and capital, but also a capacity for possibility or becoming (to use affect theory parlance), where precarity describes the space between uncertainty and emergence. By this I mean that there may be not only contradictions and tensions in call center work, but also traces of affective life that allow for the imagining of alternate temporalities or spatial affiliations that make up Philippine nationhood. According to William Mazzarella, it is the failure of affective mediation that leads to the continual desire to engage and re-engage with the conditions of identity and belonging. Following Mazzarella's claim, we might ask: What other negotiations of Filipinoness might make way, even for a brief moment, for some kind of futurity outside the constraints of capital and colonial recall? If American English and other practices of routinized work are not the aspects of labor that are engaging to Filipino workers, then what labor animates Filipino capacities, energies, and intellectual abilities? It might be in the work to sustain a logic of capitalism, but it could also be the work to open up alternative futurities for Philippine nationhood.

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A *Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines*, by Jan M. Padios. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. xiv + 232 pp. Paper, $25.95. ISBN 978-0-8223-7059-8

Early on in A *Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines* (2018), Jan M. Padios claims that the emergence of the Filipino call center industry marks "the single most important social, cultural, and economic development in the country in the twenty-first century."[1] This point cannot be emphasized enough, and I want to insist that Padios's book will come to mark a watershed moment in both Filipinx American and Philippine studies insofar as it represents a critical bridge that generatively spans earlier scholarship on the domestic and diasporic politics of Filipino labor export, and the more recent turn toward theorizing labor's reconfigured technological mediation within the global knowledge economy. Situating the rise of the Filipino call center specifically, and the development of the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in the Philippines more generally, within global capital's singular modernity, A *Nation on the Line* is one of those rare pieces of scholarship that seamlessly moves between an intimate and embodied relational ethnography and an

1. Jan M. Padios, A *Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 3.

expansive cognitive mapping of the radical shifts occurring within the new regimes of twenty-first-century value production. The book's deep commitment to historicizing the emergence of the Philippine call center within a longer continuum of Filipino labor's transnational appropriation and exploitation becomes, in my opinion, one of Padios's main contributions to Filipinx American and Philippine studies. *A Nation on the Line* avoids the reductive trap of theorizing new forms of labor without accounting for the harder to perceive contemporary reconfigurations within extant modes of capital accumulation; as such, I would like to focus my review essay on Padios's generative assessment of Filipino affective labor's subsumption within the shifting coordinates of the global knowledge economy.

When scholarship on the Philippines and its diaspora explicitly engages Marxian political economy, it has historically done so through a Maoist-inflected national democratic programmatism and anti-imperialist analytic. Thus, with the important exception of Neferti X.M. Tadiar's groundbreaking critical scholarship, few scholars working in Filipinx American and Philippine studies have positioned their work in relationship to the "postworkerist" debates of autonomist Marxism—the school of Marxist theory most linked to analyses of the contemporary information economy and "cognitive capitalism." *A Nation on the Line* boldly enters into these conversations, and Padios's work crucially recognizes that when the terrain of global capital radically shifts and reconfigures, which is, let us not forget, how Marx often described capital, as "value in process,"[2] so too must our modes of critical apprehension change. The twenty-first century has witnessed profound shifts to transnational Filipino labor composition. The relative size of OFW outmigration is decreasing, and the economic centrality of overseas remittances is being overtaken by domestic BPO revenue. Our critical frameworks must be flexible enough to respond to these reconfigurations, in order to cognitively map the combined and uneven networks of the capitalist world-system through which, to borrow a wonderful phrase from Martin Manalansan, the "Flexible Filipino"[3] continues to circulate—with the call center agent now doing so via "virtual migration."[4] With illuminating prescience, *A Nation on the Line* engenders such an approach, and while it is a book most clearly situated within and indebted to the robust archive of Filipinx American and Philippine studies scholarship on Filipino positionalities within the global division labor, I would like to address my specific comments here to what I consider to be Padios's dynamic extension and generative reworking of some of the most central debates within autonomist Marxist theory.

2. Karl Marx, *Capital Volume II* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 211.
3. Martin F. Manalansan, "Servicing the World: Flexible Filipinos and the Unsecured Life," in *Political Emotions*, eds. Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2010), 215.
4. A. Aneesh, *Virtual Migration: The Programming of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

While deeply informed by autonomist assessments of deindustrialization and the post-Fordist shift to flexible accumulation, as evidenced by *A Nation on the Line*'s engagement with the work of Maurizio Lazzarato, Enda Brophy, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Cristina Morini, and Kathi Weeks, Padios productively pushes through the limits of autonomist approaches to the commodification of emotional, cognitive, and affective activities within an increasingly globalized knowledge economy. This generative troubling and expansion of autonomist thought is most visible in two redefinitions that Padios proffers. The first is her insistence that we understand the global knowledge economy as remaining tethered to imperial legacies, and the even more important role the nation-state form (*not* its weakening) occupies in the era of globalization—a position that Hardt and Negri infamously describe as increasingly anachronistic. The second is Padios's intentional choice to steer clear of the now overdetermined autonomist concept of "immaterial labor,"[5] in favor of describing a historically specific mode of "affective labor" that attends (unlike the term's first iteration by Hardt) to its *longue durée* development *through* colonial, racialized, and gendered relations. Reworking affective commodification, Padios develops her own concept of "relational labor," which understands capital's affective demands through a much more nuanced constellation of "historically specific power structures."[6] Through these two moves—redefining how we consider the global knowledge economy and the conceptualization of relational labor—*A Nation on the Line* simultaneously develops and supersedes the critical insights afforded by traditional (i.e., Italian, northern) autonomist thought. I will now address each of these reconfigurations in turn.

Padios illustratively renders the nuance needed in theorizing the knowledge economy's development across the uneven terrain of the postcolonial world. Padios writes that "the term *knowledge economy* points to the expansion of production processes that utilize and create knowledge, ideas, and information."[7] This is the conventional autonomist understanding of cognitive capitalism. Yet, Padios continues and importantly cautions us to remember that the turn toward knowledge production is "not simply about a shift toward more immaterial, informational, communicative, or symbolic forms of labor," but it also indexes a discursive narrative for "national development meant to signal a developing country's readiness for competition in a global world."[8] Thus, Padios implicitly challenges autonomist accounts, like that of Hardt and Negri, whose analyses of the knowledge economy and immaterial labor untether value production from its traditional

5. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, eds. Paulo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 133.
6. Padios, *A Nation on the Line*, 10.
7. Ibid., 20.
8. Ibid.

mooring within the nation-state system. Padios instead demonstrates how the production of knowledge is deeply imbricated within and central to nationalist identity formation and even statist consolidation.

In the calculated, mid-1990s rhetoric of the Ramos administration, Padios locates an instrumentalized narrative of the Philippines' burgeoning knowledge economy that ideologically veils the nation-state's reconfigured developmentalist logics. Padios importantly underscores the fundamental gap between the strategically deployed statecraft at the core of the Philippines' narrative of self-possessed entry into the global knowledge economy and the embodied realities of offshored call center work. Through revealing interview after interview with Filipino call center workers, and even an entire chapter of embedded autoethnography recounting the process of new agent onboarding, Padios demonstrates how "securing a firm place in the knowledge economy has, however, proven vexing for the Philippines, in part because most call center jobs have not required the knowledge, creative power, or technical acumen for which the Philippines aspires to be known."[9] Framing it this way, as *aspirational* nationalist narrative, registers the persistent imbalances within the global knowledge economy, and Padios reveals how the Philippine BPO-state nexus thus contributes to "the separation of and hierarchy between knowledge and service work," the latter being paradigmatically linked in the global imaginary to the OFW.[10] This hierarchization registers a pernicious obfuscation by the Philippine nation-state and global capital, insofar as "the knowledge required to undertake routine tasks, for example, has become illegible as knowledge work and therefore invisible within the global economy."[11] By persuasively arguing against the ideological rhetoric producing this separation and hierarchy, Padios establishes a line of continuity that suggests that the new labors occurring in Filipino call centers might indeed have more in common with the exported service work (socially reproductive and otherwise) of the OFW diaspora than the developmentalist IT-BPO narratives of the Philippine nation-state suggest.

By insisting that we continue to attend to the nation-state form within the global knowledge economy, Padios expands the analytical import of relationality. Padios's most significant reworking of autonomist Marxist thought therefore appears in her original concept of "relational labor." She reminds us that while call center work "clearly requires affective labor, or the labor employed in shaping someone's mood or state of mind [...it also] requires relational labor, which includes agents' effort to relate to customers in a way that manages their overall relationship to the client companies or businesses in question; in this way, agents are charged with reinforcing callers' submission to the

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 22.
11. Ibid., 21.

forces of capital."[12] Padios's elucidation of relational labor emerges as the dialectical synthesis of the autonomists' "affective labor,"[13] or the work of producing certain affects in service-recipient consumers, and Arlie Hochschild's "emotional labor,"[14] or the work of managing affects in the laborer herself.

Relational labor registers capital's more thorough subsumption of workers' subjectivity, and the concept allows Padios's insight into the various levels of mediation and interpellation that occur in the Philippine call center. The Filipino call center agent not only aims to produce positive emotions in their client callers (affective labor) through their own performances of conciliatory disposition (emotional labor), but they are also tasked with producing and navigating many other formal and informal relationalities—like the complex identifications with their third-party BPO company, their offshore "client" company, co-workers, team leaders, and corporate culture.[15] This more expansive understanding of the overdetermined relational demands on this labor discloses the most significant relational imperative facing Filipino call center workers: that they each also form and maintain an affective identification *with the United States itself*. Padios therefore opens up relational labor to include "the imperative that Filipino agents identify and communicate with U.S.-based customers and therefore America as a material location and imaginary space," which she calls "Filipino/American relatability" or "the ways Filipinos and the Philippines have maintained an affinity with Americans and America—from popular culture to the educational system—during and since colonization."[16] The demand that these Filipino workers affectively relate to the United States, through the American client companies they invisibly speak for, through the American callers they speak with, through the American-inflected English they speak in, and the American cultural norms and assumptions they speak through, radically demonstrates the ways in which this new "communicative" labor is in fact dependent on much older colonial and imperial histories.

Padios's reconfigured autonomist Marxism powerfully brings the material embodiment—the racialization, feminization, and sexualization—of Filipino labor into relation with global capital's so-called cognitive and affective turns. And through this attention paid to the historically specific embodiments of affective, emotional, and relational labor, A *Nation on the Line* makes clear "that any attempt to address working conditions in the twenty-first century must critique how the subsumption of labor and capital accumulation are increasingly organized to exploit the human body's temporal and biological systems, and thus not just labor alone but whole systems for

12. Ibid., 43.
13. Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor," *Boundary 2* 26.2 (1999): 89–100.
14. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 7.
15. Padios, *A Nation on the Line*, 37.
16. Ibid., 5.

sustaining life."[17] Here then is our charge, the task that Padios admirably sets for us, and many scholars are answering her call. *A Nation on the Line* has unequivocally carved out a new path for Filipinx American and Philippine studies' engagement with science and technology studies. And if the recent interdisciplinary research on technological mediation being produced by scholars like Allan Punzalan Isaac, Anna Romina Guevarra, Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, Jonathan Corpus Ong, Cheryll Soriano, Cecilia Uy-Tioco, Emmanuel David, Stephanie Dimatulac Santos, Paul Michael Leonardo Atienza, Jason Vincent Cabañes, Earvin Charles Cabalquinto, and Karlynne Ejercito is any indication of the sheer breadth of this new path, then we owe much to *A Nation on the Line*.

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Author's Response to Book Reviews

I really want to thank Eileen Lagman and Alden Sajor Marte-Wood for their deep engagement with *A Nation on the Line*. Their essays are generous, illuminating, and sharp. I'm flattered by their attention and their placement of my work alongside so many powerful Filipinx and Philippine Studies scholars, both established and emerging. Given my conversations with *Alon*'s book review editor Antonio Tiongson, Jr. about how to make book reviews more useful and enjoyable, I thought I'd use this response essay to chart some of the routes I took toward the points Lagman and Marte-Wood write about in their essays. While I address the substance of their respective reviews, I also want to demystify some aspects of my research and writing process. I especially hope this is useful for people in the midst (or mire) of their research, whether a dissertation or a first book.

Lagman and Marte-Wood's respective essays strike me as having different styles of engagements with *A Nation on the Line*. Marte-Wood's analysis is like a massive earth digger excavating major theories and debates that form the groundwork for my book, and his knowledge of Marxist thought (and its lacunae) is intricate and powerful. In short, he does a lot of heavy lifting the book did not do! As many know, the methodological details we grapple with en route to our scholarship rarely make it into the final work, so it is a gift to have a scholar like Marte-Wood tease out such lines of thought.

17. Ibid., 184–185.