to explore the character of that struggle. Crossing historical, geographic, and cultural boundaries, we saw how various oppressed groups, through pragmatic and creative ingenuity, employ countless routine tactics of resistance in their efforts to negotiate for change. We observed how, through stealing and dissimulation, slaves ensured their survival, and how through spirit possession and feigned illness, Malay women found respite from the assembly line. Similarly, we noted that gossip and defamation are the common weapons of Sedakan peasants in their efforts to slow the forward march of the forces of capitalist accumulation. Through examination of the everyday experiences of the weak, we saw how the varied mundane acts such as lying and shirking, or the myriad banal activities such as tale telling and petty vandalism, in their immediacy, simplicity, and general accessibility serve as the most rational, safe, and ultimately effective strategies for protecting against further material and status subordination.

With chapter three we saw our focus shift to the experiences of migrant domestics. We saw how classist, racist, and patriarchal realities in Canada have combined to create a demand for a particularly vulnerable set of workers. Filipino migrant women fleeing the economic instability in their country -- women who are

subsequently denied any citizenship rights in this country -- have tended to increasingly fit that demand. With their entry into Canada governed by the Live-in Caregiver Programme, the conditions of their exploitation are already established. The live-in requirement and the corresponding inability to monitor work conditions adequately, effectively enable employers to violate contracts and to further exploit the women's labour. It is hardly surprising, then, that desperately long hours and exceedingly heavy work loads are by far the most commonly-lived experience reported by all 11 women interviewed. Poor living conditions, verbal abuse, insults to dignity and self-esteem are, as we have seen, no less exceptional. While fears of being fired or deported generally preclude the possibility of overt confrontation, I argued, domestic workers are not helpless in the face of these realities.

By drawing on the rich narratives of 11 migrant women, by exploring the vast realm of everyday resistance, we observed in chapter four, how through their often mundane, usually ambiguous, and occasionally brilliantly subversive tactics, the women challenge their exploitation and negotiate for change.

Clearly, the simple excuses, the resort to stereotypes, the stony silences, and the destruction of property, are neither the irrational nor deviant behaviours of either the insane or the accident-prone. The women's stories make more than obvious the varied intentions behind their actions. Winning respect, extending leisure time, easing workloads, and taking revenge are all among the expressed aims of the women's varied acts of defiance. Adding urine to curried chicken or inventing stories about social engagements are thus actions to be analyzed against this broader social

subtext. Similarly, a domestic's shirking of responsibilities, and cutting corners on tasks like ironing, cannot be mistaken, as we have seen, for the actions of an irresponsible truant. The experiences related by the women, and their revealing analyses of them, leave no room for misinterpreting the rationale driving their varied actions. Despite their self-serving, ambiguous and non-declaratory character, such banal acts are by pragmatic default, the chosen weapons of the weak.

What significance can one attach to these highly individualized efforts? How do they contribute toward broader movements for change? What ground is ultimately ceded through these skirmishes, however mundane?

The fifth and final chapter attempted to address these questions. We saw that despite the diversity of strategies, and indeed the specificity of both goals and gains, the women's efforts represent a shared oppositional discourse. It is a discourse constructed upon a common set of values -- values of equality and reciprocity, dignity and sharing that the women attempt to assert through each act of defiance. These values are rooted not in grand theory or political dogma, but rather in the local knowledges which emerge through the women's lived experiences. Together these knowledges, and the values behind them, present an ideological challenge to the dominant -- one which undermines their belief system with all its hierarchical and bigoted premises, and thus acts to thwart the practices of subordination articulated through it.

Though the accommodating nature of the women's strategies may ultimately detract from that challenge, I argued, they are in no way suggestive of hegemonic

incorporation. The actions are clearly indicative of the negotiation of power relations which create a political potential through which to negotiate both immediate and long-term change.

Exploring the particularities of the lives of 11 women -- of Samantha, Grace, Lisa, Linda, Ceta, Mary, Janet, Leah, Vallie, Dominica and Zia -- offered us a privileged view from which to observe how everyday resistance subtly and tirelessly performs its work. As mentioned at the outset, no portentous generalizations should be derived from this analysis. If we can barely anticipate defiant behaviour from one domestic to the next, we can hazard even less about the tactics of other oppressed and about the manner in which they will choose to make their claims. The countless particularities of social sites of exploitation coupled with the varied sensibilities of the actors inhabiting them, work to ensure that routine defiance will inevitably be diverse and unpredictable. This reality may itself attest to the irrepressible power of oppressed peoples both to individually interpret their environments and to struggle for something better. Thus perhaps, in the end, there are really only two claims that we can make: that human beings are not hopeless victims in the face of domination but are instead defiant resisters engaged in protracted daily struggles; and, that their everyday resistance represents an ideological challenge and thus implicitly creates political openings for change. Exploration of these openings in turn engenders a potential for solidarity with these struggles. The challenge remains to find a way to build on that potential.

Appendix One Question Guide

A. Background interviews

1. Name
2. From where in the Philippines do you come?
3. Tell me briefly what your educational background is.
4. Are you married?
5. Do you have children?
6. Where are they?
7. What other family do you have?
8. Where are they?
9. How long have you been in Canada?
10. Have you applied for landed immigrant status?
11. Are your employers white?
12. What are you paid?
13. How old are you?

B. Leaving the Philippines

1. Why did you leave?
2. What were you doing in the Philippines before you left?
3. How much money were you making?

C. Remittances

1. How much money, if any, do you send to the Philippines?
2. How often?
3. How do you send the money?
4. Why do you send the money in this way?
5. To whom do you send the money?

D. On being sent back -- what's at stake

1. What would happen if you lost your job?
2. What does having this job mean to you?
3. What kinds of things would you and your family not be able to buy or have access to if you didn't have this job?
4. How important are these things within Filipino culture?
5. What are you saving your money for?
6. How important are these things in Filipino culture?

E. The Domestic Experience

i. The work

1. What do you like most about your work?
2. What do you like least?
3. What, if anything, are you doing at work that wasn't in your contract?
4. What sorts of things are you doing that you don't think you should be doing?
5. What, if anything would you change if you could?
6. When you are faced with being asked or told to do something you really don't want to do, what do you do? How do you react?
7. What is usually the outcome? Can you give me some examples?
8. How do you try to make your job better for you? (Do you ask for more time off? Do you complain, or demand changes?)
9. If not, why not? If so, what is the response?
10. Do you think your employers would try to get more work, and more hours, out of you if they could?
11. What do you do to try to ensure that they don't take advantage of you more? Can you give me some examples?

ii. Living in

1. Tell me about your living conditions.
2. What do you like least about them?
3. What do you like most?
4. What kinds of things would you change if you could?
5. Tell me about what you eat; how happy are you with that? what do you do about it?
6. Tell me about your sleeping arrangements; how do you feel about them
7. Tell me about your privacy; do you get enough?
8. How, if at all, do you attempt to make your living conditions better? (buys own food, rents apartment, creates a wall, etc.)
9. Have you asked for better conditions? For changes of any kind?
10. If so, what was the reaction? If not, why not?
11. What do you think about the living-in requirement in general?
12. Can you give me an example of some ways in which you've got your employers to change their demands or expectations of you?

iii. Relationship with employers

1. Describe your relationship with them
2. What do you like most about them?
3. What do you like least?
4. What would you change about that relationship if you could?

5. On which occasions have you and your employer not got along? Tell me about them.
6. How do they treat you?
7. How would you like them to treat you?
8. Have you ever asked to be treated that way, or asked them not to treat you in a particular way?
9. If yes, what was the response; if no, why not? What have you tried to do to make sure they don't continue to treat you in that way?

iv. Expressing Anger

1. Tell me about your worst experience.
2. What did you do?
3. How angry were you?
4. How did you express that anger?
5. Has there ever been something at work that has really made you mad, or upset you, that you're afraid you can't tell your employer?
6. So what did you do instead?
7. What was your employer's response?
8. Do they usually repeat that behaviour?
9. Do you ever think of things you would like to say to someone who's treated you unfairly, if only you weren't afraid you'd be fired or deported? Can you give me some examples?
10. Do you ever dream or fantasize about doing something to get back at your employer, or the Canadian government for treating you the way they do? Example.
11. Have you ever acted on these dreams?
12. Would you in the future?

F. Specific areas of resistance/exploitation

i. On racism/classism

1. Have you ever heard your employers say anything racist? If so, can you give me some examples?
2. What about their kids?
3. What did you do about it?
4. Do you think they might treat you a bit differently if you were white, if you were, say, a British nanny? How?
5. Do they ever ask you about the Philippines?
6. What do they want to know?
7. What do you tell them?
8. What won't you talk about with your employers?
9. Do you ever make-up stories just to please them? Example?

10. Why?
11. To what extent do they discuss their private lives with you?
12. When your employers address you, do they use your first name or last?
13. How do you address them?
14. How does that difference make you feel?
15. What do you call them when they are not in your presence?
16. How long do your employers expect you to work for them?
17. How do you feel about that?
18. Do you see yourself working as a domestic for a long time?
19. Do you tell them that?
20. Why or why not?

ii. Dehumanization

1. To what extent do you think your employer treats you like a child? Example
2. To what extent do they treat you like an animal? Example
3. To what extent do they think you are not so smart (needs a lot of instructions, etc. Example
4. Do you ever feel as if you're invisible to your employer?
5. How do you react to that?
6. Can you give me an example of some ways in which you've managed to change your employer's attitudes towards you?
7. To what extent do your employers see you as part of their family?
8. Do you want to be a part of their family?
9. How do you respond to their efforts?

iii. Violation of cultural norms

1. In which ways, if any, do your employers treat you, or behave with you that just wouldn't be acceptable in the Philippines? Can you give me some examples?
2. How do you react?
3. Have they changed those ways as a result?

iv. Deference

1. How do they expect you to behave when they are in your presence?
2. To what extent do you feel you have to avert your eyes, look down, agree to everything they say, etc.
3. Do you feel as if you have to act in a way that shows they are superior, or more powerful?
4. What do you do about it?
5. How would you prefer to act?

6. Do you ever intentionally pretend that you don't understand, or that what they're explaining is too difficult because you know that you shouldn't have to do that work? Can you give me some examples?

vi. Unmet expectations

1. What do you expect of your employer?
2. What expectations are not met? Examples?
3. What do you do about it?
4. Have you come up with any ways to force them to meet your expectations?
5. Has your response affected your employers at all?
6. Do your employers ever give you gifts, either for yourself, or for your family back home?
7. If they do, why do you think they do that?
8. How does that make you feel? Why? How do you respond?

vii. Sexual harassment and other abuse

1. Have you ever been touched or teased by an employer in a way which makes you uncomfortable?
2. If yes, how did you respond to any of these?
3. What was the response of your employer?
4. Have they ever done anything else abusive -- lock you out or lock you in? Forbid you to use the phone? Can you give me any examples?
5. What was your response to that?

G. Children

1. Tell me about your relationship with the children
2. To what extent do you think you're influencing them?
3. Do you ever try to tell the children about what you think life should be like?
4. What sorts of stories and songs do you teach the children?
5. What, if anything do you tell them about the Philippines?

H. Resisting by building community networks

1. What do you do in your free time?
2. How often do you meet with other domestics?
3. What kinds of things do you talk about? Do you ever talk about work -- compare jobs? Give me some examples about what is said?
4. Can you give me some stories of domestics who have shown up their employers?
5. How do you think these stories affect your job, or your behaviour at work.
6. What kinds of things do you do with your friends?

7. Why those things?
8. Are you part of a domestic workers' organization? If yes, which one?
9. Why?
10. Do you go to church? How often?
11. If yes, why?

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