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Crip'in Migration: Examining the Elderly Migrant Experience in Filipino American Literature

A thesis in partial satisfaction of

the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Asian American Studies

by

Edward Kenneth Nadurata

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Crip'in Migration: Examining the Elderly Migrant Experience

in Filipino American Literature

by

Edward Kenneth Nadurata

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Lucy M. Burns, Chair

This study focuses on the experiences of elderly migrants, specifically those who move to the United States during the later stages of their life, as they are depicted in works of literature from the United States and the Philippines. Specifically, I focus on two groups of late-life migrants that are omnipresent in Filipino America today: Filipino grandparents and Filipino World War II veterans. With Filipinos being portrayed and positioned as a global labor force for the world, I locate the position of elderly Filipino migrants in our understandings of contemporary migration and globalization. I highlight the importance of interrogating age and ability as analytics in our analyses of the lived experiences of these late-life migrants to the United States and how literature provides us new ways of seeing these elderly migrants beyond their dependence on the family, the state, and their desires to return home.

This thesis of Edward Kenneth Nadurata is approved.

Juliann T. Anesi

Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo

Lucy M. Burns, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

To lolo and lola, for everything and more.

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UCLA has been the best place to see if graduate school and academia was for me. I would like to thank Keith Camacho, Valerie Matsumoto, Purnima Mankekar, Tritia Toyota, Grace Hong and Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo for their teaching and whose grad seminars allowed me to explore my interests and helped with how I conceptualized my project. Taking classes with them validated my questions and affirmed that there was a place in academia for me. Institutionally, my research and education have received important support from the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, UCLA Graduate Division, and especially the UCLA Institute of American Cultures.

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While graduate school can often be lonely, I realize now that it doesn't have to be. During my first quarter at UCLA, Keith Camacho advised us that it would be smart to form a writing group. Although I did not do this til my second year, I realize now that it was more of a call to

find a community of people who are invested in each other's growth. I would like to thank friends and colleagues that I have met in the department and have made my time at UCLA memorable. Thank you to my cohort: Jade Verdeflor, Dean/na Gao, Josephine Ong, Christian Gella and Lan Nguyen for a fun first year filled with jokes and food. Having six in a cohort was cozy and comforting. I have learned a lot from you all. My conversations with my cohort and Ella Bersola, Paul Mendoza, June Kuoch, Micaella Libunao, and Kathleen Corpuz fill my head with memories of laughter and a sense of relief. They make academia fun and worth it! I would like to especially thank Tiffany Wang-Su Tran, Maliya Lor, James Huynh, Ruben De Leon, Demiliza Saramosing, and Stephanie Chang for their support with my writing and graduate school in general. It is with them that I found comradeship and support in all sense of the word, whether in or outside the academy. Rolfe Hall would be less fun if it were not for them.

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Tita Elsa, Tita Helen, and Lola Sita have supported me for as long as I can remember. Life in Los Angeles would not be the same without them. I would like to thank my family in the Philippines for housing me and feeding me during my visits in the Philippines especially my cousins Nicole, Ian, and Chloe, and my aunts and uncle Lisa Nadurata, Linda and Raoul Villaseñor. I'm glad that I was finally be able to go home and see them after so long. They make Manila home once again. I especially want to thank my grandparents Eddie and Charing for being the inspiration behind all this. My grandparents decided to retire when me and my cousins were born so that they could watch over us while our parents were at work. They would drop us off and pick us up when we were kids and we never left the house without our *baons*. It is with their love and guidance that I learned to love being in school. They are all over these pages, even if sometimes only visible to my eyes.

I chose to apply to UCLA because I would have the chance to live at home with my family once again. Although the commute definitely made it challenging, I wouldn't trade the past two years for anything if it meant being far from them. My brother is a constant inspiration to find the joy in the simplest of things. He is a reminder that work isn't everything and that I should take a break, slow down, and enjoy the present. All of this would not be possible if it were not for my parents. They have always been a source of unconditional love, support, and inspiration. My world is bigger and the possibilities for my future are endless because of them. With them by my side, I can do anything and everything in the world. It is from them that I learn the most crucial and important of things and I can only hope to give back and make them proud.

Introduction: On Using Age and Ability as Analytics for Migration

> Her name was Eudocia Tomas Pulido. We called her *Lola*. She was 4 foot 11, with mocha-brown skin and almond eyes that I can still see looking into mine—my first memory. She was 18 years old when my grandfather gave her to my mother as a gift, and when my family moved to the United States, we brought her with us. No other word but *slave* encompassed the life she lived.
>
> — Alex Tizon, "My Family's Slave"[1]

In 2017, *The Atlantic* posthumously published an article penned by the late Pulitzer Prize winning Filipino-American journalist, Alex Tizon, called "My Family's Slave." The essay recounts the life of Eudocia Tomas Pulido or "lola" who was given as a gift to Tizon's mother and served as the family's "slave" or "indentured servant" throughout his life. I open my thesis with this epigraph, not necessarily to highlight nor to critique the article but to point out Tizon's usage of the word *lola* to refer to Pulido. The uproar that ensued after the article went viral mainly focused on class issues in the Philippines, human trafficking, and even the equation of slavery to a Filipino body.[2] Yet no attention was given to the fact that the moniker that was given to Pulido was the word for grandmother in Tagalog. My analysis of "My Family's Slave" does not completely address the specificities of Pulido's life in the United States and the manner to which she migrated here but what I wish to point out is the invocation of *lola* in relation to the normalization of her labor.

I start with "My Family's Slave" to highlight the centrality of the elderly in how we imagine community and familial formations in Filipino American communities. As Tizon

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[1] Alex Tizon, "My Family's Slave," https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/lolas-story/524490/

[2] *The Atlantic* published readers' reactions after the publication of "My Family's Slave" which can be found at https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2017/06/lola-twitter-responses/529299/ and more formal think pieces to the article under their "contemporary slavery" category: https://www.theatlantic.com/business/category/contemporary-slavery/. Historian Vicente Rafael also points out the incongruencies of indentured labor in the Philippines to antebellum American slavery and the dangers of conflating the two (https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/05/lola-unconquered/527964/). Philippine cultural critics like Caroline Hau has commented on the importance of thinking about the conditions of the katulongs/kasambahays or maids in the Philippines (https://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/170451-56-years-slave-lola-eudocia-pulido).

narrates the life of Pulido, it is clear that filial relations have been used to mask Pulido's position as indentured labor for the eyes of those who did not know the Tizon's true relations to Pulido.

> Lola would come out to serve food and drinks during games, and my parents would smile and thank her before she quickly disappeared. "Who's that little lady you keep in the kitchen?," Big Jim, the Missler patriarch, once asked. A relative from back home, Dad said. Very shy.
>
> When I once referred to Lola as a distant aunt, Billy reminded me that when we'd first met I'd said she was my grandmother.

The usage of the word *lola* to refer to Pulido is a discursive maneuver to include her in the family-unit as the family's grandmother, or distant relative who is there to support the family at large. Her legibility as a subject relies on her "functioning" as a grandmother. To those outside the Tizons, her representation as "lola" occludes them from knowing her circumstances because of the naturalizing effects of being a grandmother as someone who cooks, cleans, etc. This forces people to deduce that her presence in the United States was the result of family reunification rather than exploitation.[3] The invocation of the word *lola* removes us from examining Pulido's intricate and complicated migration story as someone who was trafficked by the Tizon family and the exploitative condition we find her in as narrated in the article. The publication of "My Family's Slave" and the elision of the *lola* as a figure in the critiques and analyses related to Tizon's essay show the taken-for-granted position of the elderly migrant, and the elderly at large, as those who perform the crucial reproductive labor that is often relegated to "non-productive" members of the family who do not "work."

My thesis focuses on the experiences of elderly migrants, specifically those who move to the United States during the later stages of their life, as they are depicted in works of literature

[3] While the invocation of the word lola is used to hide the fact that Eudocia Pulido was trafficked into the United States, it is also true that exploitation can easily and does occur in the family unit.

from the United States and the Philippines. Specifically, I focus on two groups of late-life migrants that are omnipresent in Filipino America today: Filipino grandparents and Filipino World War II veterans. With Filipinos being portrayed and positioned as a global labor force for the world, I am interested in locating the position of elderly Filipino migrants in our understandings of contemporary migration and globalization. I highlight the importance of interrogating age and ability as analytics in our analyses of the lived experiences of these late-life migrants to the United States and how literature provides us new ways of seeing these elderly migrants beyond their dependence on the family, the state, and their desires to return home.

Although much work has been done on Filipino migration and diaspora, there is a lack of scholarship that critically engages elderly Filipino migrants who relocate to the United States. The important work of scholars like Robyn Rodriguez and Anna Romina Guevarra, in their exploration of the Philippines' development as a labor brokerage state during the Marcos period, show how the Philippines is complicit in constructing, training, marketing, and exporting its own people for their labor to places all over the world.[4] The importance of the Philippines as a labor-sending nation is clearly seen with scholarship in Filipino Studies because of the focus the field has given to those who provide the productive and reproductive labor that is needed abroad.[5] Filipino migration, however, and the reliance of the United States on the productive labor that Filipino contribute to the United States did not start during the Marcos regime and its exportation of laborers to the Global North. Amidst exclusionary immigration laws that barred Chinese,

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[4] Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*, University of Minnesota Press 2010; Anna Romina Guevarra, *Manufacturing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: The Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers*, Rutgers University Press 2010.

[5] Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*, Duke University Press 2003 for the United States, and Megha Amrith, *Caring for Strangers: Filipino Medical Workers in Asia,* Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) Press 2017, Neferti X. M. Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experiences and the Makings of Globalization,* Duke University Press, 2009.

Japanese, and South Asians from migrating to the United States, American colonization of the Philippines in 1898 rendered Filipinos the status of American nationals which allowed them to move freely through the United States's borders. Indeed, many scholars have explored the lives of the Filipinos who moved to the United States before 1965, who were mostly young able-bodied men who worked as farmworkers, cannery workers, and domestic servants in places like Hawaii, California, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest.[6]

Scholarship on Filipinos, however, has also increasingly focused on the migration of Filipinos to the Global North for their reproductive labor. Martin Manalansan points out that "Filipinos have been synonymous with [the] care industry across the world" because of Filipino dominance in the global care economy.[7] Rhacel Parreñas's theorizes the "international division of reproductive labor" in writing about "how the global economy is formed not only by the trade in material goods and productive labor but also by the purchase of services and reproductive labor."[8] In Parrenas' work we see the need for Filipino laborers who come to places like the United States and Italy to perform the crucial work needed for social reproduction like home making, cleaning, and taking care of children and the elderly, so that those that employ them can

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[6] See the work of Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941,* University of California Press 2003; JoAnna Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire: Filipino and Puerto Rican Laborers in Hawai'i,* University of Illinois Press 2014; Linda España Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s,* Columbia University Press 2006; Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California,* Duke University Press 2013; and Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946,* New York University Press 2011, to name a few.

[7] Martin F. Manalansan IV, "Servicing the World: Flexible Filipinos and the Unsecured Life" in *Political Emotions: New Agendas in Communication,* edited by Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds, Routledge 2010, 215. Again, the books by Megha Amrith and Catherine Choy talks about the importance of Filipino nurses and medical workers in Asia and the United States.

[8] Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work, 2nd ed.*, Stanford University Press 2015.

work outside the home.[9] Harrod Suarez's theorization of the diasporic maternal further interrogates how "Filipina/os circulate the nation and world through positions having to do with nurture, care, and service of different kinds" and how "the Philippines enters modernity through its own kind of nurture, care, and service to the global economy." [10] The legibility of the Philippines and the laborers it exports are only legible if read under the conditions of the waged labor that they produce, whether they be productive or reproductive labor.[11] This focus on the waged laborer invisibilizes the crucial positions that elderly migrants inhibit as agents of social reproduction.

The portrayal of the movement of Filipino bodies from the Philippines to the Global North have been problematized in recent work in the Filipino Studies. Eric Pido's work on return migration and development in Manila show the growth of what he calls a "*balikbayan* economy" that targets Filipinos abroad to invest in real estate development in the Philippines designed for return migrants.[12] However, the focus of such work is still on the cohort of Filipinos who moved to the United States as labor migrants due to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Furthermore, we see that movement to the United States is no longer required to be implicated in global economies that seek cheap labor. As seen with Allan Isaac and Jan Padios's work on the development of the call center industry in the Philippines, Filipino workers can now temporally

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[9] Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers*, 2nd ed, Cornell University Press, 2007.

[10] Harrod J. Suarez, *The Work of Mothering: Globalization and the Filipino Diaspora*, University of Illinois Press, 2017.

[11] Other works that explore issues related to Filipinos and care work are Martin F. Manalansan, "Quering the Chain of Care Paradigm," S & F Online, no.3 (2008), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/immigration/print_manalansan.htm and Allan Punzalan Isaac, "In a Precarious Time and Place: The Refusal to Wallow and Other Migratory Temporal Investments in Care Divas, the Musical," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, vol. 19, no.1 (2016).

[12] Eric J. Pido, *Migrant Returns: Manila, Development, and Transnational Connectivity,* Duke University Press 2018.

be in the United States while physically being in the Philippines, as they work overnight to receive calls regarding products and services that are offered by multinational companies that cater to those who live in the Global North.[13]

In 1965 the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished nation based immigration quotas and ushered in a shift in migration because of the possibility of a family reunification. While it was more common to migrate as a bachelor before 1965, the Hart-Celler Act, allowed for the migrant's immediate family to be petitioned and to move with them to the United States. It is on this vein that my work dialogues with the field of Filipino Studies, by looking at elderly migrants who migrate to the United States through family reunification. Additionally, I examine the lives of Filipino World War II veterans that were allowed to move to the United States to become U.S. citizens due to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990. It is important to make this distinction clear, that I specifically focus on these groups of migrants because of the fact that they moved to the United States when they were already old. While there are writings on post 1965 elderly migrants including Pido's work, these migrants are still those who grew old in the United States and did not move during their old age. Jennifer Nazareno along with Parreñas and Yu-Kang Fan, in collaboration with the Pilipino Worker's Center in Los Angeles explores this further by looking at the growing phenomenon of elderly domestic workers in Los Angeles and the elusiveness of retirement.[14] The second edition of Parreñas' book *Servants of Globalization,*

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[13] Allan Punzalan Isaac, "Offshore Identities: Ruptures in the 300-Second Average Handling Time" in *Archipelafic American Studies* edited by Brian Russell and Michelle Ann Stephens, Duke University Press 2017, Jan M. Padios, *A Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines,* Duke University Press 2018.

[14] Jennifer Nazareno, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, Yu-Kang Fan, "Can I Ever Retire: The Plight of Migrant Filipino Elderly Caregivers," Los Angeles: Pilipino Workers Center, 2014. https://irle.ucla.edu/old/publications/documents/CanIEverRetirePolicyReportIRLE.pdf

also looks at the false promises of retirement for migrant domestic workers.[15] While Parreñas does look at age, her focus on waged reproductive work is one that differentiates her study, and one that I will build on later.

My focus on elderly migrants puts me in dialogue with the field of Gerontology. Adrian N. S. Badana and Ross Andel point out that aging is under-theorized in the Philippines and most focus on "perceptions of aging, quality of life of older Filipinos, and older adults in the workforce."[16] This lack of theorization is alarming for them and both call for the government to revamp its law in order to care for this growing subset of the Philippine population. Lindy Williams and Lita Domingo highlight the positions of elderly Filipinos and the interdependence that is displayed in the family unit in their study.[17] Williams and Domingo assert that the elderly maintain a certain authority over the entire family depending on factors such as health, income, and property ownership. Furthermore, they explore family dynamics when elderly parents end up depending on their children and how many of them end up feeling like a burden. Additionally Madalyn Iris explores the idea of "successful aging" and the pressures that may be added to immigrants who move to the United States at an older age.[18] Her work illuminates the different understanding about aging depending on where someone is. It is clear that migration can often be a disruptive event in one's life course. Iris addresses the experiences of elderly migrants in relation to aging compared to those who are from the United States and "age in place" who are

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[15] Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "The Aging of Migrant Domestic Workers" in *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work, 2nd ed.,* Stanford University Press 2015.

[16] Adrian N. S. Badana and Ross Angel, "Aging in the Philippines," *Gerontologist, 2018, Vol. 00, No. 0, 1-7.*

[17] Lindy Williams and Lita J. Domingo. "The Social Status of Elderly Women and Men within the Filipino Family." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 55, no. 2, 1993, pp. 415–26.

[18] Madelyn Iris, "Aging and Transnational Immigration" in *Applying Anthropology in the Global Village* edited by Chistina Watson, et. al. (Left Coast Press 2012).

often viewed as those who are aging more successfully. It is clear that elderly family members take on important roles in the Filipino family, which may answer the reason why many elderly Filipinos move to the United States. Through gerontology, we are able to see how Filipinos grow old and the effects of globalization and neoliberalism. In taking aging into account in our analyses of migration, we can examine the difference in the experiences of elderly migrants compared to those who migrate when they were younger and extend the theorization on aging as a phenomenon.

It is at the intersections of aging and migration that this work is in conversation with Disability Studies. As Kathleen Woodward puts it, "aging is not yet a keyword in disability studies."[19] Aging as a biological process is often combined with the deterioration of physical capabilities and modified interactions with society at large (loss of independence, living in a nursing home, to name a few). Woodward again reminds us that we must "[think] about old age as a time in our lives when bodily vulnerability and changed generational relations present new problems–and challenges."[20] In her book, she theorizes that in old age, humans feel a sense of completion, but despite this wholeness is faced with a deteriorating body, which alienates them from themselves.[21] Although her focus is on the fragmenting representations of the aging body, I want to point out that Woodward is not saying that these depictions are correct; rather, she questions these Western representations and challenges us to view aging differently. What

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[19] Kathleen Woodward, "Aging" in *Keywords for Disability Studies,* New York University Press 2015.

[20] Kathleen Woodward, *Aging and its Discontents*, Indiana University Press 1991, 21.

[21] Woodward writes, "In old age, as the images of the body as a broken doll and the body as a stiff glove imply, the psyche and the body are inevitable congruent. The psyche longs for youth, and the body is an insult and an impediment." Aging and its Discontents, 188. Her use of psychoanalysis pushes the argument that bodies are fragmented in old age, an idea I discuss in relation to migration in Chapter 2.

challenges, then, do elderly migrants face specifically because they are migrating at an old age? How might we read elderly migration and their depictions in literature not as a loss but as resistance?

Through the lens of Disability Studies, I take up the importance of using age and ability as an analytic in the study of migration. There are two prevailing models of disability that scholars and activist use in their theorizations, organizing, and discussion.[22] The medical model was conceptualized in regards to physical differences that occur through genetics or accidents. On the other hand, the social model of disability, differentiates between an impairment and a disability. For those who adhere to this latter model of disability, an impairment is akin to the definitions of the medical model while a disability is the effects of how society as a whole respond to those impairments. The social model of disability is laid out by the textbook example of those who use wheelchairs, as pointed out by Joel Michael Reynolds.[23] While a person who has an impairment needs to use a wheelchair, the construction of the world without ramps and accessible accommodations for wheelchair users is the disability.

While both models offer crucial perspectives on disability, I follow Allison Kafer's theorization of a political/relational model of disability where "the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and ways of being."[24] Although seemingly similar to the social model of disability, Kafer's critique lies more on the social

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[22] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 5-6.

[23] Joel Michael Reynolds, "The Extended Body: On Aging, Disability, and Well-being," What Makes a Good Life in Late Life? Citizenship and Justice in Aging Societies, special report, Hastings Center Report 48, no. 5 (2018): S31-S36.

[24] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 6.

model's distinction between impairments and disability. For Kafer, this distinction tends to overlook the disabling effects of the body over the influence of society, and forgets that disability affects everyone. As Kafer puts it, "disability is experienced in and through relationships; it does not occur in isolation."[25] I use the political/relational model of disability in my work, because it is exactly at the intersection of aging and migration where the distinctions between the medical and social models of disability become blurry.

Lastly, it is important to point out that throughout my thesis, I use the term *crip*. Robert McRuer reminds us that in taking up crip, we stand in opposition to both the medical and social model of disability. Furthermore, the genesis of the term crip in Disability Studies and the emergence of what we call Crip Theory, stands with its " flamboyant defiance [that] ties it to models of disability...that are more culturally generative (and politically radical) than a merely reformist social model."[26] Akin to the reclamation of the word queer and the development of Queer Studies, crip and Crip Theory are rooted in an investment in political and social change that can have material effects to those who are marginalized because of their disabilities. Additionally, Crip Theory's questions lie on the interrogation of the binaristic relationship between ability and disability. To claim crip then, as Alison Kafer points out, "is to recognize the ethical, epistemic, and political responsibilities behind such claims; deconstructing the binary between disabled and able-bodied/able-minded requires more attention to how different bodies/ minds are treated differently, not less."[27] To claim crip and to crip our understandings of the

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[25] Ibid 8.

[26] Robert McRuer, *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance*, New York University Press, 2018, 19.

[27] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 13.

elderly migrant experience is to align ourselves and our questions to a radical critique that demands change rather than reform. To crip is to connect the experiences of the grandparents and veterans that I examine, to other marginalized groups: queers, the disabled, people of color, and to create coalitions and understanding that their specific marginalization under neoliberalism and globalization are not discrete phenomena but are interlinked.

On Literature

In this thesis I look at two literary works: *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* by Pati Navalta Poblete and *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street* by Benjamin Pimentel. My turn to literature in examining the lives and experiences of these elderly migrants is deliberate. I follow Neferti Tadiar approach of looking at literature for its creative possibilities. In doing so, we see how creative possibility "recasts lived experience so that it no longer takes the form of incontrovertible social fact but instead takes on the experimental character of literature itself."[28] For Tadiar, literary works are the author's reimaginings of life's new possibilities under the conditions in which they were writing in. In turn, literature provides "theoretical perspectives on both dominant and residual cultural logics of social life."[29] If elderly migrants are measured by their participation in capitalist economy, literature allows us to read against their valuation as potential laborers and players of globalization and understand them as actual subjects beyond their "productivity."

If elderly migrants are faced with the inevitability of death, literature provides us with immortality for their stories. The fact that both *The Oracles* and *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street*

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[28] Neferti X. Tadiar. *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of* Globalization. Duke University Press 2009. 17.

[29] Ibid.

are based on the memories of their authors provide us with an archive for examining the lives of those who move to the United States during the latter part of their lives. The use of literature extends our current purview and understanding of contemporary migration and globalization. In examining these two works, we are allowed to be transported to the worlds of the authors who wrote these books and see why these stories mattered to them. As such, we move beyond the valuation of these elderly migrants under capitalist logics to their affective importance in Filipino America.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter 1, I look at the memoir, *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*, by Pati Navalta Poblete, to examine the lives of elderly grandparents who migrate to the United States through the mechanisms of family reunification. First, I think through the formation of Filipino American Migration Studies and its focus on the waged laborer as its normative subject. I then look at the figure of the grandparent and the creation of their identity as dependents through the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. I argue that looking at elderly migrants as dependents does not take into account the complexity of their and their family's lived experience in the United States. I also examine the unsettling potential of Filipino elderly migrants in the lives of their families and in Filipino American Studies. Lastly, I look at the memoir as a form and its reliance on memories as a way to examine the lived experiences of elderly migrants. I argue that memoirs like *The Oracles* can in turn help us honor those who came before us and think of alternative futures inspired by the conditions and lives of elderly migrants .

Chapter 2 moves away from the family and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, to the lives of Filipino World War II veterans in *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street (The Guerillas of*

Powell Street), by Benjamin Pimentel. This chapter looks at the concept of return and how returning to the Philippines pervades the imagination of these elderly veterans in San Francisco. I discuss the ways in which age and ability have always been central to the relationship between veterans and the United States. Additionally, I show how the migration of these veterans are implicated in the neoliberal multicultural logic and geopolitical interests of the United States. Lastly, I examine the transformation and possibilities of return for these veterans through literature and how their stories can take on a second life to inspire and inform future generations in creating change.

My coda turns to my own experiences of return to the Philippines and my experience in Manila during two trips over the last year. I reflect on the future trajectory of my work that focuses on the intersections of aging and globalization and how aging itself is changing in the Philippines.

Chapter 1: Unsettling Dependencies: Filipino Grandparents and the Politics of the Memoir in *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*[30]

On a cold December morning, doors opened to welcome Filipinos who were gathered outside a Catholic church in Atwater Village to participate in the Filipino tradition of *simbang gabi*. This nine day novena mass was held in preparation for Christmas and was heavily attended by many Filipinos who lived around Northeast Los Angeles. Truthfully, the celebration of such traditions serve as a mark of a strong Filipino history in a community. Such is the case for this parish which claims to be one of the first in Los Angeles to celebrate the *simbang gabi* in honor of the many Filipino parishioners that worshipped and prayed under its dimly lit halls.

Amidst yawns and the smell of strong incense, the deacon stood up and cleared his throat for his sermon. People clad in nursing scrubs or sweats, sat up and raised their heads to show that they were trying to pay attention and resist the urge to sleep. For a practicing Catholic like me, who has attended *simbang gabi* since my childhood in the Philippines, the deacon's choice to talk about how *simbang gabi* became a Filipino tradition was of no surprise.[31] As a matter of fact, this was his sermon for the first mass the year before as well.

This year, however, was quite different. After spending some time tracing the *simbang gabi's* history, the deacon started to reflect on the importance of the family during Christmas. While seemingly a banal point, especially during the Holidays, what prompted the deacon's rumination was more tragic. A few days before, his friend who worked as a nurse at one of the

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[30] While Poblete's book is titled The Oracles, she also refers to her grandparents as The Oracles. Throughout the chapter, I use the italicized version to refer to the book and the normal typography when referring to her grandparents.

[31] The simbang gabi is a long-standing tradition for Filipino Catholics. It is said that the masses are held between 3 am and 5 am because the church has to accommodate its Filipino parishioners who worked as farmers. This is because they had to work long days harvesting and tending the fields.

many local hospitals in Los Angeles had to find her quickest way back to the Philippines. She had received the tragic news that her mother was on her deathbed, and that there was no time left. The deacon asserted that during this season, we should see the importance and the value of our families, unlike the nurse who "didn't even bother petitioning her mother to live in the United States." His comment struck me. Clearly, family reunification is not a choice, but an obligation for some in the Filipino community.

This chapter offers a critical reading of *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* by Pati Navalta Poblete, a memoir published in 2006 which recounts the author's life and memories of growing up with both maternal and paternal sets of grandparents in Northern California.[32] In my close of reading of this text, I focus on the lives of these elderly migrants to question the reliance of Filipino Migration Studies on the waged laborer as its normative subject. Informed by Crip theory and Disability Studies, I read the author's grandparents as crip migrants in order to trace their unsettling potential for our understandings of Filipino America. Furthermore, I reframe dependence as it relates to these late-life migrants who were petitioned by their children to the United States and the creation of dependent categories through the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Lastly I look at the memoir as a form and how its dependence on memories can offer new ways of understanding elderly migrants and their migration to the United States that look at their value beyond the labor the provide. How might we (re)imagine ourselves and our communities when we listen, document, and memorialize the quotidian experiences of elderly migrants in the United States?

The Elderly Question and the Politics of Productivity

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[32] Pati Navalta Poblete. *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America.* Heyday Books. 2006.

Filipino migration, and Asian migration at large, has always and is still is implicated on the United States' need for human capital. The United State's reliance on racialized labor for its economic growth and development, additionally has contributed to maintaining the legacies of native dispossession that was crucial to the formation of the US settler state.[33] With this I pose two question on the formation of Filipino Migration Studies at large: Is the subject of Filipino Migration Studies just tied to waged labor? What is the place of the elderly in our discussion of contemporary migration and globalization?

In a way this focus on waged labor is of no surprise as Asian migration to the United States has been regulated through multiple exclusion acts that barred Asian migration to the United States.[34] These exclusion acts were a way to regulate Asian labor migration and virtually stopped the movement of Asian bodies to the country. However the positionality of Filipinos as U.S. nationals exempted them from these laws and allowed them to move freely within the United States' borders.[35] Filipinos would fill the labor vacuum that these exclusionary laws created until 1934, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act was signed. This law enacted for the creation of the Philippine Commonwealth and forged a path to independence. Consequently, this meant

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[33] For a discussion on the relatedness of Asian (North) American labor and the dispossession of indigenous communities, please refer to Iyko Day's book, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Duke University Press, 2016.

[34] For a discussion of Asian migration to the United States before the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, refer to Moon Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation,* John Hopkins University Press, 2006; Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, & Indian Anticolonialism in North America*, Oxford University Press, 2014; Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943,* Stanford University Press, 2000; Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West,* University of California Press, 2011; and *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* University of California Press, 2001.

[35] We see this with both Puerto Ricans and Filipinos and their migration to Hawaii. The United States recruited these populations as laborers given their status as U.S. nationals. This is because of the fact that the United States had taken possession of these territories after the Spanish-American War and the Treaty of Paris. Filipinos and Puerto Ricans became replacement for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean migrant laborers because migration from East Asia had been barred because of the exclusion acts. See Roderick N. Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*, University of Illinois Press, 2015, 41-43.

that Filipino migration to the United States would now be regulated and limited to 50 individuals annually.[36]

The relaxation of immigration restrictions with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 further put labor in the middle of discussions of migration because the ability to be a productive working citizen became the justification for being allowed to immigrate to the United States. The shift to professional labor in turn valued white collar jobs like medicine, engineering, and nursing to name a few. The focus on middle aged waged migrants in Filipino Migration Studies then makes sense especially when thinking about the advent of Asian American Studies and the implementation of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.[37] It was through this combination of increased migration from Asia, the ongoing wars in Southeast Asia, and the decolonization movements in the Global South that fueled the push for Ethnic Studies. As people whose presence in the United States were justified through their contributions to the economy, a labor analysis in Ethnic Studies provided an understanding of the Asian experience in the United States. The Filipino body then is a laboring a body. To perform waged labor, is then, to be studied, as one's wages are the reason why they are in the diaspora in the first place.[38]

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[36] Section 8 of the Philippine Independence Act, also known as, the Tydings-McDuffie Act stipulates that "citizens of the Philippine Islands who are not citizens of the United States shall be considered as if they were aliens. For such purposes the Philippine Islands shall be considered as a separate country and shall have for each fiscal year a quota of fifty." Full text of the law can be found at http://www.philippine-history.org/tydings-mcduffie-law.htm. For further reading on this legislation, read Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines,* University of North Carolina Press, 2006; and Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946,* New York University Press, 2011.

[37] As mentioned in the introduction, works in Filipino Migration Studies have focused on young, ablebodied men and women, who leave the Filipinos as waged laborers. See Rodriguez, Tadiar, Guevarra, Choy, Fujita-Rony, Maram, Poblete.

[38] I focus here on waged labor and specifically their wages, especially since higher wages abroad are one of the many reasons that encourage migrants to move to the United States.

The centrality of labor issues, however, has not been the only motivation for the formation of the Asian American movement and panethnicity as we know it today. While the influx of Asian migrants occurred at the crest of the Asian American movement in the 1960s, what was central to the conscientization of Americans of Asian descent at that time were issues that revolved around elderly individuals in their community. An example is the struggle of the elderly Filipino bachelor farmworkers, commonly known as *manongs*, who were being threatened by homelessness through the destruction of affordable living accommodations like the I-Hotel.[39] These issues relating to the elderly played a central role in the formation and mobilization of the Asian American Movement of the 1960s and onwards. The importance of labor, however, is not missed in the case of the *manongs* of the I-Hotel since they worked in the agricultural and service industries throughout their lives in the United States. Nonetheless, it was these elderly men, often without families of their own, that helped coalesce the formation of Asian American Studies and its attention to community issues.

More so, I want to highlight that my critique of Filipino Migration Studies builds on its centering of the waged laborer in studies of migration. This chapter calls our attention to the unwaged Filipino elderly migrants that move to the United States through family reunification and the fact that the migration of able bodied and middle aged individuals have been assumed and privileged in the formation of Filipino Migration Studies and Asian American Studies at large. The migration of these elderly Filipinos are in no question related to labor since they are able to migrate within the category of "dependents" to those who came to the United States as

[39] See Curtis Choy, *The Fall of the I-Hotel,* 1983 and Estella Habal, *San Francisco's International Hotel: Mobilizing the Filipino American Community in the Anti-Eviction Movement,* Temple University Press, 2007.

waged migrants.[40] However, since family reunification is one of the core principles of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, scholars have also failed to take up the importance of those who move to the United States under the auspices of family reunification like Filipino grandparents who are the focus of this chapter. The lack of engagement with those who were petitioned by their middle aged children then effectively occludes us from understanding the experience of elderly migrants in the United States. This maybe because that they do not necessarily perform the waged labor, that is valued more by the United States. Nonetheless, these elderly migrants are crucial to the social reproduction of the normal waged subjects that scholarship on Filipinos have focused on. While the waged migrant is important for their remittances that they send to the Philippines, the unwaged elderly migrant is crucial for "the energy [they] put into making sure the person doing productive labor was able to return to work each day."[41]

The unquestioned and normalized position of the waged migrant as the subject of Filipino Migration Studies follows what McRuer theorizes as "compulsory abledbodiedness." For McRuer, this comes with an "emphasis on work…[and] being capable of the normal physical exertions required in a particular system of labor."[42] The normalization of the waged laborer reveal who is valued by current mechanisms of migration. Furthermore I take up the term "crip" and read these elderly migrants as crip migrants. As defined by Kafer, to crip is to acknowledge

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[40] While much scholarship on Filipino migration has looked at the centrality of Filipinos in the global care industry and their reproductive labor, I do not make the distinction between productive and reproductive labor here. I classify both types of labor as waged labor since elderly migrants perform unwaged reproductive labor, which I will further explore later.

[41] Kalindi Vora, *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor,* University of Minnesota Press 2015, 30.

[42] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, New York University Press, 2006, 8.

"that we all have bodies and minds with shifting abilities, and [that we must wrestle]...with the political meanings and histories of such shifts."[43] I do this to assert that by paying attention to the lives of these elderly grandparents and their unwaged labor, I do not aim to recuperate their presence in the United States towards a capitalist respectability. It is not my desire to say that they matter too because they work. Rather, my aim is to point out that these unwaged migrants are here because the United States immigration system is designed as such and that (dis)ability is central to the entire picture. Their incommensurability to the capitalist logics of migration because of their age is the justification for their presence in the United States. Shifting our focus from those who perform the waged productive and reproductive labor that contribute to the U.S. and Philippine economy through their wages and remittances, allow for other subjects, and questions to emerge. Cripping our understandings of migration enable us to see elderly migrants anew and highlight their important role in the social reproduction of the family/home.

The Unsettlement of Dependency and Migration

Family reunification has been a cornerstone in the formation of contemporary migrant communities in the United States because of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This is a stark difference to the regulation of Asian migrants and families in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century that barred and heavily scrutinized the migration of Asian women to the United States. This regulation of migration based on gender, along with anti-miscegenation laws, in turn created what Nayan Shah calls "queer domesticities" or non normative private social formations like the bachelor societies of the *manongs* who later became inhabitants of places like

[43] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 13.

the I-Hotel because of the lack of family support.[44] The importance of the family unit is clear to the social reproduction of the type of migrants that the United States is opening their doors to. As for the case of these *manongs*, their inability to have and create a family structure left them with no caretakers at their old age. It was clear that these laborers would be more productive and beneficial to the United States if their immediate families were with them, especially because they would be able to support each other in the United States instead of becoming reliant on the government.

The heteronormative structure of migration is made clear in this 1965 policy that only allows families—children, siblings, spouses, and parents of naturalized citizens—to be sponsored. Under the legal mechanisms of family reunification, those who are sponsored and petitioned to move to the United States are defined as dependents to those who petitioned them to live in the United States, which in the case of elderly migrants are their children living here in the diaspora. Laws such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 already create structures of dependence in framing who is responsible for who when moving to the United States. This implicates those who move through family reunification to the waged labor that merited the migration of individuals to the United States in the first place. Those who desire to petition any family member are actually required to provide an affidavit of support that asserts their responsibility for these migrants moving to the United States. Those who are petitioning need to earn enough money to support those they bring here so that they do not become wards of the state and end up relying on the welfare system.

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[44] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown,* University of California Press, 2001.

While it is the case that these elderly migrants depend on their children for housing, food, and other basic necessities as new migrants to the United States, their dependence can easily be seen as the act of willingly giving up their sense of dignity or self for not being able to provide for themselves anymore. The failure to be self sustaining is incongruent to normative assumptions of the life course in the United States: dependency as a child, independence as an adult, and independence as an elderly person, *if and only if* a person has invested enough in their retirement and old age. To be a dependent is to fail the assumptions given to what successful aging looks like. To be a dependent is to be a failure as someone who did not do enough preparation to have money saved for independence during retirement. The loss of independence in old age is seen as unsuccessfully aging during one's life course. As Eva Feder Kittay points out "a person's well-being or welfare is usually a prerequisite to autonomy, but when individuals find themselves dependent on others for self-care, economic security, and safety, the dignity which comes with autonomy appears threatened."[45] It is the inability to practice and participate in normalized concepts such as retirement that paint elderly migrants as failures for they do not retire under their own terms or retire at all. As scholars like Jennifer Nazareno, Rhacel Parreñas, and Yu-Kang Fan show, many migrants in the United States are forced to work well after the normal retirement age of 65 in the United States.[46] For many migrants, retirement is a mere fantasy and complete independence at old age are but constructs that are common and privileged in discourses from the Global North. In many countries like the Philippines, it is a reality for many that independence is all but a make believe dream. Realistically the lives of those in the

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[45] Eva Fedder Kittay, "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability" *Ratio Juris*. Vol. 24, No.1, March 2011, 50.

[46] Jennifer Nazareno, Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, Yu-Kang Fan, "Can I Ever Retire: The Plight of Migrant Filipino Elderly Caregivers," Los Angeles: Pilipino Workers Center, 2014. https://irle.ucla.edu/old/publications/documents/CanIEverRetirePolicyReportIRLE.pdf

Philippines and those in the diaspora are always and indefinitely linked through remittances and phenomenon such as family reunification. While those in the homeland are dependent financially on remittances, those working abroad are also dependent to those in the Philippines and are embedded in a system of what Valerie Francisco-Menchavez terms as multidirectional care.[47] The negotiation of distance between families through sending remittances are also met with families in the Philippines by keeping them in the loop with their lives at home. As Francisco-Menchavez shows, a focus on the actions of the waged laborer leads to a one sided portrayal of dependence, and that in reality complete independence is a farce to begin with.

The construction of elderly migrants as dependents is also implicated in discourses of modernity that privilege the movement of bodies to the Global North. We see this in the memoir, *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* that show the memories of Poblete, the author, of the lives that her grandparents lived after moving to the United States:

> Grandma Fausta continued to cook most of the meals and took care of my brother. Grandma Patricia was in charge of cleaning and doing the laundry. Grandpa Sunday tended to the yard work and used his lifelong farming skills on his own modest vegetable garden. Grandpa Paterno was everyone's assistant, helping with everything—cooking, cleaning, childcare, and gardening.
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> *— The Oracles, 47*

While Pati's parents are away at work, her grandparents are the ones taking care of the children, cleaning after them, and cooking, effectively freeing the parents, those who petitioned them, of banal but time consuming things like maintaining the home. To reduce our definitions of labor to waged labor then is limiting and it is important to think about the contributions of elderly migrants to the family unit at large. It is clear that the presence of these elderly migrants in the

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[47] Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, *The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in tbe Digital Age,* University of Illinois Press 2017.

household reorient dependency to their children who are out at work. In a public reading of an excerpt of *The Oracles* in San Francisco, Poblete said herself, that "[she] was primarily raised by [her] grandparents because [her] parents worked a lot."[48] As we can see, those who perform the waged productive labor, Poblete's parents, only need to worry now about their work, while their elderly parents, The Oracles, who they petitioned from the Philippines, would take care of the rest. We see this as well in the Philippines for children that are left by migrant parents working abroad. It is often that migrant parents leave their children under the custody of female family members like aunts and grandmothers.[49]

As we see in the memoir, the decision to petition Grandma Fausta, the first one to come to the United States, was because Poblete's father was promoted to Director of Corporate Planning for Blue Cross and her mom recently landed a job as an account executive for Union Bank. Taking up her grandmother's voice, Poblete writes:

> We worked hard and we owned our own rice mill. My life in the Philippines was good. *I only came here because your mom needed me to help with your brother and you.* I was not looking for a life in America. Why should I? My life is in the Philippines.
>
> — *The Oracles,* 7 (emphasis added)

The politics of dependence becomes unclear once we examine the reasons why elderly migrants move to the United States and what they do in the private sphere of the home: those in the United States needed the elderly parents to move for their crucial positions in terms of social reproduction. Practically speaking, why would migrants pay for a babysitter, when they could

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[48] hanggangsamuliSF "'Legacy' by Pati Navalta Poblete," May 7, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jfOmkfmf7Y

[49] Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*, Stanford University Press 2005, 115.

just petition their parents to immigrate to the United States? More so as Poblete's mother points out to her, "it will be better to have your grandma here with you instead of hiring a stranger."[50]

It is important to note the distinctions given to the parents of migrants in the United States in terms of immigration policies. Parents of those who are born or naturalized as U.S. citizens, qualify under the Immediate Relative Immigrant Visa (IR) category instead of under the Family Preference Immigrant Visa (F) category. Along with parents of U.S. citizens, spouses and unmarried children under 21 are considered under the Immediate Relative category while unmarried and married children of citizens, and their siblings, are placed under the Family Preference category. Because of their classification as immediate relatives, the visas that are offered to elderly parents of U.S. citizens do not require them to wait long to get to the United States. Additionally these visas for immediate relatives are not subject to annual quotas that regulate the amount of available to visas for more distant family members of citizens and lawful permanent residents. For example, the priority date for petitioned siblings of U.S. citizens that reside in the Philippines as of May 2019 was March 1, 1997.[51] This means that the paperwork that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are barely processing petitions that were filed on March 1, 1997. Those who were petitioned 22 years ago are now barely moving to the United States as lawful permanent residents compared to elderly parents who usually wait about a year before stepping foot on American soil.

Here we can examine the politics of productivity and labor and the temporal dimensions of migration. The importance of productive labor to the the U.S. immigration system along with

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[50] Pati Navalta Poblete, *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America*, Heyday Books, 5.

[51] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-bulletin/2019/visa-bulletin-for-may-2019.html There are distinctions based on the country of origin for the Philippines, Mexico, China, and India, which are the places where most migrants to the United States come from. This website shows the priority dates for all visa categories.

the importance of elderly migrants in the realm of social production is undeniable. If it is the case that migration to the United States is implicated in labor demands, and the possibility to move to the United States is only realizable if a migrant is to fill a certain labor niche, then how do we explain the migration of immediate relatives such as Poblete's grandparents if not for their place and contributions in social reproduction that occurs in the home. The backlog and long wait for younger migrants, like siblings of U.S. citizens or their children who are over the age of 21, can be explained with the simple fact that the labor they provide might not be congruent to the current needs of American labor markets. As we can see, the benefits and promises of family reunification are still bestowed to those in the structure of the heteronormative family, but it is in the temporal aspects of migration where we see valuations based on ability/ablebodiedness come into play. The limitations with visas regarding family reunification is the fact that their worth and value are not being measured in terms of the labor they provide but in the fact that they are only a family member of someone who is a citizen. However, the incongruence of the elderly body to normative assumptions of the worker or migrant laborer, specifically because of their age, relegates them to positions of care and social reproduction that are evident in *The Oracles*. They are here to provide support to the workers that the United States wanted, and because they will not become surplus migrant workers that could saturate American labor markets.

While elderly migrants do occupy crucial positions in the home, the idea that the elderly only perform reproductive labor proves to be a hasty generalization. This is shown by Grandpa Paterno who after taking a job as a busboy in a local diner, was quickly in search for more sources of income and took a seasonal job on a farm in Salinas.[52] It is later revealed to us that

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[52] Pati Navalta Poblete, *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America,* Heyday Books, 2006, 61.

their plan all along "had always been to come to America, make enough money to retire, then return to the Philippines and live a comfortable life on Grandpa Paterno's pension."[53]

Later on, Grandma Patricia joins Grandpa Paterno in Salinas so that they could live with one another again. With a newfound appreciation for her elders, a new car, and her recently earned license, Pati decided to drive out two hours to Salinas to visit her grandparents and see how they lived. Her grandparents had moved out in order to work and Pati had not seen them for a while. Dismayed at the sight of her grandparents living in a senior care facility, Pati inquired about their living situation and the people they were with.

> "This is a board and care home," [Grandpa Paterno] answered. "Some of them are very sick. The others don't even know what is going on around them."
>
> "But you don't belong in a care home," [Pati] said.
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> "We're not one of them, we take care of them," he explained. "This is the only way Grandma and I can have a free room and earn a little money."
>
> *— The Oracles, 79*

Here we see the ironies of the American dream and implication of labor to Filipino migration, whether it be the elderly or the young. Being senior citizens themselves, it was an easy assumption for Poblete to think that her grandparents were placed in a home, so that others could take care of them, since they were senior citizens themselves. To her shock, it was actually her grandparents who were taking care of those in the senior facility even though they were now in their 70s themselves. As Rick Bonus points out, "many of these [elderly migrants] had less than adequate schooling or below-average qualifications for better paying jobs."[54] For these elderly

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space*, Temple University Press 2000, 45.

migrants, their age and the deterioration of their skills and abilities related to their aging, relegate them to working low-paying jobs like being a busboy, or elderly caregiver as their skills and abilities are incongruent to the demands of corporations and capitalist development that are fulfilled by their children. What then do we make of these experiences of elderly migrants in the United States? What do we make of this *unsettlement* of the images that we might have of Filipino America?

In thinking about unsettlement, I extend Purnima Mankekar's theorization that a deployment of unsettlement as an analytic allows us to "skirt the conceptual trap of thinking of cultural change in terms of transitions between prescripted stages by insisting on movements as intrinsic to culture."[55] It is important to interrogate and unsettle the taken-for-granted images we have of a Filipino-American as the waged laborer in order to show the fact that identity and social constructions are always in flux and ever changing. An unsettlement of the proper subject reval other ways that globalization and migration affect the Philippines and its people. Simply put, if my previous assertion is correct that the waged laborer has been the focus of studies in regards to Filipino migration, what new identities and phenomenon can we observe if we stop privileging the narratives of the waged migrant?

Furthermore, elderly migrants like The Oracles unsettle not just images of Filipino America but the lives of their family members and the places that they settle in as well. This is a clear occurence for Pati who in the preface of her book state that when"the strangeness of their foreign lands surfaced in [her] American life" the foundations of her being and way of life would

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[55] Purnima Mankekar. *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality.* Duke University Press. 2015. 18.

shake and that "[her] life would never be the same without [the Oracle's] music.[56] As Mankekar points out, "Unsettlement was thus not simply something that [the migrants and their families] experienced but was affective in that it was profoundly consequential for the formation of their subjectivities."[57] Unsettling here takes an affective turn that registers changes in the environment and the people that Poblete's grandparents interact with.

Now a teenager, Pati was more and more concerned about her social standing in middle school, and was preoccupied with the manner in which she spoke, dressed, and lived her life completely. We see this when Patty was getting ready for the first day of school, hoping to wear typical American fashion of simple blue jeans and a white T-shirt. Instead she was greeted by a matching shirt and skirt from the Philippines with "large red and pink horizontal ruffles" and "Black patent-leather loafers that [her grandmother] had also brought from the Philippines and looked like comfort shoes made for the elderly." In the mind of a teenage girl, her clothes, music, and all over appearance were the factors that would make or break middle school for her and the first day of school was when one's social capital would be the most pronounced. Her quotidian encounters with her grandparents unsettle her notions of what normative teenagehood looks like from what she wears to school to what she eats everyday which she remembered as something that was always "unleashing a stench that only the grandchild of four insane Filipino immigrants could possibly understand."[58]

The peculiarity of her experiences as a teenager, however, was not limited to the quotidian but was also momentous and grand as seen with the desires of her grandmothers to

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[56] Pati Navalta Poblete, *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America,* Heyday Books, 2006, x.

[57] Purnima Mankekar. *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality.* Duke University Press. 2015. 18.

[58] Ibid. 49.

bring Filipino culture and tradition to their suburban lives in Northern California. Her grandmothers insisted in holding a *santacruzan*, a Catholic tradition that is a mixture of a pageant and a parade and what many Filipinos consider to be the "quintessential Filipino ritual."[59] In the Philippines, it is common for teenage girls to put on a dress, and a crown, and be escorted by a boy down the streets of the town in some sort of parade. Poblete writes:

> The idea was bad enough since I had no say in the matter, but far worse was the fact that nobody in our neighborhood knew what the Santacruzan was about, or why I and three other girls were dressed up and walking in the middle of the street. Our neighbors on the left side were German, and on the right they were just an all-American white mix. Across the street was a black family, and next to them was another white household. Of course that didn't matter to Grandma Patricia.
>
> I walked up and down the street without saying a word to my "Roman soldiers," two scrawny Filipino boys from the neighborhood whom Grandma Patricia had managed to recruit. The Oracles followed along the sidewalk, snapping pictures as if it were some great spectacle. Cars honked at us in anger, neighbors tilted their heads in confusion.
>
> — *The Oracles, 53*

The enactment of the *santacruzan* in the United States became a way for the elderly migrants to lay claim to the United States and also pass down cultural tradition to Pati but with much to her dismay. For Pati, it was unthinkable that something so foreign was happening, citing that her neighbors weren't even Filipino, and that they were just met with honks as they were traversing the middle of the street in dresses. For the elderly, however, seeing this unsettling of Vallejo as an American multicultural suburb and its transformation to a place where a *santacruzan* can be held was a sign of refusal. As Manalansan points out, staging Filipino rituals like the *santacruzan*, show "how immigrants negotiate between the hegemonic imperative of assimilation and the

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[59] Martin F. Manalansan, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Duke University Press 2003, 129. Manalansan discusses the history of the *santacruzan* and explores the importance of cross-dressing and the ritual for diasporic queer Filipinos in New York in his fifth chapter, " 'To Play with the World': The Pageantry of Identities."

subaltern option of total defiance."[60] Their granddaughter was participating in something that was accessible to them and something they valued. While we can easily read the *santacruzan* happening in the suburbs under the logics of neoliberal multiculturalism, I interpret the persistence of Pati's grandmothers as an affirmation of their alterity. This clash of two cultures would define the rest of the memoir and be the place where Pati Navalta Poblete would reflect and harness much of her growth and appreciation for her grandparents.

While we see the way that Eudocia Pulido was kept in the private sphere of the home, we see a difference with *The Oracles* with how they settle, lay claim and take space in Vallejo. We see this not just in the privacy of the home, as seen with their interactions with Poblete, but also with the way they settled through their *unsettlement*.[61] The construction of these elderly migrants as dependents easily construct them as failed migrants, and as people who cannot reassert their voice and autonomy. However, we see how *The Oracles* assert themselves and are not the old idle subjects that they are portrayed to be in immigration discourse that only see them as reliant to those who petitioned them and as potential liabilities to U.S. society. Rather, these migrants have their own battles and stakes in being in the United States. Elderly migrants like The Oracles actively participate in the greater politics of migration and acculturation that are constantly forced on migrants like themselves.

On Memoirs as Archives and Critical Fabulation

My aim was to treat *The Orcales,* not just as a literary text, but also as an archive in order to critically examine the lives of the elderly who move here through family reunification. While

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[60] Ibid 150.

[61] The unsettlement of Vallejo, in my opinion, is a settlement of Vallejo in Poblete's grandparents own way. Although settler colonialism has not been discussed in this work, I recognize that migration does *unsettle* a place, and that this act in it of itself is a settlement.

Poblete's grandparents are present in the text, all of them were to no surprise destined for death. The elderly characters effectively need to be removed from the picture in order to make sense of their importance in the narrative and aims of *The Oracles* and Poblete's decision to write her memoir. While aging is not necessarily a disability under the medical model, aging does bring forth certain disabilities that are manifested through the elderly body. We see the ways that elderly folks are structurally unable to fit in American society and are constantly seen as dependents in discourses regarding their migration, because of their age and their incompatibility to American capitalist society. While unable to assimilate under the terms of the United States, they are also old and are basically just closer to death. In reading these elderly migrants as crip migrants, I view aging through Alison Kafer's definition of disabilities through a political/ relational model, where "the problem of disability no longer resides in the minds or bodies of individuals but in built environments and social patterns that exclude or stigmatize particular kinds of bodies, minds, and way of being" and that solving the predicaments are not gonna be through the use of prosthetics or medical intervention but in societal change and political transformation.[62] In taking up "crip" as method and reading the elderly migrant experience through Kafer's political/relational model, we can examine the intricacies of the experience of aging individuals who move to the United States, those who are not normalized in studies and research of migration which have continued to focus on the waged productive/reproductive labor crucial to capitalist society.

The irony then lies on the fact that in these depictions, the elderly body disappears through their death. Their narrative value is reliant on their impending erasure. However through

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[62] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 6.

literature, we see the ways in which these elderly figures take up new forms that do not operate in the value production embedded in neoliberal processes like immigration which rely on the valuation of a workers body to produce and function under capitalism. Forms such as the memoir are important to look at because there is an immortality to these stories and in our memories of our *lolos* and *lolas.* Our memories go beyond how they are seen as only dependents, as too old, as not productive, as those who do not produce or perform the right labor under regimes like international labor migration.

Works like *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* then serve as a critical source of information for the experiences of elderly migrants. We see the impetus for Poblete and the urgency of writing this memoir when she says in the same public reading mentioned earlier that she " was thirsting for a labor of love, and as a second generation American, [she] was looking to leave something behind for her children."[63] Furthermore, in the memoir, Poblete explores her thought process when she decided to write her book:

> The kids were barely walking when the Oracles left America for good, and they would never know, or appreciate, the different cultures, beliefs, and traditions that their great grandparents possessed, unless I told them. So I took out my laptop computer, scribbled memories on napkins and receipts as they came to me, went through old photo albums, and brought myself back to a time when I thought I was the most tortured little girl in the world.
>
> — *The Oracles, 122*

These memories then serve as the connection that her children and readers of her memoir would get to Filipino culture. Her memoir becomes a sort of necessary work of literature akin to what Carol Hau might call as a "necessary fiction" in cementing claims to Filipino identity, or even

[63] hanggangsamuliSF "'Legacy' by Pati Navalta Poblete," May 7, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jfOmkfmf7Y

nationalism.[64] While these elderly migrants are easily seen as dependents to their working children, a reorientation can open up other questions of dependency that privilege these elderly migrants. The death of Grandpa Sunday became the impetus for Pati Navalta Poblete to start writing her memoir *The Oracles* in order to preserve the memories of her grandparents for her newly born kids. Her process in writing was simple: look at her family's own archive—pictures and ephemera of their lives— try to juggle scenes out of her memory, and write them whether on napkins, receipts, or her laptop. This effectively sends her back to the time when she hated being around her grandparents amidst the loss she had just felt when losing one of The Oracles. While The Oracles might have been dependent on Poblete and her parents during their time in America, now Poblete is dependent on her memories of her grandparents for the creation of her memoir. A memoir's dependence on memory serves as a reason to think about using literature in studies that concern elderly Filipinos. If we are to remember elderly figures in our lives, it is then through the power of our imagination and our writings that these memories can come to life.

Furthermore, we see how concepts like *dependence* do not necessarily fit how relationships occur between elderly migrants and their families. More specifically, the idea that dependency is wrong, avoidable, or makes one less of a human, is proved to be a complete fantasy. Dependence is congruent and part of community and family fomrations that go against Western notions of individualism and proper subjecthood. This follows Eva Feder Kittay in her invocation that we are all *inextricably interdependent* and that "to insist on our inextricable interdependence is to say that no matter what social arrangements we enter into on a voluntaristic basis, the fact is that we must be engaged in *some* social arrangements, some forms of

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[64] Caroline Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1990*, Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2000.

dependence; interdependence is not a matter of voluntarism."[65] Independence for anyone is a fantasy. We are all implicated in multiple layers and vectors of power relations that undoubtedly tie all of us together. Alive or dead. Young or old. True or false. Waged or unwaged. Independent or Dependent. To depend on these binaries, is to miss the entire picture. It is to impose a power structure that values certain positions over others when in reality our actions and worlds are not secluded in binaristic spaces, and are much more entangled than how it seems.

While writing the book, Poblete dedicates a chapter for each grandparent, writing in Italics and in the first person as if embodying each of The Oracles in their own chapter. This gesture is similar to what Saidiya Hartman might call as *critical fabulation* which is "not to give voice...but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between two zones of death—social and corporeal death—and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance."[66] This follows Lisa Lowe in her reflections about the implications of recuperation and asks "what it means to supplement forgetting with new narratives of affirmation and presence."[67] Lowe posits what she calls a *past conditional temporality*, "of the 'what could have been' [which] symbolizes aptly the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled, and unavailable by its methods." In wirting through our memories, we get to reflect and reimagine the past for better futures. In this vain I

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[65] Eva Feder Kittay, "Musings: Centering Justice on Dependency and Recovering Freedom" *Hypatia* vol. 30, no.1, Winter 2015, 287.

[66] Saidiya Hartman. "Venus in Two Acts." *small axe* 26, Vol. 12, No. 2. June 2008, 12.

[67] Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents" in *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacies in North American History* edited by Ann Laura Stoler. Duke University Press. 2006. 207.

interpret works like *The Oracles: My Filipino Grandparents in America* as their authors' own "what could've been" in relation to the story of their grandparents and elderly migrants. How can these stories change our present lives now that stories like *The Oracles* are here for us and posterity to read? What new futures might we imagine when we think about cripping our understandings of migration and the Filipino American experience?

Chapter 2: Don't Say No-No to my Lolo: Disabling and Reimagining Filipino Veteran Returns in *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street*

Every Veteran's Day, a Filipino progressive organization, Kabataang maka Bayan (KmB) or Pro-People Youth, organizes a march and rally called "Justice for Filipino American Veterans" in Los Angeles.[68] This action, which was established in 2000, has become a place of gathering for many Filipino college students in Southern California, looking to get more involved and to fight for issues in the Filipino community. As a matter of fact, I myself have attended this event, and often drove up from San Diego so that I could see friends from other universities like UCLA, UCR, and Cal State Long Beach. Picket signs that say "Makibaka! Huwag Matakot!" (Dare to Rise! Do Not Be Afraid," are distributed to us those in attendance, so that we could carry them as we walked down Hollywood Boulevard, chanting the words "Don't Say No-No, to my Lolo."

The march would be incomplete without the *jeepney* that lead the long procession of students and community members. The *jeepney* is a reappropriated version of the World War II Jeeps that Americans used and left in the Philippines and now serve as a cheap and primary mode of transportation for many commuters in Manila. This *jeepney*, however, is meant for the veterans and their widows who wanted to march with us, but who are unable to do so because of their age. When I first marched in 2012, there were about 5 veterans who were in the *jeepney* cheering us on. In its 17th year, however, there was but one veteran in the *jeepney* when the march started on November 11, 2017.

In this chapter, I look at *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* (The Guerrillas of Powell Street) by Benjamin Pimentel which narrates the experiences of Filipino World War II veterans in San

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[68] To read more on the organizaton, *Kabataang maka-Bayan (KmB)* see http://propeopleyouth.com/campaigns/jfav/. For more information on the Justice for Filipino American Veterans Movement, http://jfavusa.org/.

Francisco from the 1990s to the mid 2000s.[69] Although billed as a fiction, the story of these veterans were based on stories that Pimentel covered as a journalist for the San Francisco Chronicle.[70] Throughout the chapter, I juxtapose *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* with legislation and speeches related to campaigns for Filipino World War II veterans to receive the same government provisions that other American veterans receive such as a pension, disability assistance, and burial benefits. I do this to examine the centrality of return in the stories highlighted in book and how they make sense of their own desires of return in order to reframe these depictions of veterans not as unassimilable migrants but as political figures in active resistance to receive equity and justice for their services during World War II. I highlight the lives of these Filipino World War II veterans to tease out their unique positions as migrants who were allowed to move to the United States at their old age, without having to go through the auspices of family reunification as highlighted in the chapter before. Additionally, I situate these narratives of World War II veterans in *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* conceptually with Jasbir Puar's idea of *maiming* to show the centrality of age and ability in the migration of these veterans.[71] By looking at the characters of *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street*, we see how they actively reject and refuse the tenets of American exceptionalism and its contradictory promises

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[69] Benjamin Pimentel, *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street,* Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2007.

[70] This is evident with this article from the *San Francisco Chronicle* where he writes about the people he met while covering the plight of these Filipino World War II veterans. We see that the characters are based on real people and that Pimentel even kept their real names. See Benjamin Pimentel, "DREAMING OF HOME / For many Filipino Americans who fought alongside U.S. troops in World War II, their life in San Francisco is a torturous legal limbo, and their goal is a quiet grave in their native land," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1997, https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/DREAMING-OF-HOME-For-many-Filipino-Americans-2816853.php.

[71] For Puar, the right to maim, is to injure someone enough so that they are disabled but are not rendered dead. It is a method of control that lies between allowing someone to live and allowing someone to die. To maim is to let someone live but with a different level of capability as they had before.

of citizenship.[72] Lastly I look at the different possibilities of return for the figure of the Filipino veteran and point out the ways in which literature can become a method of return that goes against how the United States renders something or someone valuable.

The Idea of Return in Veteran Imaginaries

> "Gaya ng bawat isa sa aming mga tambay sa Powell Street, ang pinapangarap ni Ciriaco at ang makauwi nang buo. Iyong nakahiga sa ataul. Nakasuot ng Barong Tagalog o naka-Amerikanang may kurbata. Hindi iyong ginagawang abo na, tapos e isinasaksak sa garapon, kahit gaano pa ito kaganda o kakintab."
>
> [Like every one of us who hang out around Powell Steet, Ciriaco's dream is to return home whole. In a manner that one is laying down in a coffin. Wearing a Barong Tagalog or wearing a suit and tie. Not cremated and burnt to ashes, stuffed in a jar, no matter how beautiful or shiny it may be.]
>
> *— Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street, 1*

The concept of return opens up the book with the first sentence discussing the dreams of these veterans regarding their "returns." As the title of the first chapter "Ang Makauwi nang Buo" (To Be Able to Return Whole/Complete) suggests, the ability to return home complete seems to be the main goal for many of these men who ruminate on death as they live their daily lives in the United States. In the novel, the migration of these individuals had always been conditional to an idea of a possible return, despite being given what can easily be seen as the ultimate privilege of citizenship.

Ironically, as illustrated above, these recent migrants to the United States are not starting their interactions with America but are rather continuing a protracted encounter and relationship that continues to this day in their fight for equity. Their presence in the United States has already

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[72] For an exploration of the meanings of citizenship for these Filipino World War II veterans, see Theo Gonzalves, "'We hold a neatly folded hope': Filipino Veterans of World War II on Citizenship and Political Obligation." *Amerasia Journal* 21:3 (Winter 1995/1996): 155-174.

been predicated on their desire to go back home, not necessarily to come home alive or as a *balikbayan* but with the clear possibility that they would die before being able to go back.[73] However, return for those in the diaspora has always been implicated in the failure of an idealized return. Much of the scholarship that has looked at the phenomenon of return in Filipino American communities show how what we think we are going back to has already changed.[74] Simply put, we will never be able to go back to that which we left or have always dreamt about. Whether fulfilled by their death or in the form of equity—that they finally receive the same benefits that normal U.S. veterans would get for serving under the flag of the United States—it is clear that what these veterans want is to return.

This is highlighted in one of the veterans, Ciriaco, who is the main advocate and bearer of news regarding the equity movement in the book, for the motley crew that hang out near the BART station on Powell Street. His interest in the equity movement was so strong that he was basically a de-facto assistant to Attorney Anna, a legal advocate who had gotten close to many of the veterans on Powell Street. Ciriaco would wake up early and go to the law office to ask for news in order to update the other veterans about the legislative process regarding the equity movement. However with his declining health and lack of family in San Francisco, Attorney Anna actively tries to convince Ciriaco to move back to the Philippines. However, Ciriaco

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[73] A *balikbayan* is someone who is a current or former Filipino citizen who is returning back to the Philippines.

[74] For recent work that explore *balikbayans* and the politics of return, see Eric Pido, *Migrant Returns: Manila, Development, and Transnational Connectivity,* Duke University Press, 2017; L. Joyce Zapanta Mariano, "Doing Good in Filipino Diaspora: Philanthropy, Remittances, and Homeland Returns," *Journal of Asian American Studies,* vol. 20, no. 2, June 2017; Josen Masangkay Diaz, "Balikbayan Configurations and a U.S.-Philippine Politics of Modernization," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, vol. 21, no.1, Feb. 2018; Robert Diaz, "Failed Returns: The Queer Balikbayan in R. Zamora Linmark's Leche and Gil Portes's Miguel/Michelle," in *Global Asian American Popular Cultures*, edited by Shilpa Davé, Leilani Nishime, and Tasha Oren, New York University Press, 2016, 335-350; and Martin Manalansan, "Wayward Erotics: Mediating Queer Diasporic Return" in *Media, Erotics, and Transnational Asia,* edited by Purnima Mankekar and Louisa Schein, Duke University Press, 2012, 33-52.

refuses to go home unless and until the Equity bill is passed in Congress, actively rallying his other veterans and treating the cause as if it were his last mission on Earth. Return had always been in his mind. The reality of his age had always been clear to him, actively availing of a "fire insurance," a life insurance policy that would cover burial necessities like a casket and a one way ticket back to the Philippines, in case he dies before their long sought equity bill is realized.

While many desired to go home, many were unable to because they would not be able to receive the same benefits if they were living in the Philippines. In a letter to Milo, Fidel's grandson in the Philippines who urges him to move back, Fidel writes:

> "Ang inaasa ko na lang na matuloy na ang Ekwiti para makauwi na kaming dalawa. Mas dumami na raw ang sumasang-ayon na mga politiko, sabi ni Attorney Anna. Pero mabagal talaga ang proseso. Ewan ko ba kung bakit. Gusto lang naman namin ay matanggap ang mga benepisyo na ipinangako sa amin ng mga Amerikano. At matanggap ito nang hindi na kailangang tumira sa Amerika. Pero mukhang umuusad naman daw, sabi ni Attorney. Kaya hintayin lang daw namin."
>
> [What I'm hoping for now is for Equity to finally happen so that the two of us can come home. More and more politicians are now agreeing with it, says Attorney Anna. But the process is just very slow. I really don't know why. We only want to receive the benefits that the Americans promised us. And to receive them without needing to live in America. But it seem that its moving according to Attorney. So she said let's just wait.]
>
> — *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street, 113*

Here we see the centrality of time in the lives of these veterans and how their presence in the United States are tied to the wait for their long sought benefits. This is exemplified in the book in the way that these veterans make light of their current situation. In the middle of Powell Street, we see Ciriaco update the rest of the veterans about the equity bill.

> "Kung isipin mo nga naman, mababait naman ang mga Kano- at may *sense of justice* di ba?" Sabi ni Ciriaco.
>
> "Dyas tiis, 'ika mo," hirit ni Delfin Sabay tawang matsing.

> ["If you actually think about it, Americans are actually very nice- and they have a sense of justice, right?" Ciriaco said.
>
> "Just endure/suffer through it, you mean" exclaimed Delfin as he laughs like a monkey.]
>
> — *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street, 20*

As Ciriaco ruminates on the benevolence that the American government has shown to them in listening to their plight for equity, another veteran Delfin quickly answers Ciriaco's question with a question that employs a pun. "Dyas tiis" roughly translates to "just suffer through it" or "just wait it out" in a sense that the suffering, trials, and tribulations of being an elderly migrant will all be worth it once full equity actually comes. To prolong and endure suffering in the case of the veterans can be read as a slow death or what Lauren Berlant defines as "the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence."[75] While her theorization of slow death refers to obesity, I take up her concept in thinking about how the rationalization of health as being the only part of the story of capitalist survival would automatically exclude the elderly because of the deterioration of their physical body and their proximity to death. While these veterans are playing the waiting game for the benefits, the United States government is equally playing the same game, with the hopes that these veterans die before having to confer them the benefits that they are entitled to.

This sentiment of waiting is even highlighted with the opening words of the book, specifically the reference to the veterans by the main narrator, Fidel, who calls himself and the other veterans as "tambays." *Tambay* as a word is commonly used with loiterers in the corners of

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[75] Berlant, Lauren, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)", *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 33, no. 4, 754.

the streets of the Philippines, usually unemployed, and are instead just hanging around or having a good time vis a vis drinking.[76] It is a word of idleness, a word that emphasizes the passive world of those who don't contribute to the capitalist notions of productivity in the Philippines. "Tambay" interestingly enough is a colloquial Filipino word that is derived from the word "istambay" or the word "stand-by" but said in a Filipino accent.[77]

Jobless, purposeless, and lazy are just but few words that are associated with the word *tambay.* The deployment of the term, along with its connotations, are however not by accident. As elderly migrants, these veterans are limited in the job prospects that are available to them once they arrive to the United States. Those who are able enough to work are relegated to low paying jobs like staffing small shops. It is in this intersections of aging and migration that we see the pernicious ways neoliberalism affects the lived experiences of elderly Filipino veterans in San Francisco. While not necessarily wanting to move to the United States, these veterans were pulled from the Philippines, in order to receive the most that they can for their service. With few job prospects and the reduction of social welfare benefits through legislations like the Personal

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[76] Vagrancy was not criminalized until the American colonization of the Philippines when the Philippine Commission passed Act. No. 519. This was intensified during Martial Law under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos who enacted curfews and prohibited people from loitering outside. He also added a provision against mendicants who are defined as "persons with no visible and legal means of support or lawful employment and who are physically able to work but fail to apply themselves to some lawful calling and instead, use begging as a means of making a living." In 2012, Republic Act No. 10158, was passed which decriminalized vagrancy in the Philippines. See https://www .lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2012/ra_10158_2012.html for the legislation. However, President Rodrigo Duterte has enacted a strict law against loiterers which target many of the urban poor that are also implicated in his drug war. Duterte is quoted to say that if loiterers do not go home, he would tie their hands, and throw them in the Pasig river. See Romel Bagares, "The Vagrancy Law: It all Started with the Black Death in England," *The Philippine Star,* March 8, 2000, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2000/03/08 /95265/ vagrancy-law-it-all -started-black -death-england and "The Vagrancy Law: Unconstitutional and Often Prone to Abuse," *The Philippine Star,* March 9, 2000, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2000/03/09/87005/ vagrancy -law-unconstitutional-and -often-prone -abuse; Anjo Bagoisan, "Goodbye Tambay? What people say about Duterte's order against loitering," *ABS-CBN News*, June 15, 2018, https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/06/15/18/ goodbye-tambay-what-people-say -about- dutertes-order-against-loitering;

[77] Joseph T. Salazar, "Rethinking Filipino Masculinities: The Case of the Cosmopolitan *Tambay,*" *Kritika Kultura, 33/34, (2019/2020): 859-882;* Clarence M. Batan, "A Conceptual Exploration of the Istambay Phenomenon in the Philippines," *Philippine Sociological Review,* 2012, volume 60, 101-130.

Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, these veterans essentially become loiterers, good-for-nothing, parasites, or *tambays.* In the eyes of the American public, they are people who depend too much on the welfare state, instead of veterans receiving benefits because of their prior service in World War II. Although the veterans see themselves as *tambays*, it would be easy for others to see them as unproductive as well given that their migration to the United States is highlighted by the fact that they did not move here for work. Unlike other elderly migrants who migrate through family reunification, this movement of elderly bodies are not implicated in the mechanisms of care that are inherently assumed in terms of family reunification. These veterans rely on the little pension that they receive in order to survive. This forces many of these veterans to often live in one bedroom apartments or studios with other veterans so that they can still afford to send money back to the Philippines. The experiences of these veterans are similar to the elderly manongs of the 60s and 70s, who lived in bachelor societies without the support of the heteronormative family that would've been in charge of taking care of them in their twilight years. The inability of these migrants to operate under the demands of capitalism because of their incommensurability to the capitalist logics of migration transform them to surplus populations, who are disposable for the United States. This is seen with the invocation of the word *buo* or whole or complete and how migration has effectively transformed them to partial citizens as seen with the partial benefits they get from the United States.

The position of these elderly veterans in between life and death can be explained further through Puar's conceptualization of the right to maim, "a practice that escapes definition within both legal and biopolitical or necropolitical frameworks because it does not proceed through making life, making die, letting live, and letting die" as it takes up debilitation as a central

concept in her theorization of biopolitics.[78] Debility is a status, and not necessarily just a process that questions the focus on both life and death. Instead debility looks at how important disability is to controlling populations. In taking up Puar's theorization of maiming, Filipino World War II veterans can be seen as migrants that are maimed because of their age and how the process of state sponsored migration can be seen as optimal for those who are younger in relation to having to adjust to pressures and specificities of a new environment.

Historicizing Filipino Veteran Abjection

As former soldiers who served under the flag of the United States during World War II, these Filipino veterans were promised the same benefits that any U.S. veterans would get for their service: burial benefits, disability assistance, pension, to name a few. However a few months before the independence of the Philippines from the United States, President Harry Truman signed the Rescission Act of 1946 which retroactively stripped these benefits away that would've been available to Filipino troops who served under the flag of the United States. The passage of the Rescission Act was due to a fear that, the would be Philippine government would have to face "a mass emigration of able-bodied men" that would have dire effects in its upcoming nation-building.[79] The impending independence of the Philippines had removed the status of nationals from the Filipino people and was used as a rationale for the removal of these benefits. The development of the Philippine nation was often cited in the proceedings about the Rescission Act and the stripping of benefits from these veterans. As senator Carl Hayden noted:

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[78] Jasbir Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Duke University Press, 2017, 137.

[79] Marvin Howe, "*Immigrant Act Aids Filipino Veterans,*" *The New York Times,* November 25, 1990, https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/25/us/immigrant-act-aids-filipino-veterans.html. While there are uneven power relations between the Philippines and the United States, it is worth noting that the Philippines did not further pursuit the case of the Filipino World War II veterans. Their inaction and fear of an exodus of able-bodied Filipino men to the United States makes the Philippine state complicit to the conditions that Filipino World War II veterans have faced.

> "As I see it, the best thing the American government can do is to help the Filipino people to help themselves. Where there was a choice between expenditures for the rehabilitation of the economy of the Philippine Islands and payments in cash to Filipino veterans, I am sure it is better to spend any equal sum of money, for example, on improving the roads and port facilities. What the Filipino veteran needs is steady employment rather than to depend for his living upon a monthly payment sent from the United States."[80]

Given that the estimated cost of these benefits were estimated to be $3 billion in the span of 75 years, along with the numerous legislation that were already passed in the U.S. Congress to assist and stimulate the growth of its former colony's economy, the United States decided to rescind their promise to consider Filipino World War II veterans as actual veterans of the United States.[81] The lifting of the formal status of the Philippines as a formal colony freed the United States from its responsibility to the Philippines. However, the development of the Philippine economy under the direction of the United States and institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, created an uneven relationship between two sovereign nations.Through uneven trade deals and military pacts, Philippine dependence on the United States was solidified and American geopolitical power in the Asia-Pacific was ensured.

The passage of the Rescission Act forced many of these veterans to wage a long battle for equity. The veterans issue was consistently part of any bilateral talk between the United States and the Philippines. Starting in the 1960s, many Filipinos took their plight for American citizenship to the courts in order to challenge the United State's refusal to grant them citizenship.

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[80] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Deficiency, Hearings on H.R. 5604, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., March 25, 1946.

[81] The United States passed laws such as the Philippine Rehabilitation Act and the Philippine Trade Act that gave $620 million to the Philippines.

However in 1988, the Supreme Court found that they did not have the power to grant citizenship to these veterans and that this was a limitation imposed by Congress.[82]

Half a century later, the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 allowed the veterans to see a semblance of redress for the injustices they received from the United States government.[83] The legislation ultimately resulted into a mass migration of Filipino veterans as they were granted the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen to amend the mistakes of the post-war United States government. Why then were these Filipino veterans allowed to move to the United States during the later stages of their lives in 1990, 45 years after the end of WW2?

Given the time that had passed, the inclusion and passage of the resolution that stipulated the privileging of these Filipino WW2 veterans to bypass usual immigration bureaucracy in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 seems peculiar. This was however only a partial fulfillment to President Harry Truman's assertion that "the passage and approval of [the Rescission Act] do[es] not release the United States from its moral obligation to provide for the heroic Philippine veterans who sacrificed so much for the common cause during the war." This was a clear act that the United States was righting its wrongs in order to exonerate itself from its mistakes from the past. Geopolitically, however, the United States' lease on their military bases in the Philippines were soon to end. In many ways, the passage of the stipulations for Filipino World War II veterans in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 may have been a way to

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[82] Nakano, Satoshi, "The Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Movement and the Filipino American Community," paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Philippine Studies, June 17, 2004, 136.

[83] Section 405 "NATURALIZATION OF NATIVES OF THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH CERTAIN ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE DURING WORLD WAR II" of The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 enacted that those who served "within the Philippine Army, the Philippine Scouts, or recognized guerrilla units, at any time during the period beginning September 1, 1939, and ending December 31, 1946" are recognized as U.S. veterans and can be naturalized as American citizens because of their service during World War II. See http://library.uwb.edu/Static/USimmigration/104%20stat%204978.pdf.

show that the United States was attentive to the needs of the Philippines and its people especially since one of the biggest issues in the Philippines was the fact that the country was not being compensated enough by the United States for using bases in the Philippines.[84] The issue of equity for Filipino veterans was something of importance for the Philippine government as well, clearly seen with President Corazon Aquino saying that "words extolling the joint sacrifices of Filipinos and Americans ring hollow until this is resolved,"[85] It was important for the United States to pay attention to the plight of Filipino World War II veterans, if only to maintain their control of the Asia-Pacific region by remaining in the Philippines. However the importance of these veterans' age must not be elided in conversations that highlight this supposed act of American benevolence. It is clear that the fact that many of the veterans have died or will die soon, vis a vis their age, was central to the passage of this law. As seen in an argument by California representative Tom Campbell, the resolution that allowed these veterans to move to the United States should be supported because

> "it's unlikely that many of these veterans will choose to move to America in the twilight of their lives. Rather, they will choose to remain in their homeland with family and friends."[86]

Aging signifies the inability, whether physical, cultural, or social, of these veterans to move to the United States. It is far too late, illogical, and does not make sense to move at their age during the twilight years of their lives. Although reparations were finally available to these veterans,

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[84] For example, during the 1970s Thailand and South Korea both received $400 million and $600 million respectively for military assistance while the Philippines only received $50 million. For further discussion of the debates and issues surrounding the US bases in the Philippines see James A. Gregor, "The Key Role of U.S. Bases in the Philippines," *The Heritage Foundation*, January 10, 1984. https://www.heritage.org/report/the-key-role-us-bases-the-philippines.

[85] Bob Drogin, "Aquino Scolds U.S. Over Filipino Veterans." *Los Angeles Times,* April 11, 1992. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-04-11-mn-165-story.html

[86] Nakano, Satoshi, "Nation, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Filipino World War II Veterans Equity Movement, 1945-1999," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies 32,* no. 2, (December 2000): 33-53.

what was available to them required an entire shift in life as they knew it. The inclusion of this stipulation in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 rested on an assumption that these veterans would not move simply because they were too old to do so. As such, it is important to focus on the experiences of Filipino World War II veterans, not necessarily in the sphere of citizenship but in the ways in which their age and ability are discursively used as analytics in relation to their life and fight for equity in the United States.

Commodifying the Veteran

The multiple deaths portrayed in *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* can be read as the elusiveness of equity and the fulfillment of the goals of cost cutting measures enabled by the waiting off for these veterans to get old. The ubiquity of death is clear, with one earmarking each chapter of the book and serving as the fulfillment of the veteran's wishes of return to the Philippines. While many of the veteran's ashes were flown back to the Philippines, as mentioned before, some like Ruben's, another veteran and the narrator's best friend, were also scattered in the Pacific Ocean to serve as a symbolic return through the ocean connects both the United States to the Philippines, in hopes that the waves will eventually bring the ashes back home.

Rudy, or Major as the other veterans called him, became the group's liaison to Attorney Anna once Ciriaco died and even became a sort of spokesperson when the new calls for equity gained traction. Of the group, it was Major who was always the one speaking English, and had high praises for the Americans, most likely due to his service for the United States beyond World War II and into the Korean War. His enthusiasm lead him to be interviewed by newspapers like *Filipino American News* which was subsequently picked up by TV and radio stations, bringing more attention to their cause. Major explains:

> ‘Dis is a final mission por us,” Sabi niya sa artikulo. “We should be sitting ander a man go tree back home, drinking beer, en eating sitsaron. But we came to America por our families’
>
> [‘This is a final mission for us,’ He said in the article. ‘We should be sitting under a man go tree back home, drinking beer, and eating pork rinds. But we came to America for our families’]
>
> — *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street, 192*

Many veterans like Ruben and Ciriaco were not able to see their demands materialize, and the proximity of their activism to their death has relegated their fight for equity as their final mission. The added traction given by this interview and Major’s invocation that this is their final mission garnered the attention they needed. This was so important for the veterans that they even argued about the imagery of “drinking beer under a mango tree, eating pork rinds,” as a depiction of them as lazy drunks who don’t do anything but eat. This discussion surrounding the respectability of the veterans resulted in Major’s lines changing to “We should be sitting ander a mengo tree back home, playing wid our grandchildren en enjoying retirement. But we came to to America por our families” when giving an interview. Like the elderly migrants of the previous chapter, the figure of the veteran had to be recuperated as crucial for social reproduction. This warrants them to have the rest of their lives in retirement as long as they are still performing the crucial reproductive labor of taking care of their grandchildren to uphold the figure of the reproductive family.

The imagery of suffering elderly veterans away from their families was what became jarring for those in the United States and resulted in the public becoming more sympathetic to their cause, especially as “Final Mission” became the title of many articles after the initial one. Such was the case when an exposé about a group of World War II veterans was released in the

1990s. This sudden migration of elderly men caused by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 opened opportunities for other Filipinos to scheme these veterans who knew virtually nothing about life in the United States. The exposing of the lives of this group of elderly veterans locked up in a Richmond home by another Filipino who was stealing their pensions became a focal point in the call to organize around equity for Filipino World War II veterans in the 1990s.[87]

In order to galvanize more support for a new bill in Congress for the Filipino Veterans Equity movement, Attorney Anna and the Filipino community threw a fiesta for the veterans. To much success, even General Antonio Taguba, who was famous for revealing the atrocities in Abu Ghraib, came to show support to the veterans and speak to the crowd. This is particularly powerful for Major who in the story was said to have been the commanding officer of General Taguba's father during World War II. This particular triumph for the veterans and Major specifically was so powerful that by the end of the night, Major was visibly crying tears of joy. The connection to General Taguba not only connects the fight for equity to a more general audience but also connects the Filipino Veterans experience to larger histories of American imperialism and militarism after U.S. independence. The centrality of the Filipino soldier in recuperating the respectability of the United States Armed Forces is striking. Whether in World War II or the War on Terror, it is through the Filipino body that a return to a position of respectability is possible for the United States Armed Forces.

The elusiveness of equity is further exemplified with Major who died in his sleep after the fiesta honoring him and the rest World War II veterans. While death for the other veterans in *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* had meant cremation and the only possible return to the

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[87] Steven Chin, "Group Forms to Aid Filipino Veterans" *The San Francisco Examiner,* Dec. 29, 1993.

Philippines, Major's case was different. Due to his notoriety as the face for the veterans of Powell Street, those who attended the fiesta were quick to donate funds in order for his body to be sent back to the Philippines. Major was *actually* going to go back whole. Even Major's estranged relatives in Daly City reached out and offered to help bring his body back to the Philippines. While suspicious with the family's intentions, the rest of the veterans had no choice but to let the family take care of Major's end of life ceremonies as long as Major was able to return to the Philippines as he intended according to his last will and testament.

Like for many of the veterans, death had been the only reason for the possibility of return to the Philippines for Major. The other veterans were able to go to a farewell ceremony for Major before his body was flown back to the Philippine with his cousin Mauricio. To the veteran's surprise the casket was closed for the viewing, which were the wishes of Major's cousin. After the ceremony and while Mauricio was getting ready to load the vehicle that was going to take Major's remains to the airport, Badong, another veteran who was also Major's roommate, could not contain himself and decided to take a last peak at his late friend. As he opened the casket, against the family's wishes and the hesitation of Fidel, Badong was shocked with what he saw:

> "Payapang nakahiga si Major, suot ang paborito niyang uniporme. Pero sa loob ng ataul, may ibang kasama si Major. Sa paligid ng bangkay nakatambak ang mga de-lata ng Spam, sardinas, at kung ano-ano pa. May mga bote ng kape at *creamer*. May mga tuwalyang halatang bagong bili. Sa bawat isa, may nakadikit na piraso ng masking teyp. Nakasulat ang iba't ibang pangalan: 'Gingging,' 'Kiko,' 'Leloy,' 'Maribeth.' Sa isang supot, nakasulat, 'For Tita Mameng, From Ason.' At sa isa pa: 'For JunJun and Cherrie Pie, from Tito Mau and Tita Ason. We lab yu.' "
>
> Major was lying peacefully wearing his favorite uniform. But inside the casket, there were others that were with Major. Cans of Spam, sardines, and other were stuffed around the cadaver. There were bottles of coffee and creamer. There were towels that were obviously just purchased. On each of the items, there was a piece of masking tape stuck on them. Written on them were different names: 'Ginging,' "Kiko,' 'Leloy,' 'Maribeth."

> In one plastic bag, 'For Tita Mameng, From Ason,' was written and on the on the other: 'For JunJun and Cherrie Pie, from Tito Mau and Tita Ason. We love you.'
>
> — *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street, 214*

To Badong and Fidel's disgust, they found the body of their friend surrounded by canned goods and other items that were meant to be consumed by family and friends in the Philippines. Major's casket essentially became another *balikbayan box*, boxes of goods that are usually sent to the Philippines by family members that are working and living abroad as gifts and support for those who left in the Philippines. In this instance we see the transformation of Major's body from that of human to commodity. His death and body are further abstracted into the circuits of capital that have dictated the relationship between the Philippines and the United States, and between those in the Philippines and those in the diaspora.

The reconstitution of the elderly veteran to that of a commodity is not surprising. Given the specific history of the Philippines with its neoliberal policies as a labor brokerage state and its reliance on remittances from Filipinos abroad, the returns that they welcome must have value and support the growth of the nation and its economy. The Filipino veteran body must be commodified, and must be given value, in order to merit any "respectable" and possible return to the Philippines.

The Paradoxes of Neoliberal Multiculturalism

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 which privileged the migration of elderly Filipino veterans to the United States, has often been portrayed as a way for the United States to right a wrong that they had committed in the past. However, once here, many veterans ended up in poverty and were faced with challenges to not only provide for themselves but also for those

they left in the Philippines. Many other legislations have been passed to ameliorate the challenges that these veterans face in the United States which have served as "rhetorical gestures of ethical right and certainty."[88] This shows that this cause is part and symbolic of the values of neoliberal multiculturalism that the United States espouses. By neoliberal multiculturalism, I follow Jodi Melamed, in showing how the United States claims an end to racism by policies of inclusion to the melting pot of the United States. Neoliberal multiculturalism masks other forms of exploitation under neoliberalism and capitalism through the foregrounding of an official anti-racism. Of the legislations passed, two of the movement's successes merit further examination in thinking through the paradoxes of neoliberal multiculturalism at large: The Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund and The Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015.

The valuing of these Filipino elderly veterans as partial citizens is clear from the treatment they've received from the United States government since the end of World War II. While these veterans have slowly been granted more benefits since 1990, their desire for full equity has not been fulfilled and has been annually lobbied for by many of those in the Filipino community. The Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund, that was passed in 2009, gave a one time payment of $15,000 to those who lived in the United States, and $7000 to those in the Philippines.[89] However, this was contingent upon the ability of Filipino WW2 veterans to prove that they were actually veterans and served in World War II. This was tricky since many veterans could not access these benefits because of incomplete Veterans Affairs records that the Philippine

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[88] Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism," *Social Text* 89 Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter 2006, 16.

[89] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "WWII Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation (FVEC) Fund." https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/fvec.asp.

state had neglected. Some veterans also didn't list their real names or didn't put a name at all in fear that if the Japanese forces found these papers, they would retaliate against them and their families. The onus then fell on the veterans and their ability to prove their service.

An example of this is the Aeta Squadron 30 and its three surviving members in 2016.[90] The Aeta, an indigenous mountain-dwelling group in the Philippines, also served in the guerrilla forces in World War II, as hunters in the mountains looking for Japanese soldiers. They used their skills navigating the mountains to harvest food and protect American servicemen that they saved from death from the Japanese. Having no birth certificates, nor having the ability to write, these indigenous peoples who served during World War II were still left in a precarious position, waiting and hoping that benefits can be afforded to them. In this sense, Filipino veterans become legible in relation to neoliberal multiculturalism as it "arranges racial meaning to mitigate the charge of racism (according to conventional race categories), while innovating a new racism that rewards or punishes people for being or not being 'multicultural Americans,' [like the Aetas]."[91] The disavowal of the Aeta Squadron 30 can be seen as symptomatic of the indigenous condition in postcolonial nations like the Philippines and the ways in which certain populations are deemed legible in order to rehabilitate the image of the United States as an inclusive nation who is trying to mend their past mistakes.

Incidentally, the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund was incorporated into the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 which was meant to reinvigorate the

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[90] Tonette, Orejas, "Pension Elusive for Aeta Guerillas," *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* March 2, 2016. http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/769917/pension-elusive-for-aeta-guerrillas. Unfortunately, there has been no update on the fate of the Aeta Squadron 30's three surviving members.

[91] Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism," *Social Text* 89 Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter 2006, 19.

American economy after the Great Recession by saving current jobs and creating new ones.[92] Although this inclusion to an economic stimulus bill may be a coincidence, it is interesting to note that compensation for elderly Filipino World War II veterans were added into this mix.[93] Arguably, this can be seen as an investment in the Philippines writ large, by allocating money to correct the errors of the United States in times of dire need to the causes of the Filipino people. We can read these actions to mean that Filipino veterans and American relations with the Philippines are worth investing in. To cultivate a better relationship with the Philippines can mean the development of the American economy through the possibility of free trade between the two countries, the leasing of the former American bases back to the United States, and the continued allyship and military cooperation between the United States and its former colony.

However, the issues surrounding equity for Filipino veterans is not just an issue for the United States. In a speech during a Filipino World War II Veteran Assembly in the Philippines, former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo highlighted her victories in the realm of foreign affairs. Her tours all over the world "from Africa to the American Midwest" lead to foreign investments pouring in the country, boasting that even though ⅔ of the world was in recession for the past 12 months, the Philippines had 34 quarters of uninterrupted economic growth.[94] This global engagement, according to Arroyo, did not just lead to increase in investments but also in

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[92] "H.R.1 - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/house-bill/1/text.

[93] The legislator who advocated for the inclusion of the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund into the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawai'i. See Congressional Record, 111th Congress, 1st Session Issue: Vol. 155, No. 23 — Daily Edition https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2009/2/5/senate-section/article/s1617-2?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22filipino+veterans+equity+compensation+fund%22%5D%7D&s=5&r=93.

[94] Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, "Speech of President Arroyo during the Filipino World War II Veterans Assembly," September 3, 2009, http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph /2009/09/03/speech-of-president- arroyo-during-the-filipino-world-war-ii-veterans-assembly/

the correction of a historical injustice. Arroyo connects her presence in the United States and her tireless advocacy to the recognition of Filipino American veterans to the passage of the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund. Economic development and the conditions and battles that Filipino veterans face are clearly connected as evidenced by Arroyo's usage of her advocacy for the veterans. In doing so, Arroyo shows her skills in foreign diplomacy with the veterans almost seeming like a bargaining chip for the Philippine government in making deals with the United States.

While I have argued that we must read these actions of the United States beyond benevolence, it is also important that we not misconstrue the advocacies of the Philippine state. The Philippines is also culpable for the conditions that we find these Filipino World War II veterans in. For both nations, the plight of these veterans have been nothing more but a pawn for their respective foreign policy agendas. These veterans serve as a reminder for the injustices of the Americans for the Philippines while the United States use it to further "improve" their relations with the Filipino people.

The passage of The Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015 further illustrates the point that an investment on these veterans yield returns to the economy for the United States.[95] The bill awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to these Filipino veterans, which is considered one of the highest civilian awards in the United States along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. However, ability and the usage of Filipino bodies as a global labor force does not escape even the rhetoric in relation to Filipino elderly migrants. In the awarding ceremony for Filipino veterans, many legislators spoke about the importance of

[95] S. 1555 - Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015. https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1555.

Filipinos to the United States. New York Senator Chuck Schumer gave a "special shout out" to "the great Filipino people and the millions who have crossed the ocean to come to America to be hardworking, patriotic, and dedicated American citizens" ending his speech saying "we want more of you here."[96] The usage of the first person plural "we" seem to suggest that Schumer means that the United States wants more Filipinos to come to the country. This shift to the value of the able-bodied Filipino laboring body is no surprise, being that Filipinos are those which are exported the most by the Philippine nation-state and the types of migrants that the United States need to support its economy.

The importance of Filipino labor on the economy and the United States is extended by the comments made by Nancy Pelosi during the same award ceremony:

> We are blessed in San Francisco, and in California, and indeed in our country with so many Filipino Americans that have made such a valuable contribution to our country.
>
> But from all over our country, you see the blessings that the Filipino American community has brought us. For seven decades, Filipino veterans fought for the compensation they had earned, for too long their justice was denied and not fully respected. Even after citizenship was granted, the full promise of that status remained unfulfilled, that's part of the fight we've always had. But we are always in awe not only by the bravery of these heroes in the battlefield but also their fight for due recognition upon coming to the US. Today we take a proud step toward justice by conferring the highest honor that Congress can bestow, the Congressional gold medal. This medal recognizes the extraordinary heroism and sacrifice of Filipino veterans. It honors their fierce devotion to freedom and their noble sacrifice. It places them in the pantheon of heroes. We honor our Filipino heroes not only as freedom fighters and defenders of democracy. We honor them as an inseparable part of the fabric of our community and country, For centuries, Filipinos have enriched our nation and made America more American with their courage, their determination, their optimism for the future. It gives me great pride as a Californian that our state is home to 1.5 million Filipino Americans (*aside*) that's an applause line.[97]

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[96] Speaker Paul Ryan, "Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony Honoring Filipino World War II Veterans." October 25, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8XFn2cixCM&t=2091s.

[97] Ibid.

Pelosi's comments are a clear manifestation of ideas that further the neoliberal multiculturalism that is emblematic of American society since the 1990s which justify and support the migration of people from the Philippines to the United States. The Filipino people, by extension, are valuable and honored by the Congressional Medal of Honor for their important contributions in the past as a way to cement American geopolitical power in the Asia-Pacific and as laborers bolstering up the U.S. economy.

The Fulfillment and Transformation of Return(s) through Literature

While no veterans were interviewed in this chapter, the decision to use literary critique lied on the fact that by examining literature, we operate beyond the biological time that have been used in the determining when to give these veterans their much awaited benefits. We are able to remember these veterans because works such as *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street* immortalize the stories and experiences of these elderly migrants even after they have passed away. If my argument stands that aging and ability were central to the United States' decision in granting these benefits, then how do the narratives of Filipino veterans in literature circumvent and critique the production of value when value making goes beyond the biological time of these veterans.

The centrality of return in the narratives of the veterans of Powell Street is clear in *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street*. While these veterans can be easily seen as migrants, a critical examination of the politics and desires behind their migration show how these migrants are political subjects that are fighting for equitable benefits that were reneged from them by the United States government. Their migration and returns are predicated on this interplay between

the United States and its former colonial subjects, that challenge the teleological ideas of American modernity and the supposed desire of migrants to actually be in the United States. While physical return may be impossible for some veterans, and returns in the case of these elderly men have morphed into the economic returns that are made possible through their inclusion in American neoliberal multiculturalism, there are other forms of return that are made possible by *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street*.

In July 2014, "Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street/The Guerrillas of Powell Street" premiered in Bindlestiff Studios in San Francisco, California. For Pimentel, this occasion was a sort of homecoming given that now that the stories of the veterans he immortalized in his novel were now accessible in the United States were the events transpired.[98] This homecoming, and *return* to San Francisco is worth noting as the novel, which was published in 2007 by the Ateneo de Manila University Press, was written in Filipino and published in Manila, away from the setting of the book and unintelligible to those who do not understand Filipino. The publication of the novel in the Philippines and in Filipino mark it as one of the few, if not the only, publication that has written about the Filipino American experiences in Filipino. The novel was even awarded the National Book Award for Fiction in 2007 by the Manila Critics Circle and the National Book Development Board. These facts, although arbitrary to some, are crucial in seeing the importance of such works like *Mga Gerilya Sa Powell Street,* that indeed these stories and the veterans are valuable.

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[98] Rommel Conclara, "Filipino WWII Veterans' Struggle Hits the Stage in 'The Guerillas of Powell Street'." *Balitang America,* July 21, 2014. https://balitangamerica.tv/filipino-wwii-veterans-struggle-hits-the-stage-in-the-guerillas-of-powell-street/

The accessibility of the novel may be limited but the malleability of literary works enable returns that would've been unimaginable to the veterans highlighted in the novel and the play. Following Paul Nadal's discussion of what he terms as "remittance fiction" or "works produced abroad and valorized at home," I interpret *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* as another form of literary remittance.[99] Building on Nadal's notion of literary remittance, my pivot towards a work of fiction that was published in the Philippines and returned to the United States divorce us from the value production inherent in publishing. For the most part, we see the value of literary works published in English in the Global North as indeed global, with a market and audience in the Global South. In looking at *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street*, we see that works published in languages other than English and from places like the Philippines can also travel against the circuits of capital that privilege literary movement to *rather than* from the Philippines. Works such as *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* indeed transform in its return to the United States. It is here that we see new possibilities of return, not only to the Philippines, but also to the United States, in new forms that value and highlight the importance of the narratives and experiences of these elderly migrants. Even though the stories of these veterans were inaccessible before, its return and transformation makes the lives of these guerillas of Powell Street now available for those who are unaware of their cause. Moreos, while there are now less veterans alive, works like *Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street* urge Filipinos to take up and listen to stories from our own communities. Through literature, we can immortalize stories that in turn inspire other to imagine and mobilize for better futures.

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[99] Paul Nadal, "A Literary Remittance: Juan C. Laya's His Native Soil and the Rise of Realism in the Filipino Novel in English," *American Literature*, vol. 89, no. 3, September 2017.

Coda: Manila, I'm Finally Coming Back, Manila

By paying attention to the elderly migrant experience as exemplified by Filipino World War II veterans and grandparents who are petitioned through family reunification, we see how important age and ability serve as analytics in our understandings of migration and globalization. I deliberately claim crip in the title of my thesis "Crip'in Migration" to highlight two crucial points: that elderly migrants become crip in migration and that we need to crip our understandings of migration. I do this to follow the work of disability scholars and activists in forging and imagining coalitions amongst those who are marginalized under regimes like neoliberalism and globalization. Kafer exemplifies, as I have shown earlier, the importance of claiming crip:

> To claim crip critically is to recognize the ethical, epistemic, and political responsibilities behind such claims; deconstructing the binary between disabled and able-bodied/able-minded requires more attention to how different bodies/minds are treated differently, not less.[100]

There are radical stakes in envisioning ourselves as crip and seeing the importance of disability in our current moment. By cripping our understandings of ourselves and our lives, we call for new futures that envision a future not rooted in the violence of capitalism and globalization. It is a call to understand and see that our values are not reliant on how we function under systems of waged labor; it is a call to reimagine ourselves as always interdependent rather than disconnected and alone. To crip is to forego ideas of pure independence and to acknowledge that we rely on our loved ones, on our companion species, and on the places we call, in order to live, survive,

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[100]Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Indiana University Press, 2013, 13.

and thrive. It is an investment in our interconnectedness that is natural and is crucial to cultivate and imagine better pasts, presents, and futures.

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"Manila/ I keep coming back to Manila/
Simply no place like Manila/ Manila, I'm coming home."

— Hotdog "Manila"

In the summer of 2018, I was finally able to come back home to Manila after living in the United States for 12 years. Armed with a research agenda and what was left from my stipend from the previous year, I aimed to answer my questions about aging in the Philippines. Manila had always been in my head. It was a place that I was familiar to, the place I grew up in. As my epigraph from a famous Filipino 70s song puts it, there is simply no place like Manila.

The shopping malls were neverending in Manila. So much so that life can easily revolve around these gigantic buildings that connected the entirety of the National Capital Region (NCR).[101] Each mall had a chapel that held Sunday masses throughout the day. High-rise condominium were being built next to these malls to accommodate the growth of the area's population. More importantly, the city's public transportation was linked to these malls that dotted Manila's map. Each mall served as a stop for the light rail system, or one of the buses that never stopped until it reached another mall.

As I walked around one of these shopping centers looking for souvenirs to bring back with me, multiple posters caught my attention: "Bring your grandparents to get a 20% discount!" "Thank you po Lolo and Lola! Free Palabok with Chicken Bucket Purchase!" The weekend

[101] While Manila is the capital of the Philippines, Manila is part of a larger entity called the National Capital Region, which is a conglomerate multiple cities in the region.

following my departure was apparently Grandparents Day, an American holiday that was created in the 1970s.[102] As American as its history might be, Grandparents Day was something that I was not aware of, even if I had lived the majority of my life in the United States. This was striking, how is this celebration of grandparents so normalized in the Philippines?

That following January, I returned again to the Philippines. During my research, many materials came up that talked about the development of the Philippines as a medical tourism and retirement destination. I was interested in how this increased perception of the Philippines as a place to get care was affecting those who lived in the Philippines. My curiosity lead me to a nursing home in the northern part of the capital.

Since I was staying in Makati, in the southern part of the region, I was forced to wake up early to avoid Manila's infamous traffic. What would've been a 1 hour and 30 minute drive at 9 A.M. only took 30 minutes at 7 A.M. As we traversed through the crowded streets of the city, it was not uncommon to have a mendicant knock on our car's windows to ask for spare change. Many of them were mothers who were carrying their babies, or unemployed elderly Filipinos.

This image stayed with me as I spent that day in the nursing home. What conditions allow people to be on the streets asking for money in their old age? What do I make of the development of care industries for Filipinos that relate to aging like the nursing home that I was visiting?

These two vignettes show two different scenes of aging in the Philippines. While the first vignette was a celebration of grandparents and their commodification as a holiday for consumerism, the other was a reminder that not everyone has access to the malls and

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[102] For a history of Grandparent's Day, see https://grandparentsday.org/about/.

development all over the city. When coupled with the fact that the Philippines is continuing to be marketed as a destination for retirement and medical tourism to those in the Global North, my research is shifting to look at how aging is changing in the Philippines. I am interested in exploring how globalization, and the implication of the Philippines in the global care industry, itself, are changing how Filipinos see and manage themselves as they approach the inevitability of death.

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