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**"'Your Grief is Our Gossip': Overseas  
Filipinos and Other Spectral  
Presences"**

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"Your Grief is Our Gossip"<sup>1</sup>:

Overseas Filipinos and Other Spectral Presences

This essay grows out of an interest in nationalism as a kind of affect productive of a community of longing. My concern lies in the emergence of nationalist sentiment (as distinct from the institutionalization of nationalist ideology and its accompanying disciplinary technologies) in and through the work of mourning particular and exemplary deaths amid the collusion of the state with transnational capital.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on recent events in the Philippines, particularly with regard to the increasing flows of immigrants and overseas contract workers, I inquire into nationalist attempts at containing the dislocating effects of global capital through the collective mourning for its victims.

This labor of mourning, however, tends to bring forth the uncanny nature of capitalist development itself on which the nation-state depends. The moral economy of grieving is persistently haunted by the circulation of money. Hence, while nationalist mourning is borne by the desire of the living to defer to the dead, thereby giving rise to the sensation of each belonging to the other, it also anticipates its own failure amid the relentless commodification of everyday life. Often, the form which that anticipation takes, especially in a society saturated by commercially-driven mass media, is gossip. As I hope to show, mourning and gossip together generate the structures of feeling

specific (but not limited) to Philippine nationalism: the tensions--which is to say the sensation--of becoming "Filipino" at the close of the twentieth century.

### Workers for the World

Not too long ago, an article in the Los Angeles Times described overseas Filipinos in the following way:

Distinctive among the huddled masses of global economic migration, overseas Filipinos represent the elite, high end of the labor market. They are generally well-educated and usually accomplished speakers of English. But like other itinerant workers, they lack opportunities in the dysfunctional Philippine economy. So women with college degrees serve as maids in Tokyo and Hongkong.... Semi-skilled laborers toil in Kuwait while Filipino seamen ply the oceans on the world's ships. Filipino business graduates dominate the middle-management ranks of many multinational corporations in Southeast Asia, earning wages they couldn't dream of at home.<sup>3</sup>

Comprising an army of flexible workers, Filipinos abroad simultaneously signify the failure of the nation-state to contain its excess population and the success of global capitalism in absorbing and accomodating this failure. From the point of view of the Los Angeles Times, they can best be regarded as both the

product and producers of surplus: sheer labor power immediately translatable into a universally understood form of value. Though they originate from the Philippines they can, thanks to the workings of global capital, now return to the nation in a form that is at once abstract and exterior to it. Indeed, as Filipino-American newspaper publisher, Alex Esclamado put it, "Remittances by overseas Filipinos [estimated in 1995 to be about \$6 billion annually] to their families are now considered direct foreign aid... that can have a radical effect on people's lives -- building houses in depressed rural villages, paying off medical bills, sending little brothers and sister and cousins to school."<sup>4</sup>

As "foreign" sources of "aid," overseas Filipinos come to occupy ambiguous positions. Neither inside nor wholly outside the nation-state, they hover on the edges of its consciousness, rendering its boundaries porous with their dollar-driven comings and goings. In this sense, they take on the semblance of spectral presences whose labor takes place somewhere else but whose effects command, by their association with money, a place in the nation-state. As extruded parts of the body politic, the traces of their bodies continue to circulate, producing "radical effects on people's lives." For this reason, overseas Filipinos now increasingly represent novel elements in local understandings of "cultural transformations" and "national development." Their absence become integral features of vernacular narratives regarding what it means to be modern.

How then is the modernity of overseas Filipinos understood in the Philippines? While Filipino populations have had a long history of migrations, it is only in the last twenty five years that the massive and, more important, state encouraged movements of workers and immigrants have become part of the nation's everyday life.<sup>5</sup> What are the ways by which "foreign" Filipinos are rendered socially legible by the nation-state and its critics? How do the differentially articulated locations of "Filipino-ness" -- for example, as contract workers on the move, as immigrant professionals anxious for suburbanized assimilation, or as members of racialized and hyphenated minorities -- pose limits to the particularizing reach of a Filipino nationalist imaginary? In what follows, I offer some provisional observations on the peculiar conjunction of "overseas" with "Filipino" in the late twentieth century. While recognizing the diversity of overseas Filipino lives, I will limit my focus in this essay on two significant terms for designating them in the Philippines: balikbayan, or immigrant Filipinos primarily from North America who periodically visit the motherland, and OCW, overseas contract workers who are employed on a contractual basis in such places as the Middle East, Europe, East and Southeast Asia.

#### A Nationalism Deferred

It was the Marcos regime in the mid-1970s that coined the term balikbayan by joining the Tagalog words balik, to return, with bayan, meaning town and, at least from the late nineteenth

century on, nation. As a balikbayan, one's relationship to the Philippines is construed in terms of one's sentimental attachments to one's hometown and extended family rather than one's loyalty to the nation-state. At the same time, being a balikbayan depends on one's permanent residence abroad. It means that one lives somewhere else and that one's appearance in the Philippines is temporary and intermittent, as if one were a tourist.

Indeed, the Marcos regime's interest in overseas Filipinos was part of its plan to spur the tourist industry both as a generator of foreign exchange and a showcase for its putative accomplishments. Offering a combination of bargain airfares, tax breaks and other incentives, the Philippine government encouraged dollar earning Filipinos, especially from North America, to visit the country and see for themselves the results of Martial Law. Living in close proximity to the sources of capital, balikbayans were treated like tourists in their land of origin. As consumers of the Philippines, balikbayans like other foreign visitors were to be accorded deference and generously accommodated by local officials.

For the balikbayans, the Philippines was served up as a collection of consumable goods orchestrated by the Department of Tourism. Tourist spots, native handicrafts and local food were packaged as fragments of the bayan available for purchase. Alienated from the nation, balikbayans returned to encounter commodified versions of their origins now similarly rendered

alienable as tourist objects destined for other places. Within the general rubric of tourism, their strangeness was reworked into a manageable, if not entirely familiar, presence by the state.

That the state succeeded in domesticating balikbayans into tourists can in part be seen in Filipino nationalist unease about them. Nationalist writers often distinguish those who return from working temporary jobs in the Middle East and Asia from those who visit from the U.S. Whereas overseas contract workers are seen to return from conditions of near abjection, balikbayans are often viewed to be steeped in their own sense of superiority serving only to fill others with a sense of envy. The well known journalist Conrado de Quiros, for example, writes of

th[ose] balikbayans from America, who force us each year to make an apologia for the indolence of the Filipinos.

They're the ones who sally forth to bedazzle the natives. They queue up in East or West Coast airports with tons and tons of baggage, many of them containing groceries for relatives who can't wait to have a taste of America...<sup>6</sup>

They bring us stories about how much life in America has proved what the Reader's Digest says it is. They also bring us homilies, delivered with the proselytizing zeal of Thomasites, which are forceful for their use of contrasts. It's too hot in the



Philippines. It's nice to snuggle by the hearth in America. There's grime and smog in our streets. You can't drive without anti-pollutants in the States. Filipino drivers are maniacs. American drivers follow traffic rules... You defer too much to authority here. You can talk man-to-man even with the president of the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Quiros compares the balikbayans to the Thomasites, the first group of American school teachers who arrived in the Philippines at the beginning of this century and who figure in nationalist narratives not as benevolent instructors but as purveyors of the "mis-education" of the Filipinos. Thanks to the Thomasites and those who came in their wake, Filipinos were led to think of themselves as if they were Americans, that is, as other than who they were suppose to be.<sup>8</sup> Balikbayans as Thomasites are thus positioned as neo-colonizers whose ambitions lie in setting themselves apart from the rest of the "natives" rather than affiliating with them. In that sense, balikbayans emerge as figures to be envied. Their easy association with Western consumer products and their access to a powerful North American state apparatus mark them as different: they represent the fulfillment of Filipino desires realizable only outside of the Philippines. However, what adds to their difference is this: that they are unable to respond to the envy of others with a show of empathy. While they seem to possess everything, they in fact lack

something: a sense of humility as shown by their inability to defer to those who lack what they have. Indeed, they do nothing else but point out what it is the Philippines lacks as compared to the U.S., thereby appearing shameless and arrogant.

Yet, that shamelessness, or what in Tagalog is commonly referred to as walang hiya<sup>9</sup>, is less a "cultural trait" as it is part of a historical legacy. Quiros continues:

And then you realize that the physical fact of Filipinos migrating abroad is really just the tip of the iceberg... Most of us are expatriates right here in our own land. America is our heartland whether we get to go there or not.

Nothing demonstrates this better than that the balikbayan does succeed in bedazzling the natives. If he flaunts his wares, it's simply because he knows the audience will lap it up...

It's the lack of any sense of nationhood, of being Filipino, among us that makes expatriation the most preferred option of all... But surely there's a tragedy in seeing the fundamental question of one's life as nothing more than which country can provide a better living? Surely there must be more to life than this?  
[140].

The shamelessness of the balikbayan turns out to be the "tragedy" that is shared by the majority of Filipinos still

caught up in colonial delusions. Balikbayans are disconcerting not only because they seem to corroborate the terms of colonial hegemony; they also mirror the "failure" of nationalism to retain and control the excess known as overseas Filipinos. For the nationalist writer, balikbayans seem to escape rather than confirm the hope that Filipinos as Filipinos would choose to "belong to this particular earth, this particular time"; that rather than leave this "benighted life," they would instead "do something about our benightedness" [141]. Not only are balikbayans akin to American colonizers; even more dismaying is their similarity to the collaborators of the past. Their departure amounts to a kind of betrayal of national particularity. Yet, the fact that they are merely enacting a historical role laid out before them makes them far more intimate with the people who they leave behind. Proof of this is the fact that balikbayans are envied. They are recognized for what they are. It isn't the case then that their interests diverge from the people, but rather they, rather than nationalist intellectuals, set the terms for the articulation of those interests. It is this negative insight that haunts Quiros' essay.

While the state accords balikbayans a place as touristic consumers identifiable with foreign currency and international legitimacy, the nationalist writer regards them as "tragic" reflections of the nation's failure to materialize itself as the locus of a people's desire. Through the figure of the balikbayan, Quiros manages to mark the pathos and poignancy of a nationalism

deferred as part of the condition of being a Filipino today. As we shall see, it is precisely this pathos laden notion of nationalism and the politics of deference it implies that finds expression in the figure of the other overseas Filipino: the OCW.

### The "New Heros"

When the balikbayan program was inaugurated in the early Martial Law years, its original targets, as we saw, were immigrants from North America who then made up the largest pool of overseas Filipinos. By the early 1980s, changes in the global economy increased the demand for skilled and semi-skilled Filipino workers in many parts of the Middle East, Asia and Western Europe. Unlike the earlier groups of Filipino-Americans, this later group of workers were bound by temporary contracts to foreign employers in international locales. They came to be known in the Philippines by a particular name: OCW's or overseas contract workers.

Unlike Filipinos in the U.S. who generally tended to assimilate either as professional middle class suburbanites or, as in the case of second generation Filipino-Americans as ethnicized, hyphenated Americans<sup>10</sup>, OCW's rarely ever expect to remain permanently in their host country. Forever consigned to positions of relative subservience and marginality by the terms of their contract and by virtue of their exclusion from the linguistic and religious communities of their employers, OCW's could only exist as sheer labor power, supplementary formations

to the imagined communities of their bosses. Rather than ask for the rights of citizenship, as Filipino immigrants in North America are wont to do, OCW's tend instead to seek good earnings within maximally safe and minimally abusive environments. They are thus less interested in influencing legislation or the terms of political representation within the country of their employ-- they leave that up to the activist NGO's and Church organizations to which they have occasional recourse--as they are with securing the material and symbolic means with which to maintain ties of reciprocity and obligatory exchanges with their extended kin groups at home.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that OCW's often refer to their travels as a kind of "adventure," or in Tagalog as pakikipagsapalaran and pagbabakasakali.<sup>12</sup> To go abroad is to find one's fortune (palad), as well as to take risks (magbakasakali). One seeks to convert the products of one's labor into "gifts" with which to endow one's kins at home and thereby gain their respect and recognition. At the same time, one also risks uncertain conditions and the prospect of becoming alienated abroad and at home.

Subject to the daily pressures and exploitive demands of an alien working environment and taxed by their efforts to negotiate with or, more commonly, evade the apparatus of a state hostile or indifferent to their situation, OCW's often relate lives of loneliness, deprivation and abuse. It isn't surprising then that they should be accorded a status distinct from that of balikbayans. Rather than regarded as tourists for whom the

Philippines can only exist as a set of commodified objects or as failed versions of nationalist aspirations, OCW's are recognized as "national heroes." It was in fact President Cory Aquino, whose administration was major beneficiary of dollar remittances by OWC's, who first referred to these overseas Filipinos as heroes in a speech she gave in 1988 to a group of domestic helpers in Hongkong, telling them that, "Kayo po ang mga bagong bayani." ["You are the new heroes"].<sup>13</sup>

To understand how it is that OCW's rather than Filipino immigrants to North America came to be considered "heroes," it is necessary to ask about the ways by which heroism has historically been construed in the Philippines. As with all modern nation-states, the Philippines traces its official genealogy to a line of male founders, beginning with the "first Filipino," the Chinese-mestizo Jose Rizal. As the historian Reynaldo Ileto has convincingly demonstrated, much of the history of Filipino nationalism in the twentieth century has been articulated with reference as much to the purported life of Rizal as to his suffering and death at the hands of Spanish colonial rulers. Invested with a messianic aura, Rizal proved to be far more potent in his death than he was when alive. Numerous revolutionary groups--from Andres Bonifacio's Katipunan to the peasant armies and rebel churches in the Southern Tagalog regions--rallied around his name.<sup>14</sup>

Rizal's potency rested on his ability to evoke populist visions of utopic communities held together by an ethos of mutual

caring, the sharing of obligations (damayan) and the exchange of pity (awa). These notions were reminiscent of the great themes set by the widely popular narrative of Jesus Christ's passion translated into various vernaculars (collectively known as Pasyon) since the eighteenth century. Recognizing the power of Rizal's memory, American colonial and Filipino national elites collaborated in monumentalizing his absence--as for example in the erection of the Rizal monument at the place of his execution in 1912--as they sought to regulate both the sites and occasions of its commemoration.

It was precisely this image of Rizal in conjunction with the suffering Christ--figures at once pathetic and prophetic--that was mobilized to explain the events that began with the assassination of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino in 1983 and ended with the "People Power" revolt in 1986 that ousted the Marcoses from power. Ninoy and Rizal seemed to merge into a single narrative frame that harked back to the themes of the Pasyon: of innocent lives forced to undergo humiliation at the hands of alien forces; of unjustified deaths both shocking and public; of massive responses of pity and prayer that would, in mobilizing alternative communities of resistance, finally drive away the forces of oppression and pave the way for some kind of liberation. In place of the class-based militancy of the National Democratic Front and the Communist Party of the Philippines, this particular narrative drew on cross-class religiosity, positing a sacred hierarchy within which all other hierarchies would be

subsumed and reordered.

Predicated on the logics of suffering and sacrifice, the political culture of "People Power" and the subsequent regime of Cory Aquino thrived on the notion of pity rather than equal rights to legitimate its claims to power and moral certainty. As such, it fashioned an ideal of deference and subordination to an ultimately ineffable because transcendent source as the basis for claiming worldly authority. Where the Marcoses depicted themselves as secular modernists presiding over expansive and monumental national projects, Cory Aquino came across as the stoic widow given to prayer, repeatedly turning to her dead husband and her Saviour in the midst of right-wing coup attempts and the rampages of anti-communist death squads. On bended knees she asked only to be an instrument of a Higher will. Her obedience was the basis of her power. It was precisely during this moment in Philippine history that OCW's, increasingly made up by the mid-1980s of women going abroad as domestic helpers, "mail order" brides and sex workers came to be known as "the new heros."

#### The Economy of Pity

By encoding OCW's as "national heros," Aquino and her successor, Fidel Ramos, have sought to contain the anxieties attendant upon the flow of migrant labor, including the emotional distress over the separation of families and the everyday exploitation of migrants by job contractors, travel agents and



foreign employers. As I suggested earlier, such conditions point to the inability of the state to provide for its people.

Repeatedly, Philippine embassies abroad have come under criticism from OCW advocates, especially women's groups such as GABRIELA for their failure to safeguard the security of Filipinos abroad. Rather than become a source of national pride, embassies have become national embarrassments.

Such embarrassment (in Tagalog, hiya) periodically surfaces in the Philippine press which exists primarily to record the voices of the Filipino middle class and national elites. Anecdotes are retailed about the Europeans equating the word "Filipino" with domestic helpers, or Filipino tourists being asked by OCW's in Singapore shopping malls or Madrid parks if they, too, were on their day off. In these stories, Filipino elites as well as nationalists feel themselves incapable of maintaining the boundaries of class differences as they are associated with an ethnically marked group of service workers. Embarrassment arises from their inability to keep social lines from blurring (thereby rendering problematic their position as privileged representatives of the nation) and maintaining a distinction between "Filipino" as the name of a sovereign people and "Filipino" as the generic term for designating a subservient class dependent on foreign economies.

Anxieties about the instability of and confusion over the term "Filipino" arises most dramatically, however, over news reports about abuses suffered by OCW's at the hands of employers

from Saipan to Saudi Arabia. One such event was the recent execution of the domestic helper Flor Contemplation in Singapore. Arrested and subsequently convicted for the double murder of another Filipina domestic, Delia Maga and the child of the latter's employer in 1991, Contemplation was sentenced to death on the basis of evidence which, to most Filipinos at least, appeared to be of dubious validity. Despite numerous and desperate requests for clemency, the Singaporean courts ordered her execution on March 17, 1995. Her death aroused wide spread outrage and anguish, mobilizing mass actions unseen since the People Power revolt of 1986. For example, in a piece remarkable for its typicality, one journalist sees in the case of Flor Contemplation an event that, "encompasses all the abuse that the nation has had to endlessly endure.... The long lines at foreign embassies; the treatment at immigration counters endured by rich and poor Filipino passport holders alike... Patronizing lectures from Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. Memories of Japan's behaviour during World War II... On and on... We are mad and we won't take it anymore." Similarly, another editorial writer referred to Contemplation as the "Filipino Everyman: the lowly peon driven by poverty to seek a life abroad, risking loneliness, abuse and terror to feed his (sic) family, and trying as best as he (sic) can to stay standing amid the swirling storm around him."<sup>15</sup>

Whereas anecdotes of being mistaken abroad for OCW's produce embarrassment, incidents of state execution as in the case of Flor Contemplation ignite a surge of nationalist identification.

The link between Contemplation and the nation had to do with her innocence, presumed widely by Filipinos, and her suffering in the name of her family. Reduced to an abject entity by forces from the outside, she could then be converted into an object of pity. Her death could thus be used to "assuag[e] the ravages of the lack of referents"<sup>16</sup> brought about by the conjunction of "overseas" and "Filipino." That Flor Contemplation was a woman, and that OCW's by virtue of their subordinate position to foreign employers come across as "feminized" within the gendered contexts of nation-state formations further reinforced the sense of public pity and outrage. For as we saw earlier, the question of heroism at least since Cory Aquino, had less to do with asserting sovereignty as with affirming ties of indebtedness to a network of relations and declaring subordination to a transcendent realm of possibilities. In that sense, it had already taken what we might think of as a "feminized" aspect.

In such a context, authority ideally arises from deference. With deference, pity replaces envy. This is perhaps one way by which we can understand the popular identification with an abused and executed OCW. The figure of Flor Contemplation appeared to furnish a benign basis for reconsolidating the imaginative borders of the Philippines. Whereas OCW's find a living and sometimes die abroad, they not only return but are invariably buried in their bayan, or homeland. Obscure and anonymous while alive, death provides them with a new identity. Thus are they given a place in the nation as figures who enact the replacement

of envy with pity. It is this substitution that differentiates OCW's from balikbayans. Where the latter arouse envy and thus flaunt their failure to defer to the nation, the former are abused and even killed for deferring to the interests of their families. In dying, they can lay claim to respect. In this way are the role of OCW's as sources of money and as providers of sheer labor power mythologized. Their deaths open up to a different kind of national wishfulness, one where the nation is founded on mourning rather than "development." It is an image of a nation that draws nostalgically from the events of 1983-86 when the dead--all the dead--could compel the attention and respect of the living.

It is important to note that the collective rage over Contemplation's execution was directed not only at the Singaporean government but also at the Philippine state, especially the officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and President Ramos himself. It was as if to say that those on top were not doing what they should do: showing compassion in one case, and looking after the welfare of its citizens abroad in the other. It meant that the nation-state and foreign capital had failed this time to account for Filipinos abroad. The death of Contemplation showed how at times overseas workers were treated as mere excess. Such anger was not therefore a call for the abolition of external dependency. Rather, it was about rectifying the discrepancy between employers and employee, foreigners and Filipinos, the state and the people whether at

home or abroad, thereby stabilizing the differences between them. If only Singapore had taken pity; if only the Ramos government had taken care. It is this desire, massively resurgent in the nation's post-Marcos political culture, for a social order and forms of inequality based on pity and mutual deference to that which lies outside of one which momentarily came to a crisis--and urgently called out for containment--in the death of Flor Contemplacion.

However, nationalist attempts to account for Contemplacion's death and the plight of OCW's would themselves flounder. Flor's ghost could only be fitfully mapped onto Ninoy's. In what follows, I inquire into the conditions and effects of this failure.

### Mourning and Money

Flor Contemplacion's death drew attention to the contrast between a developmentalist understanding of OCW's as sheer labor power essential to inducing the flow of capital and the nationalist critique of their plight as the unjust effects of state-sponsored developmentalism itself. Yet, President Fidel Ramos' official statements suggested that such differences could be easily negotiated. Proclaiming OCW's as "new heros" meant that he could regard them as "our best contributions to the world" whose fate in the hands of abusive employers and foreign legal systems should not be allowed to "adversely affect our long-term and continued growth and prosperity." At the same time, President

Ramos could also lament Contemplacion's fate, seeing in her death the beginning "of our own soul-searching.... We have been reborn as a national family, mindful of our obligations to care for one another, especially for those without the means to sustain or protect themselves."<sup>17</sup> Thus could the state marshal the rhetoric of pity in order to further its policies of development.

Nonetheless, there existed another mode of addressing the dilemma of overseas contract workers which simultaneously confirmed and exceeded those of developmentalism and nationalism: that of show business which centered around movies and movie stars. "Show biz" talk as it is commonly known in the country, appeared alongside the journalistic accounts and opinion columns of major newspapers. In the midst of daily demonstrations and the hearings of the Gancayco Commission--a government-appointed body assigned to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Flor Contemplacion and the Filipina maid she was accused of murdering, Delia Maga--newspapers reported the attempts of movie producers to purchase the rights to Flor's story. Talk revolved around the large sum--over 2 million pesos--that was offered to the Contemplacion family and speculations on which stars would play the roles of Flor and Delia.<sup>18</sup>

Nationalist writers reacted with cynicism and outrage at this show biz talk. One writer, for example, criticized "the movie people" and "their entrepreneurial sensibilities. Somebody's death is their financial windfall, very much like a mortician... The film industry has again exposed itself to be

beyond and without shame." The "shamelessness" of movie producers come from their eagerness to capitalize on death. For this and other writers, remaking death into movies can only result in the corruption of the work of mourning. OCW's from this perspective are doubly victimized: first, by foreign employers who use up their labor while they are alive; second, by movie producers who plunder their memories once they are dead. Both respond to the sacrifices of OCW's with money. And money leads not to the recognition of the worker, but only to the generation of more money. As one labor activist put it, "If there's anything more tragic than brutal and unjustified death in the hands of the merciless Singaporeans, it is the "true-to-life" flick about it that's bound to be produced.... With the first, you lose your life. With the second, you lose your honor and reputation as well."<sup>19</sup>

Even the dead then are not safe from the speculations of the living. While the corpse may be idealized as a figure of respect and thus the basis for generating a sense of community based on the circulation of pity, it is also endangered by the potential intrusions of other interests. And because such interests speak only in terms of money, they remain essentially alien to the task of memorialization. Columnist Raul J. Palabrica stresses this reductive tendency of movies in their portrayal of social issues when he writes, "Never mind if the victims are trivialized.... The pleasant ring of the cash register is more important than the adverse social effects of the commercialization of crime

stories." Movies speak in the language of money and its sound has the effect of drowning out and flattening the voices of victims and their advocates.

At the same time, however, the singular soundings of cash turn out to be mediated by another kind of speech: that of gossip. Palabrica accuses movie producers of wanting to profit from the tragedies of *Contemplacion* and *Maga* by calling attention to the gossip and scandals surrounding their stories, such as "the extramarital escapade of *Contemplacion*'s husband... the pregnancy of *Contemplacion*'s teenage daughter, the dispute between *Contemplacion*'s parents and her husband over the disposition of money," and so forth. In this way, movie producers "exaggerate" and "distort" events in order to "put more spice and color in their productions."<sup>20</sup> Rather than portray events, they retail gossip.

What is the nature of gossip? How is it related to the work of mourning and the circulation of money?

We might approach the question of gossip by first situating it in relation to other forms of speech. I have suggested elsewhere that the workings of rumor, like that of gossip, differ from other sorts of rhetorics in Philippine history.<sup>21</sup> The circulation of rumor calls forth an anonymous and ephemeral community of hearers and speakers joined by their common imaginings of scenarios which might otherwise remain hidden or unknown. However, unlike the rhetoric of nationalism, whether on the register of collaboration or resistance, rumors cannot serve



as the basis for consolidating social identities to the extent that they do not allow for an accounting of the epistemological and ethical basis for identification. Put another way, rumor and gossip give rise to to the prospect of politics divorced from identity.

The salience of gossip to the work of mourning can be seen in the remarkably astute ethnography of funeral rituals and spirit mediums in a Bicol town (southeast of Manila) during the late 1980s by the anthropologist Fenella Cannell. Funeral rites, she notes, entails embalming the corpse and laying it out for several days in an open casket for visitors to see. Of particular interest to the visitors is the corpse's facial expression. Embalming the corpse in part has to do with managing its outward features so that it has the look of one at peace, freed from social obligations and physical distress. Such is done to assuage the fear often expressed among the living of seeing on the corpse the signs of something amiss, of things out of place: debts unpaid, obligations unmet, desires unfulfilled. The worry associated with seeing the dead, therefore, is linked to the possibility of being confronted with the illegible traces of its sufferings: of a prior violence that resists being read in terms of the living's expectations of perfect return and reciprocation upon death.<sup>22</sup>

The form that such anxieties take among the living usually includes gossip. As Cannell writes, the facial expression of the corpse is "often the subject both of open discussion at the wake

and of private gossip and dark insinuation after leaving it" (232). Here, gossip participates in the work of mourning.

Embalming the corpse by way of chemical sanitation and cosmetic enhancement is meant to make it recognizable to the living not as the person him or herself, but as his or her image. In this sense, embalming is integral to the work of mourning. It sets the dead apart from the living and renders the corpse available as an object of public display and a subject for collective pity.<sup>23</sup>

However, the view of the corpse, regardless of how well embalmed it is, occasions comments that invariably includes gossip. It is as if gossip about what might have happened to the corpse conjures the possibility that embalming might fail to formalize its appearance. Just as it seeks to secure the place of the corpse as a figure in repose and thereby deserving respect, embalming seems also to raise thoughts about the corpse's instability and its potential to infuse fear among the living. It is the contagious potential of the corpse--the possibility that it may not be fully at rest--that gossip in part seeks to anticipate.

Cannell points out that in the impoverished, lowland Christian setting she is describing, visits from the souls of the dead are expected, especially by its kin. Such visits are regarded as highly charged and potentially dangerous in that the returning souls may trigger misfortune, illness and even death. It is in this sense that the corpse's contagiousness is regarded: of one death leading potentially to other deaths. Hence arises

the problem of controlling the visits of the dead, regulating and domesticating its return through various ritual means (252-253).

The fear of death's contagiousness is further aggravated by the belief in the presence of malevolent spirits in search of corpses. Chief of these is the aswang or viscera suckers. Various prohibitions (palihis) are enforced throughout the wake so as to ward off the dangers posed by the aswang who are thought to literally consume its victims from inside out. Using its long snout and tongue to poke through cracks and openings in the house, the aswang is said to penetrate the corpse and devour its entrails. Keeping constant vigil over the corpse is thus a way for the living to fend off the threats of an alien force whose spectral presence looms over the scene of mourning (235-42).

The corpse then comes across as a scandalous presence. It is neither fully dead nor alive; it is a figure of respect but also vulnerability; publicly displayed, it is contained yet potentially contaminating. Embalming, vigils, ritual prayers and the like are meant to promote the memorialization of the dead and thereby account for its scandalous presence. Yet such practices also give rise to the possibility of their failure. Thus the necessity of figures such as the aswang which trope the sense of the uncanny that lingers in funerals. In this sense, aswangs arguably function like gossip: both are conjured up as ways to organize and so give shape to the thoughts and behaviour of the living when confronted with the dead. That is to say, they postulate the outer limits of mourning, mapping an imagined

terrain of asociality where speech might fail to coalesce into discourse and the corpse, in its contagiousness, can no longer provide the basis for pity. Instead, it can only occasion fear and the multiplication of further deaths. Located at the interstices of mourning and its possible failure, such phenomena as gossip and aswangs convey the persistently problematic location of the dead among the living.

Given this relationship between mourning and gossip, we can now return to the nationalist critique of show biz talk regarding Flor Contemplacion. Earlier, I had suggested that Flor's death became a way of trying to make sense of the seeming contradiction between "overseas" and "Filipinos" in the post-Marcos period. The displays of anger and expressions of pity reproduced the sense and sensation of a nation in mourning and of mourning as the labor specific to the engendering of nationhood. Overseas workers could thus be reconceived as fragments of the nation whose travels and labors were not merely selfish acts of escape or betrayal, but reflections of the courage and willingness of a people to sacrifice and if need be, die for one another. Nationalist mourning sought to rescue OCW's from the realm of global capitalist production and resituate their bodies as the exilic incarnations of contemporary patriotism.

The most remarkable enactment of these notions came during Flor Contemplacion's funeral. From the massive crowds that attended her funeral wake to the prominent presence of religious leaders who were allies of Ninoy and Cory Aquino presiding over

the burial rites, Flor's funeral bore a canny resemblance to that of Ninoy's.<sup>24</sup> The journalist Conrado de Quiros has written what is perhaps one of the more telling accounts of the funeral wake for Flor. His reflections are worth following at some length for its elucidation of the politics of mourning, particularly something of its sound:

It wasn't just the whole neighborhood [in San Pablo, Laguna] that had turned out to see Contemplacion one last time [but] the whole nation... The body of a martyr is the strongest loudspeaker there is.... You stood on that street in San Pablo last Saturday night, assailed by the assorted smells of a mass of humanity demanding to occupy one small space of earth all at once, and you knew this was bigger than all the agitators combined could make it. Here was an outpouring of anger and grief and compassion from the bosom of the earth. This was not drawn from outside, this was spread from inside, as spontaneously as pity from a wounded heart, as violently as phlegm from congested lungs.<sup>25</sup>

At the wake, the "mass of humanity" in all its sensuous heterogeneity is given form by the presence of Flor's corpse. Her body, however, was not simply offered for viewing. As the "strongest loudspeaker," it was also the locus of a demand to be heard. In her deathly silence, she seems most able to furnish a

kind of lingua franca for mobilizing the masses, transforming them into something "bigger" and other than themselves. Responding to the call of the dead, Quiros imagines the people speaking in a common language whose features consist of the elemental sounds of grieving: those of wailing, violent coughing and spitting which accompanies crying. Such a language consists less of locating what comes from outside as one of anguished exteriorization of what comes from inside. It is thus a kind of speech that signals the identification of the living with the dying through the former's incorporation of the latter's unaccounted pain.

Expressing pity for the dead means heeding its call; but it also entails speaking in its place, articulating the pain that is traced upon its remains. Those who grieve thus give voice to the dead; but at the same time, the sound of grieving is associated with the voiding of excess, the "violent" release of "phlegm from congested lungs." Such an imagery suggests that taking on the language of the dead so as to speak on its behalf also brings up the possibility of being overcome by such an identification, thereby rendering oneself unable to speak at all. How so?

The language of the dead, Quiros suggests, has to do with the silence emanating from the wounds of a violated body. In comparing Flor Contemplacion's death with that of Ninoy Aquino's, he writes that what the two had in common was that they gave rise to "more than the shouts of rage"; their deaths also released the "sound of silence breaking."

Ninoy's death broke the silence of muzzled mouths. The hole in his head became the mouth of the nation, the cracks in his skull became the screams of a wounded land. Contemplacion's death broke the silence of fear and trembling. The welt around her neck became the mouth of a volcano, the ruptured veins in her face the screams of a strangled race... Here in Contemplacion's corpse, frozen in the stillness of death, they found their voice. Here in the prison of her coffin, they found a quiver in their vocal chords... and let out a primal scream.<sup>26</sup>

The deaths of Ninoy and Flor open a path to speech that had once been repressed. It is a speech which consists of the sounds of rupture: screams, volcanic-like eruptions, quivers, and tremblings whose "primal" quality convey something of their uncontrollable and involuntary nature. Ninoy and Flor thus share something in common: their ability to furnish, in their deaths, a second language whose appropriation by the living allows them not so much to speak as to successfully evoke the attempt at speaking as one in the face of loss. In their sorrow, the living speak collectively not in their "own" language but in that of the dead.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to note in this connection that the corpse of Ninoy Aquino was displayed without the benefit of a mortician's make-up. His family wanted to "world to see what they

[i.e., the Marcos regime] had done to him."<sup>28</sup> Breaking with conventional practice, Ninoy's family laid his body out in the same bloody state that it had been found at the site of his assassination. Similarly, the corpse of Flor Contemplacion bore the visible marks of the rope used to hang her, while photographs of Delia Maga's strangled and beaten body taken by Singaporean authorities for autopsy purposes had been circulated by the Philippine media during the Gancayco Commission hearings. Such corpses thus could not but arouse fear and anger among those who viewed them. Bearing the marks of unwarranted and unaccounted suffering, these corpses relayed a history of violated bodies that resonated with the everyday violence of dictatorship, development and dispossession experienced by the body politic.

Confronted by disfigured corpses, the living find themselves in the midst of deaths out of place. The dead appear to be not quite dead and so threaten to blur the line that separates them from the living. Mourning the dead, the living are drawn to identify with its history of degradation and thereby take on the shame that is written on the corpse's visage. But doing so raises the danger of becoming an extension of the corpse, as in Quiros' imagery of bullet holes and welts on the dead serving as equivalents of the mouths of the living. In this case, the living could find themselves speaking not in place of the dead but as if they were themselves dying. It is at such moments of potential contagion that the work of mourning is imperilled. Unable to redraw the difference between the living and the dead, public



performances of pity and rage over the deaths of Ninoy and Flor threatened instead to result in an excess of identification.

In Aquino's case, such an excess of identification found its resolution in the EDSA revolt and the expulsion of the Marcoses. As I argued earlier, the sense of loss created by his death was consolidated into a basis for his widow's authority. However, in Contemplacion's case, the sense of loss generated by her execution could not be sublated. Both the Singaporean and Philippine governments seemed inadequate referents of nationalist rage. And often, rage itself was displaced into masculinist guilt, as nationalist writers took to confessing the nation's culpability in sending "our women to live bestial lives abroad" in order "to keep the economy floating."<sup>29</sup>

It was difficult then to definitively assign blame for Flor's death since it seemed to implicate everyone to a greater or lesser degree. Consequently, the sense of generalized grieving, while spurring a series of demonstrations, did not culminate in the spectacular even if temporary undoing of social hierarchy as in the case of the EDSA uprising. It is useful to note in this regard that despite the nationalist denunciations of the plight of Filipina domestic helpers abroad, the conditions of maids at home remained largely obscured and unnoticed. Indeed, other than the resignation of a number of officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs, a brief diplomatic breach between Singapore and the Philippines, and a flurry of popular demands for and official gestures at reforming the policies meant to

protect overseas workers, Flor Contemplacion's death has had relatively little effect in challenging the current order of things. Whereas Ninoy's death transformed the work of mourning into a national undertaking aimed against an authoritarian regime, Flor's death seems to have eluded nationalist closure.

The sound of mourning described by Quiros at Flor's funeral thus could not be transformed into the signal for the arrival of a different social order. Instead, it threatened to become a language devoid of content. In imitating the language of the dead, the living, in this instance, could only repeat the sounds of the corpse's imagined anguish without, however, finding a place for it in the world. Articulating loss as sheer loss, the work of mourning Flor Contemplacion and other OCW's remained incomplete and indefinitely deferred. It is in the midst of mourning's--perhaps, inevitable--inadequacy that gossip circulates. Securing the limits of grief, gossip set about retailing and thereby domesticating the scandal of death out of place.

### "Show Biz" Talk

As we saw previously, one of the major purveyors of gossip in the Philippines is show business. It is in the first instance an industrial media complex that includes producers, directors, actors and technicians. It also counts on the significant work of movie scribes who serve as publicists for movie stars and the film and television projects they appear in. With very rare

exceptions, mass mediated discussions about entertainment in the Philippines takes the form of gossip or "show biz" talk usually in Taglish, the hybrid form of Tagalog, English and Spanish that serves as the lingua franca of the marketplace.<sup>30</sup>

To get a sense of the role of gossip in relation to mourning, I want to consider the writings of Inday Badiday, one of the most recognized movie scribes in the country today.<sup>31</sup> Her radio and television shows attract a wide following and her show biz column "Face to Face" appears regularly in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, one of the country's leading newspapers of record and home to the columns of several respected journalists.

In the days leading up to the funeral of Flor Contemplacion, Inday Badiday wrote a series of columns on the movie deals being made around her story. Referring to Contemplacion's death as "a very hot issue" Badiday calls Flor's corpse a "superstar whose story has all the ingredients of a sure blockbuster." Acknowledging that the dead isn't quite dead, Badiday echoes the interest of film producers. Through movies, the dead is brought back to life and made to work again. Yet, the labor of the dead consists precisely in reassuring the living. There is a sense in which films then enlist the help of the dead in their own mourning. The camera takes the place of the living and views the corpse, rendering its disfigured body into a set of melodramatic narratives available for mechanical reproduction. It recounts what the living, in such close proximity to the dead, may not be

able to say. In this way, movies can claim to extend the logic of mourning. Badiday adds that a film on Contemplacion will have the effect of preserving her memory, keeping "our new superstar" in the "limelight for a long time." Such would have "a positive effect on the general public, including the government.... Talk about consolations!"<sup>32</sup>

By keeping Contemplacion's memory alive, movies will provide a place for Flor's death: they would serve as virtual spaces for keeping her corpse--and more precisely, the thoughts that her corpse give rise to--on display. Films will provide the stories that can be made to fill the void left by the appearance of her wounded body. By portraying the ghastriness of her alienation while alive, movies can contain, in all senses of the word, the ghostliness of her demise. Thus do movies appear to be co-extensive with nationalist attempts at idealizing death, converting the corpse into a site for the circulation of pity and a language of commonality.

However, what movies aim to produce is less a nation of mourners as an audience of consumers. The potential blockbuster value of Flor's death--that is, its ability to mobilize the crowd--means that it would already have been subjected to the calculations of the box office. Once the deals for the stories of Flor and Delia Maga were struck, they became as Badiday writes, "show biz properties." In this way, show biz departs from nationalist desire: it translates the silence of the corpse into the language of money.

That translation requires as the condition of its mass appeal and popular recognition the labor of movie stars. Show biz assumes that without stars, movies will go largely unseen and therefore unprofitable. Indeed, the most significant effect of the deaths of domestic helpers in foreign places is that, according to Badiday, their stories will furnish vehicles with which to boost the careers of certain stars. Within days of the funeral, the announcement was made that the once popular but fading star Nora Aunor would play the role of superstar Flor Contemplacion.<sup>33</sup>

Thanks to the dead, stars can come back from a dying career. At the same time, identifying with the dead allows the stars to bring them back to life. Movies then seem capable of sustaining in the marketplace the enduring fantasy of perfect reciprocity between the living and the dead analogous to that of nationalist mourning. However, the economy of the marketplace differs from the economy of pity in at least one respect. In the marketplace, identities are never stable: consumers can slide into the position of the consumed while the dead live mechanically transformed and enhanced. Whereas mourning seeks to re-establish the line between the living and the dead, movies tend to blur this distinction by commodifying both.

It is the potential for such confusion that is registered and given form by gossip. "Unlike real life," Badiday writes, "juicy items are essential ingredients to spice up the film versions and sustain the interest of the movie going public."

Gossip, like spices, are essential supplements in the preparation of stories for consumption. Dependent on historical events, gossip nonetheless leads a parasitic existence that threatens to distort such events. Badiday again:

Will Flor Contemplacion and Delia Maga ever rest in peace?

People are telling and talking about all sorts of stories about them... stories than can sway opinions, alter beliefs, confuse the public, raise biting and disturbing questions like:

Were Flor and Delia close friends? Would Efren [Flor's husband] remarry? Would Flor's mother commit suicide if a film on her daughter pushed through? When did Efren stop loving Flor? Did she have a boyfriend in Singapore?

Sounds like show biz questions?

Even the serious columns in newspapers and tabloids carry juicy items about Flor and Delia. Nothing wrong with that of course. The writers and editors could always say it's what the readers want; such items attract good readership.<sup>34</sup>

Worth noting about this passage is its odd tone, mixing titillation with apologia. It suggests the inherent intability of gossip as it migrates from the entertainment sections to the front page, from show biz talk to "serious columns." Even

nationalist attempts to condemn gossip, as we saw earlier, requires alluding to, if not relaying, its existence. Gossip as such is contagious, insinuating itself into other forms of writing and speech without itself becoming a separate and distinguishable discourse. By raising questions to which there may not be any answers, gossip also suspends conventions of referentiality. By doing so, it opens up new realms of speculation. Did Flor and Delia have a lesbian affair? Did Efren, Flor's husband, have an incestuous affair with his teenage daughter? Is Efren making millions from selling his dead wife's story? And what exactly did he do with that envelope of money that President Ramos gave him? Indeed, even the Gancayco Commission in its official investigations entertained and thereby circulated all sorts of rumors and conspiracy theories regarding the deaths of Flor and Delia which implicated even the former head of Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew.<sup>35</sup>

What is disturbing about gossip then is that not only does it raise "biting" and unanswerable questions; it also triggers a potentially limitless series of speculations. It is perhaps this combination of the highly speculative with the potentially limitless that lends gossip a scandalous aspect. It does not know where to stop, nor does it care to. It therefore produces the opposite effect of pity: suspicion, disrespect, disbelief, and so forth. And within the context of show biz, gossip invariably reveals the circulation of money in place of pity: it is money that seeks to recussitate the dead, coopting both the corpse and

its family through the attraction of the star.

In the funerals described by Cannell in rural Bicol, money always had a place assigned to it: as part of the donations (abuloy) given by friends and relatives of the bereaved family in order to help with the costs of the funeral. Money could thus be converted into a gift.<sup>36</sup> But in show biz talk, movies and the gossip they generate suggest that money is simultaneously out of place and all over the place. Not unlike the aswang, money comes across thus as a radically alien presence, inserting itself into the cracks of discourse and the spaces of identification. Just as money possesses the movie star, it threatens likewise to possess the corpse and turn it into "show biz property."

It is in light of money's spectrality that we can perhaps understand the popular interest in show biz talk. Gossip anticipates even as it is driven by the constant yet dispersed presence of money. The promiscuity and liquidity of gossip mimic and so signal the approach of money as it seeks to capitalize on the crisis of mourning. It is not surprising that people should greet gossip with a mixture of avidity and anxiety. For gossip alerts one to the workings of money and the danger it poses not only to the dead but to the living as well. Linger on the borders of mourning, gossip intimates in the most prosaic forms the violence of development. It is in this sense that gossip anticipates the inadequacy of mourning and so inoculates one against its failure. Gossip thus continues the work of mourning, albeit in its commodified form. The commodification of mourning,



however, does not foreclose the occasional eruption of mourning for commodified labor, as testified to by recent events and continuing anxieties about the conditions of OCW's. There is then the necessity of recognizing the doubleness of gossip: its capacity to simulate yet sustain the fate of memory in a global capitalist economy. It offers a way, however banal and lurid, of speaking in the face of the unspeakable, of arousing popular interest both indeterminate and wholly calculable, when confronted with disfigured corpses of migratory laborers such as those of Delia Maga and Flor Contemplacion.

#### Biographical Note.

Vicente L. Rafael teaches at the Department of Communication, University of California at San Diego. He has recently edited Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures, (Philadelphia, 1995) and is the author of Contracting Colonialism (Durham, 1993) as well as several other essays on Philippine political culture.

Notes

1. Quote found on a button in a local record store in San Diego, California.
  
2. In doing so, I have sought to retrace Benedict Anderson's suggestion of nationalism's intrinsic dependence on death as a means of "command[ing]... profound emotional legitimacy" in his now classic work, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, 2nd edition, London: Verso, 1991, 4, 10-11, 204-206. See also my essay, "Nationalism, Imagery and the Filipino Intelligentsia of the Nineteenth Century," in Discrepant History: Translocal Essays in Filipino Cultures, edited by Vicente L. Rafael, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995, 133-158. For drawing me to reflect on the affective politics of nationalism, I thank Brian Mussumi whose dense and yet to be published essay, "The Political Economy of Belonging and the Logic of Relation," has been richly suggestive.
  
3. Karl Schoenberger, "Living Off Expatriate Labor," Los Angeles Times, August 1, 1994, 1.
  
4. Quoted in Schoenberger, *ibid.*, p.A16.
  
5. See Jonathan Okamura, "The Filipino American Diaspora: Sites of Space, Time and Ethnicity," in Gary Y. Okihiro, ed., Privileging Sites: Positions in Asian American Studies, Pullman, WA: Washington

State University Press, forthcoming; Su Cheng Chan, Asian Americans: An Interpretive History, Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1991; and Yen Le Espiritu, "The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, and Class: The Multiple Identities of Second-Generation Filipinos," Identities, v.1, no. 2, 1-25, and Filipino-American Lives, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. See also the brilliant essay by Neferti X. Tadiar, "The Alimentary Struggle of Dogeaters," forthcoming in positions.

6. Among the "tons and tons of baggage" that Quiros refers to are large boxes commonly known as "balikbayan boxes" which have been staple features of balikbayan identity for the last twenty five years. Supplanting the discarded boxes of computer equipment, canned goods and Pampers diapers that were used in the 1970s and early 1980s to pack gifts (pasalubongs) that visiting immigrants felt obliged to bring back to their relatives in the Philippines, standardized cardboard boxes marked "balikbayan box" began to be manufactured by enterprising Filipino-American entrepreneurs in the mid-1980s. As with the found boxes used in an earlier period, balikbayan boxes conform to airline regulations on the maximum allowable size of checked-in baggage. Large enough to contain the quantities and variety of pasalubongs, balikbayan boxes are also cheap and disposable alternatives to more costly suitcases.

Such boxes are the material evidence of immigrant success as much as they are symbolic of the promise of immigration itself. Thus do they constitute the materialization of a desire realizable

only outside of the nation, yet recognizable only within its borders. The balikbayan box is thus a kind of social hieroglyph indexing a Filipino-American immigrant social formation predicated on the improvisation and subsequent standardization of a hybrid "type": a subject at once neo-colonial and national. I thank Rudy and Cecile Martija, Bayani Rafael and Rosemary Rafael for shedding light on the matter of balikbayan boxes.

7. Conrado de Quiros, "Bracing for Balikbayans," in Flowers from the Rubble, Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1990, 139-141. All references to this text will appear in the main body of the essay.

8. See Constantino for classic formulation of this, Mis-Education of the Filipino, Manila: 1966.

9. For discussions of the historical importance of walang hiya see Reynaldo Ileto, Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1840-1940, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1980; Vicente L. Rafael, Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

10. See Yen Espiritu, "the Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, and Class: The Multiple Identities of Second-Generation Filipinos," in Identities, v.1, no.2, 1994, 1-25 for a lucid account of the

cultural transformations of "Filipino-ness" in late twentieth century U.S.

11. See for example the rivetting accounts of OCW's in Japan in Rey Ventura, Underground in Japan, London: Jonathan Cape, 1992 and Maria Rosario P. Ballescas, Filipino Entertainers in Japan: An Introduction, Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1992. Also instructive are the collected letters from OCW's in Justino Dormiendo, Nagmamahal, Flor: Mga Liham Mula sa Mga OCW, Pasig: Anvil Publishing, 1995.

See also The Labor Trade: Filipino Migrant Workers Around the World, London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1987; and Jane Margold, "Narratives of Masculinity and Transnational Migration: Filipino Workers in the Middle East," in Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia, ed. by Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 274-298.

12. See for example the letters of OCW's in Justino Dormiendo, Nagmamahal, Flor: Mga Sulat Mula sa OCW, Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1995.

13. Jo-Ann Maglipon, "DH in HK," in Primed: Selected Stories, 1972-1992, Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1993, 45-53.

14. See Reynaldo Ileto, "Rizal and the Underside of Philippine History," in David Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, editors, Moral Order and The Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought, New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Program Series, 1982, 274-337; "Tagalog Poetry and the Perception of the Past in the War Against Spain," in Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia, ed. by David Marr and Anthony Reid, Singapore: Heineman, 1979, 374-400; "The Unfinished Revolution in Philippine Political Discourse," in Tonan Ajia Kenkyu, (Southeast Asian Studie, Kyoto), v.31, n.1, June 1993, 62-82; "The Past in the Present Crisis," in The Philippines After Marcos, ed. by Ron May and Francisco Nemenzo, London: Croom Helm, 1985, 7-16; "Orators and the Crowd: Philippine Independence Politics, 1910-1941," in Reappraising an Empire, ed. by Peter Stanley, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984, 85-114; and his book Pasyon and Revolution.

15. The citations from above appear respectively in Jerry Barrican, "Anybody But Lakas," The Manila Chronicle, March 19, 1995, 5; and "Rage, Rage," March 19, 1995 Philippine Daily Inquirer, " hereafter referred to as PDI.

16. The quote is from James T. Siegel and Kenji Tsuchiya, "Invincible Kitsch, or As Tourists in the Age of Des Alwi," in Indonesia, 50, October 1990, 61-76.

17. The quotes are from PDI, March 19, 1995, p.12; and The Straits Times (Singapore), hereafter cited as ST, April 17, 1995. My thanks to Profs. C.J. Wan-Ling and Paul Kratoska for generously providing me with copies of this newspaper.

18. PDI, March 29, 1995, 1.

19. The quotes above come from Gerard Ramos, "Turning Tragedy into Profit," PDI, March 28, 1995, 7; and Teddy Casino, "Flor Contemplacion (the Movie)," PDI, March 29, 1995, 8.

20. Raul J. Palabrica, "Crime Pays for Some Movie Producers," PDI, April 1, 1995, 5.

21. Vicente L. Rafael, "Anticipating Nationhood: Collaboration and Rumor in the Japanese Occupation of Manila," Diaspora, v.1, no.1, Spring 1991, 67-82. For a penetrating discussion of rumors, gossip and other forms of "idle talk" in relation to everyday life, see Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 211-217. I thank Jim Siegel for bringing this text to my attention.

22. Fenella Cannell, "Catholicism, Spirit Mediums and the Ideal of Beauty in a Bicolano Community in the Philippines," unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Universtiy of London, 1991, 221-230.

23. My understanding of the work of mourning is indebted to the classic account by Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, edited and translated by James Strachey, 24 volumes, London, 1953-74, v.14, 239-60. See also the brilliant ethnographies of mourning in Marilyn Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 141-191; and James T. Siegel, Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, 257-276.

24. Accounts of the funeral and its immediate aftermath can be found in PDI and ST issues between 27-29 March 1995.

25. Conrado de Quiros, "Phenomenon," PDI, March 27, 1995, 6.

26. Ibid.

27. To get a sense of the historical origins of death as the locus for reconceiving linguistic and social hierarchy, see Vicente L. Rafael, "Paradise and the Reinvention of Death," in Contracting Colonialism, 167-209.

28. See Socorro Engaño-Sapnit, ed., Ninoy: Ideals and Ideologies, 1932-1983, Hongkong: Sanford Printing Press, 1993 for the Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation, Inc. The quotation is from Ninoy's



mother, Doña Aurora Aquino cited in p.149. Photographs of Ninoy's corpse as it was displayed in public appear on pp.82-86. My thanks to David and Rina Rafael for providing me with this book.

29. Teodoro Benigno, cited in Nimma Gosh, "Manila Turns Maid's Case into Singapore Bashing," ST, March 22, 1995, 27. Guilt itself could metamorphosize into "shame" then back into guilt again as in Jessica Zafra's remarks: "Maybe deep down inside our collective psyche, we're ashamed that our people have to go abroad and get pushed around so their families at home can lead decent lives. Maybe we're guilty because we can't take care of our own people, so we allow them to get maltreated in other lands while the dollars they send back fuel our ecoomy" in "The Long Hot Simmer," Today, April 1, 1995, B5.

30. For a discussion of the history of Taglish, see Vicente L. Rafael, "Taglish, or The Phantom Power of the Lingua Franca," Public Culture, v.8, n.1, 1995, 101-126.

31. "Inday Badiday" is the pen name of Lourdes Jimenez Carvajal. Raised in an upper middle class family in Manila, she started her show biz career in the middle of the 1960s and took on a pen name to save her family from the potential embarrassment of being associated with such working class proclivities as movie stars and Tagalog movies. My thanks to Lulu Reyes for this information.

32. Inday Badiday, "Flor, The Superstar," PDI, March 25, 1995, C5.
33. "Nora Plays Die-Hard Noranian in Flor Movie," PDI, 29 March 95, p.1; Badiday, "The Other Superstar," PDI. April 1, 1995, C2.
34. Inday Badiday, "Flor and Delia's Never-Ending Story," PDI, April 8, 1995, D4.
35. See "Vicious Rumors," PDI, March 23, 1995, 7; and the ST issues of April 20 and 24, 1995, which detail the rumors regarding the drugging, torture and rape of Contemplacion in prison.
36. Cannell, "Catholicism," pp.224-30.

