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SUSAN EVANGELISTA

Regional histories, ethnic histories, studies of minority groups within particular societies have been much in vogue lately, not only in their own right, but for what they have to contribute to the larger history of the particular nation. Indeed, it has been pointed out that this "partial" history is particularly important if it is of an oppressed or down-trodden minority, for this adds a totally new dimension to our understanding. It adds a "view from the underside," which Carey McWilliams values for the insight it gives into the workings of the society:

One of the best ways to view and understand a society is to see it from the bottom looking up. To be sure, the underview is incomplete. Bottom dogs see, know, and learn a lot but their perspective is limited. But they see more, I have come to believe, than those who occupy the middle and upper reaches; their view is less inhibited, less circumscribed. The view from down under exposes the deceptions, self-deceptions, distortions, apostasies; it is likely to be bitterly realistic. It offers a good, if limited, guide to what the society is really like, not what it professes to be. The traditional values sound fine, but what happen to them when put to the test? A good test is the extent to which the society is willing to extend to outsiders, lesser breeds, strangers, the same rights and protection it extends to those who inhabit the upper zones.¹

But where does the impetus for such historical writing come from? It is probably fairly obvious that it would have to come from within the group involved. But it is equally obvious that the down-trodden, the oppressed, rarely write histories. Do they write at all? Certainly they do; they write fiction, poetry, and, if they are politically organized,

1. Carey McWilliams, *Introduction to America is in the Heart*, reprinted, pp. 20-21.

manifestos, letters to editors, at the very least, letters to friends. In the particular case in point to which Carey McWilliams was referring above, that of Carlos Bulosan, poor Filipino immigrant to the United States during the Depression Era, the document is a novel, vaguely autobiographical in intent, entitled *America is in the Heart*, a book which for many years in fact served as the starting point for the investigation of the Filipino-American historical experience, precisely because it predated the more orthodox forms of data-gathering and history writing in this particular area by twenty years or so.

The next question, then, is exactly how to make history out of such documents. That this is possible is implicit in the continuation of McWilliams' introduction:

In this sense, the view of a sensitive, idealistic, imaginative Filipino provides an excellent corrective to the view that leading West Coast institutions projected in the period, say, from 1930-1941. For the Filipino was the bottom dog; he occupied the lowest rung on the ladder. Within its limitations, his view was accurate. Although the scene has changed, this book *America is in the Heart* will stand as a graphic, historical reminder of what it was like to be a Filipino in California in the year it embraces.²

Today if we want to find out something about Filipinos in the U.S. during the 1930s, we can look back on statistical studies of population and migration, job mobility, social adjustment, labor organizations, income figures, crime rates, etc. We can find out which provinces in the Philippines were the source of major emigration, how much the Filipino lettuce picker earned in contrast to the white lettuce picker, the black, the Chinese, the Japanese, and we can find out which of these ethnic groups is earning the most in California today. (The Japanese by far and away!) We can find out how many Filipino farm laborers eventually became contractors, and, theoretically at least, we can find out how many dollars were remitted to those left at home. But none of this information, as valuable as it may be to the sociologist, the politician, the union organizer, answers the all-important question of what it was like to be a Filipino in California. It is my contention that literature contributes to history precisely by providing answers to questions such as this. Literature gives the feel, the inside of the history of the group. What was the Filipino migrant worker thinking about

2. Ibid.

when he sent money home? When he could not? When he ran up against racism, either subtle or violent? What did he think his major problems were? What were his joys in the U.S.? This information may seem too subjective for the sociologist or the political scientist, and it is indeed unquantifiable, but it is still part of the totality of the historical experience, and it is real and human in a way that the more abstract type of study cannot be.

We may think this is enough of a contribution, and perhaps it is, but "minority" literature also gives us something more. It offers us insight into the consciousness of the writer, his structuring of experience, his "take" on things. This is an important element in most modern approaches in history, and although it may not be always possible to separate this 'structuring' from the "feel" of the historical experience, in theory the consciousness imposes structure on the raw data of experience and creates the feel. Consciousness is like a pair of sunglasses, which both shapes and colors our experiences. A simple example may help us clarify this. When today's Filipino-Americans look back on the experiences of their parents and grandparents as early immigrants, they do so with a sense of outrage, for their own historical consciousness has been formed in an age of class-conscious, anti-Imperialist rhetoric. But when one reads Bulosan, one senses more bewilderment and hurt than outrage, for although the hard data is the same and is seen now as naked racism and class exploitation, Bulosan viewed his experiences through a framework provided him by his colonial education and the general level of colonial mentality prevalent among the less politically sophisticated in the Philippines of the American period. He never really got over the feeling that the American *ideal* (equality, justice, and a certain degree of prosperity for all) was somehow *there*, simply waiting to be realized. This is why Bulosan so often lapses into the sentimentalism that so bothers those of more modern consciousness, such as the critic San Juan.

This example has brought me to the main subject of this article, which is the feel, and the structure, of the changing Filipino-American experience, as expressed in literature. The discussion will move from the Bulosan era through the low points of oblivion and denial which followed the war, through the years of the national "swing to the right" of the fifties with the "Americanism" that it entailed, through the growth of Asian-American consciousness of the late sixties, with the incorporation of some new ideas from the Philippines, ending with the relatively mature and (for the moment) balanced consciousness of the present time.

BULOSAN AND THE EARLY IMMIGRANTS

This said, we return to Bulosan. *America is in the Heart* is essentially the story of a young Filipino immigrant, turned migrant field worker in the western part of the United States, who, as he journeys from place to place, discovers that his dream of America, of universal democracy and streets paved with gold simply does not exist, or at least does not reach to the level of society on which he, as a brown-skinned immigrant, finds himself. He is, as I have said, hurt, bewildered, and, yes, enraged too, but with a kind of helpless fury that is directed inward first, at himself, and next at his fellow Filipinos, who may sometimes give cause for such treatment and invariably put up with it. One often-anthologized segment of this novel, a pathetic scene indeed, is the Holtville incident in which a mixed couple, a Filipino male with his white American wife and child are refused service in a restaurant and seem to infuriate the storekeeper simply by their existence. The Filipino is desperate—the baby needs milk—and finally strikes the storekeeper who in turn beats him up and has him dragged away by the police. "He lay there on the road, when two deputy sheriffs came to take him away, he looked tearfully back at his wife and child."³ Bulosan seems most impressed by (and maybe even ashamed of) the man's helplessness in the face of such unjust treatment. He doesn't tell the incident in terms that would bring out the racism involved (although that is obvious) or the sexism (just as obvious, no doubt, to feminists who would see the white man's fury as being based on the Filipino's violation of his 'ownership' rights over the white woman). It is instead personal, almost shameful, a blow to the pride of both the man involved and the author himself. Bulosan had no doubt absorbed to his depths the idea that American justice is such that if you are treated badly, you must deserve it!

The ideal American comes to the fore in Bulosan's short story "Be American." The main character of this story is a cousin named Consorcio, a naive new arrival, with a great ambition of becoming a citizen. He gets a job as a janitor, saves up his pay, and buys himself a set of books that cover all fields of classical learning—philosophy, science, law, history, literature. When he discovers he cannot read them, he sells them, set by set, and uses the money to finance night school citizenship classes, unaware that Filipinos (and Chinese and

3. Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1946; reprint ed., University of Washington Press, 1973), pp. 144-45.

Japanese) were still legally barred from becoming citizens. Eventually, he gives up studying and drifts into migrant farm work. The author follows Consorcio's progress from then on, first through a series of small gifts from various fields--a box of asparagus, a crate of lettuce--and then later on postcards and then union newsletters, as Consorcio becomes more and more articulate. Consorcio makes himself into a "real American" by working on the California farms, pioneering in labor organizations, suffering defeat, oppression, and jail terms because of his work. When he finally receives his citizenship just before he dies, it is a mere technicality, for his real "Americanism" has grown as he grew in consciousness and in action, giving of himself, to help the farm worker find his own equality.

I was in Oregon when I received a newspaper from Consorcio, postmarked Pisma Beach. It was the first issue of his publication for agricultural workers in California. It was in English. From then on, I received all issues of his publication. All of the years that it existed defending the workers and upholding the rights and liberties of all Americans, native or foreign born, so that, as he began to understand the nature of American society, he became more and more belligerent in his editorials and had to go to jail a few times for his ideas about freedom and peace.

Yes indeed, Consorcio: you have become an American, a real American.⁴

Again, one can easily point out a more contemporary framework for Consorcio's story, one in terms of ruling and exploited classes, but Bulosan falls back on his ideal. One has to *deserve* to be an American; one has to work for one's full rights.

And work Bulosan did, as his own consciousness and political education developed, especially during the postwar McCarthy era. These years saw him active in the Seattle-based cannery workers union, a strong and radical labor organization which continues to be nearly all-Filipino to this day. As Union publicity manager, and as a student of Marxism, Bulosan began to use the rhetoric of class analysis and exploitation in his writing, but still he adhered to the idealism of "Be American." The laborer earned his right to participate in the ideal state by organizing and carrying out radical action, and if enough of this were to be done, the true and ideal potential of America would be realized.

4. Carlos Bulosan, "Be American," in *Selected Works and Letters*, ed. Epifanio San Juan, Jr. and Nimotschka Rosca (Honolulu, Hawaii: Friends of the Filipino People, 1982).

BIENVENIDO SANTOS AND THE PENSIONADOS

But there was another strain of Filipino-American writing during the war and afterwards, a strain that represented somewhat of a split in terms of historical experience and consciousness. Bienvenido Santos had gone to the United States just before the war as a *pensionado*, and, trapped by the Japanese invasion of his homeland, he too spent years wandering around America. But he did so giving lectures instead of picking fruit crops. Despite his own personal sensitivity to the lives of the Filipino immigrants like Bulosan, experientially he was simply in another group altogether. He was a scholar and spent most of his time on the East Coast, where there were then very few Filipino workers, so most of his contacts were pensionados also. Of the "barkada" in *You Lovely People*, one was a doctor, two were in Harvard, all were from relatively wealthy families. The pain in this book is due not so much to problems of race and class that plagued the poorer West Coast Filipinos, but to the simple circumstance of being an ocean away from home and being absolutely cut off, by the war going on at home. Many of the men already knew, or would eventually find out, that their families had been killed by the Japanese, and all feared such losses. But money, food, and employment are not problems. And the Americans around them are sympathetic and treat them kindly. Station masters worry about being unable to sell Santos train tickets during the holidays. His landlord includes him in the family Christmas. A waitress in a Filipino restaurant weeps as Val tells about his father's death, etc.

It is true that Santos does write, and with great sympathy too, of some lower-class Filipino-American marriages, although these stories come to him secondhand through Ambo. They are nevertheless valuable especially inasmuch as Bulosan rarely mentions women and marriage, and has often given the (mistaken) impression that Filipino workers didn't marry. Nevertheless, Santos seems to view the Filipino immigrant more as a private person, subject to the personal feelings of love, loneliness, and homesickness (it is easy to see how his circumstances would lead him to this view) whereas Bulosan was more concerned with the life and social status of the Filipinos as a group.

After the war more Filipino students and professionals went to the United States. Few of these new people had much to do with Bulosan's old-timers. Few could sympathize with them and many were quite simply ashamed of them. And with the death of Bulosan in 1956, the old-timers lost their most articulate spokesman. Ben Santos tried to speak for them, but his natural perspective really was broader.

Nevertheless, Santos' story "The Day the Dancers Came" is the classical description of the split within the Filipino group and the "feel" of it, as seen from a position of removal from both parties. The second group of Filipinos on the immigrant scene, the students and professionals, are here represented by the young members of a Philippine Dance Troupe, perhaps the Bayanihan or something similar, who are coming to perform in the city of Chicago. One of the old-timers, who live together, poor and uneducated, excitedly anticipates welcoming his young countrymen, bringing them to his apartment, showing them that Filipino hospitality lives, even in exile. Of course when the old man finally comes face to face with the dancers, meeting them in the lobby of their hotel, they will have nothing to do with him. They seem, if anything, suspicious of his intentions, as if they had been warned against this very situation. At any rate, they are young and talented and sophisticated and privileged, while he is none of these, and they can expect a warm and cordial welcome wherever they go. From today's perspective we would simply say that class speaks louder than race. But from the fifties, Santos seems to view it as primarily a split within the Filipino soul, one part rejecting the other although the other longs for unification.

The class separation still exists among the Filipinos in the United States. With the new immigration laws giving priority to professionals, highly educated immigrants become mainstream right away. On the other hand, the old-timers are older still, dying out, in fact, and usually dying in poverty. Their children, and others admitted under family reunification laws, work on farms or in canneries, and are still relatively poor in a land of material riches. And perhaps because it is hard to be happy with yourself when you are poor in a rich country, or brown in a white country, the level of self-esteem in this group was often low. Filipinos in America were, in fact, frequently known to deny their ethnic background.

ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS

For ten or fifteen years after the end of the war, pro-Americanism and anticommunism were so strong that most ethnic groups simply tried to blend into the scenery by being as American as everyone else. Even labor unions, such as that for which Bulosan was then writing in Seattle, were considered suspect, and there was in the popular mind a strong connection between "foreign" and "communist." This was, then, a bad time for ethnic literature of any but the most personal kind. Santos' stories continued to be popular; Bulosan, sick and alcoholic by

that time, vacillated between writing very personal love poetry and writing highly political union tracts for which he was eventually labelled "communist."

Finally, the 1960s saw the rise of the Civil Rights movement and the rise of ethnic consciousness among Black Americans. Then in the late sixties and early seventies, a new cultural phenomenon sprang up in the form of Asian-American consciousness. This movement was spearheaded by Chinese and Japanese-Americans, second, third, and fourth generations, prosperous and educated and from their newly-Americanized consciousness, eager to reject both the oppressive authoritarian structures of their home countries and the racism directed at them by the predominantly white culture of America. The way out of this double-rejection bind was to develop an Asian-American consciousness that wasn't just Asian, nor just American, nor a patchwork of the two, but was something new, historically and sociologically based, and capable of stimulating both historical study and creative writing.

Filipino-Americans differed from the other two groups in a number of ways. They were generally only second generation; they had not achieved so much economically; they did not reject their home culture so vehemently. They were, however, a step ahead of the other two because they had in the person of Carlos Bulosan an articulate, militant, politically-conscious spokesman, dead by then, but a published writer who had left a rich legacy of stories, poems, essays, and two novels. It was only natural, then, that the early Filipino-American movement centered on Bulosan. His writings were dug out of old bookstores and libraries and rusty filing cabinets in Seattle's Cannery Union building, where he had last worked and recirculated in mimeographed form. *America is in the Heart* became the classic account of the Filipino-American historical experience, and the old *Manong*, whom Bulosan loved so much, now older still and poorer, became the starting point for Filipino-American consciousness-raising. Oscar Pefiaranda worked in the hop fields and the salmon canneries to duplicate the experience of the *Manong*. Al Robles accumulated hundreds of hours of taped interview with *Manong*. Lou Syquia worked hard in the effort to prevent the demolition of the old International Hotel in San Francisco, where so many *Manong* lived. And they all wrote prolifically. One of my own favorite *Manong* poems is the following description of an old man waiting for his death, by Lou Syquia:

A DISTANT DRUM

a country within a street
dying
abandoned by affluent alumni
uncaring

pungent odor of bagoong and adobo
blend with garbage
outside Chinese restaurants

Kearny St. glistens after the rain
wetness gleams
in the backdrop of neon
bawdy Broadway
topless
bottomless
countryless

as the old walks
his back hunched
by his life
clicks of billiard balls
in his ear
topless
bottomless
tongueless

large brown faded hat
covers his baldness
stains of soya and dust
in his overcoat
touching the ground
with its memories
clothes much larger
than he

revolution has passed him by
his silence is heard in dry tears
Kearny St. his home family country
squeezed between the tourist money of Chinatown
and the monolith structure of Montgomery
topless

bottomless
powerless

calloused hands dig deeper into the overcoat
and light in his room becomes a beacon
door opens to warmth from a heater
sitting slowly on the bed
he waits for his visitor
flashing neon and blaring horns stop
a long day and the knock on the door
is a distant drum.⁵

This poem represents the early literature of the movement and is nearly pure description rather than historical or political analysis. Although there is in the "topless bottomless" refrain an understanding of what it is to be nationless and tongueless, and how, given these, one is powerless. Syquia also understands the convergence of economic forces against this man, but the strong sense of political exploitation, and its characteristic rhetoric, came later. However, the very act of recognizing the old-timer as a fellow-Filipino, with a history of his own, was highly significant at this time. It involved looking backwards of course, and looking towards a group of people who were dying out. However, it marked the establishment of the *roots* of a new literature.

INFLUENCES FROM HOME

Filipino-American consciousness was, however, just beginning to pull itself together when Martial Law was declared in the Philippines. Soon a small group of "political exiles" (some had been out of the country when Martial Law was declared, others had escaped or been allowed to leave) gathered in San Francisco, and, to some extent simply coopted the fledgling Filipino-American movement. This is a rather ironic reversal of the usual colonial mentality, but historically true. The Martial Law exiles were centuries ahead of their compatriots in the U.S. in terms of political understanding, organization and sophistication. They had been through the experience of 1970, 1971 and 1972, and they knew all about teach-ins, demonstrations, etc. In contrast the Filipino-Americans had just begun to recognize that they were a historical entity, that they were Filipinos as well as Americans, and that they should be proud of that fact. They welcomed the Filipino activists

5. *Liwanag* (San Francisco: Liwanag Publishing Inc., 1975).

more warmly than they would have five years earlier, and without the skepticism they might have had five years later.

The results of this uneasy union are still being felt in political and social organizations in ways too complex to describe. In literature several interesting changes appeared almost immediately after 1972. Most obviously the result of the influx of the political exiles is the poems written by Filipino-Americans about the political situation in the Philippines. Emily Cachapero writes the following untitled poem:

don't let them fool you
 the story always
 starts the same
 we become the discovered people even though
 we were already there
 but there are
 no snake dancing igorots
 casting coins reading ashes
 in isabella
 in isabella
 where guns grow on trees
 bullets the stillborn fruit
 ating tao
 harvest in the dark
 readying them for malacafiang
 and malacafiang
 is no holy city
 just because palm leaves
 line the paths
 greeting marcos
 the way they did for jesus
 just because a gold cross
 hangs over the bed
 for daily forgiveness
 of daily sins
 in the bureau picture
 ferdinand and imelda
 smiling stand so close
 knowing kanilang tao
 cannot come close
 in the picture
 smiling the two hear
 only silence
 walang umaawit ating pilipinas
 our islands do not sing

like before
mga awit of living
but now
ngayon mga awit of survival
her tongue has been cut
and the wounds salted
babae ang pilipinas
now the philippines
is one woman's blues
sung with no man's rhythms.

She follows this with a poem commemorating the Miss Universe Contest, clearly showing the native Filipino activist position against such festivals, seen as distractors from the problematic national situation.

*miss philippines islands
at the miss universe contest*

miss PI at the miss universe contest
has highways across
her body
everyone at the show
has a map
and those men
un-fresh from nam
know the map
by heart
wearing their navy caps
at the same slanted angle
as an asian cunt
is supposed to be
waiting for miss PI
to parade
in a thigh high slitted
cheong-sam
even though she's not chinese
waiting for a peek
she has highways
across her body
but bypasses isabella
she hides it under that still ratted hair
trying to muffle the sound
of ating tao

cebu and leyte
her breasts
surrender time and time again
to the slightest touch
just like in the war
she has highways
across her body
and mindanao
muslim land
moro land
is under the fold in her belly
it's a secret
kept between the thighs
miss PI at the miss universe contest
knows who the winner is
even though she doesn't like
the answer
because the winner is
the winner is
the loser.

Note that both these poems essentially revolve around the same comparison—that of the Philippines as a raped or abused woman. The second adds the racist white American soldier from Vietnam and his especially exploitative attitude toward Asian women. This basic concept, and this sort of imagery, occurs in all three forms of Asian-American literature of this period (Chinese, Japanese, Filipino), even though these particular examples look towards the homeland as the victim of abuse, instead of looking directly at the Filipino-American woman. But political consciousness has certainly gone beyond the earlier poems, and shows very clearly the influence of the rising feminist consciousness as well.

A NEW BALANCE

In the following poem by Al Robles, the new political consciousness is evident. But something else has been added, and that is the idea that the old U.S. Manong will find his essential roots not in the U.S. but in the Philippines, and that no matter where his history may take him eventually, it starts in the Philippines.

*rapping with one million carabaos
in the dark*

All night session--ocean of words
Legaspi - Frank - Bob - Bill - Sorro - Marty and
himself and someone else.

Put down your white mind
with your dark eyes
behind brown skin

Brown
like fallen coconuts
on a cold
cold winter day

Brown
like fish drying
in the hot summer sun.

Come down from those white flaky hills
the smell of the carabao shit stills the mind
keeps the pampino
swimming in your belly.

Throw away those knives and forks
and eat rice and raw fish
with brown winter-soiled hands

Jump and wallow
in the grass heap shit
of the carabao

Don't you know
you smell like the deep brown earth
if you only knew
if your eyes were only opened
you would see the sun come down
underneath brown children's feet.
You can't hide these
You can't hide these
fish heads
in your pockets
the smell is too strong.

If you only know how brown you are
you would slide down
from the highest mountain top
and would whip out your lava tongue
and scoop up all that white shit
that's keeping your people down.

I'll whip out a sharp bamboo leaf
and push it down your throat
but I'll be gentle
I'll push it down
and you will cry out
maybe see into the dawn
hear the water buffaloes
galloping along the river

On the sand
By the water
In the mountains

You will have your sharp bolo
and sing and dance
and eat and fight

All day into
the hot blazing sun
through the cool night
onto the next morning

Behind the early morning fog
a million brown Filipino faces
chanting: makibaka, makibaka, makibaka.

This was a period of identity seeking, as all of Asian-American consciousness really was, to greater or lesser degree. Filipino identity-seeking first looked back to a rather nativistic image of the homeland, a simple, pastoral life of rivers, and mountains and eating with the hands (an idea that has reemerged in post revolution Manila as a trademark of the "true" Filipino.) But at the same time Robles is conscious of what we in the Philippines call "colonial mentality," and the image of the coconut, brown on the outside but white on the inside ("your white mind") emerges. So does the idea of an aroused peasantry, unwilling to

be further exploited, and with it comes the chant of the Martial Law era: *Makibaka*.

The Filipino-American eventually found that his roots were in the Philippines, but he had his own history in the U.S. as well. In the late seventies, Robles published a dual language (English and Tagalog) children's book in which a young Filipino boy asks an old Manong in the park on Kearny Street to help him find his true identity.⁶ The old man sends him to search for Tagatac on Ifugao Mountain, and so he crosses rough seas to the Philippines and tries to climb the mountains of the north, meeting with one obstacle after another, from wild boars to unfriendly farmers, always searching for Tagatac who will tell him his real identity. At the climax he is finally to meet the great Tagatac, and instantly finds himself back on Kearny Street with the same old man, who is Tagatac himself and who tells him that his true identity is here and now (but of course one still has to struggle to find it).

This is Filipino-American consciousness at a relatively mature stage, having come to terms, more or less, with the identity question. It is, however, still backwards looking, still focusing on the old *Manongs* Bulosan made famous, as if this were the only type of Filipino in America. More recent developments include the writings of Fred Cordova, a Seattle journalist who, with his wife Dorothy, has devoted much energy to documenting and writing about the variety of Filipino-American experience. For example, he writes that, Bulosan to the contrary, there were many *women* immigrants from the Philippines, and families as well, and there were Filipinos engaged in all sorts of occupations besides farming and canning, from bartending to boxing, nursing, teaching, running restaurants, grocery stores, tailoring shops and barber shops, etc. Cordova's data are in the form of a voluminous collection of oral histories and a superb collection of photographs which has been displayed all over the country. A compilation of articles incorporating and summarizing oral histories, published by Demonstration Project for Asian Americans (under Dorothy Cordova) ends, as this article will also, with Fred's poem entitled "Ang Kundiman ng mga Niyog sa Amerika: The Lament of Seven Hundred Seventy-Four Thousand Six Hundred and Forty Coconuts":

We say we are Filipino; we say we are American, so, who are we; more so, what are we; brown or white; or are we still "other"?

6. Al Robles, *Looking for Ifugao Mountain*, Fifth World Tales (San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1977).

We waste precious time in perennially asking these questions about ourselves among ourselves but never listening to ourselves for the answers which should come from within ourselves in our search of ourselves

We are all kinds because it takes all kinds to make us whoever and whatever we are.

We are young and old, native and alien, flat-nosed and big-nosed, slant-eyed and round-eyed, dark and light, poor and poorer, middle class and lots of class, smart and stupid, industrious and lazy, full-blood and hardly any blood, scrutable Chinese and macho Spanish, university degreed and third degreed, trilingual and inarticulate, loquacious and stoic, hyper and passive, cynical and naive, gentle and violent, doctor, dishwasher, Indian chief and Catholic, conman, petty thief. . .

We are then marginal man, marginal woman, better yet, margarine, because we are being burnt, toasted, singed, braised, scorched always to our detriment for someone else's benefit; thus, we party, dance, banquet, and, happy in our delusions of grandeur, we do not hurt as much with the pain of exploitation.

We are the papas, mamas, uncles working in the fields, stooping from sunrise to sunset, sweating in the layers of dust that cling to our tanned skin.

We are the brothers, the manongs, to salmon, crab, tuna, whose guts perfume our wage-earning bodies in the slime of the fish canneries.

We are the old faces in restaurants, hotels, mansions where we do valuable service from cooking white food, waiting on tables, washing pots, fixing beds, cleaning rooms, polishing hallways, running elevators to smiling, always smiling in our fast pace even while hustling for extra money on the side and teaching our brown newcomer to the work force all the shortcuts in the job to cut short the daily drudgery

Who and what are we?

Proudly, we are Americans, who are brown unlike George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, Eleanor Roosevelt, the Lone Ranger, Superman, Charlie Chan, Douglas MacArthur, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Junior.

Pridefully, we are also Filipinos, who are Tagalog, Ilocano, Pangasinan, Bicol, Visayan, and Muslim, too, whose roots spring from throughout Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, like Lapu-lapu, Gabriela Silang, Francisco Dagohoy, Gregorio del Pilar, Francisca Aquino Reyes, Ramon Magsaysay, Carlos Romulo, Jaime Sin, Lorenzo Ruiz, and yield championship fruit throughout America, like Pancho Villa, Carlos Bulosan, Jose Caluegas, Vicki Manalo Draves, Roman Gabriel, Barbara Luna, Ron O'Neal, Tai Babilonia.

We are not just American and Filipino . . . Filipino and American.

Pinoy.

Yes, we are Pinoys.

Now, what in God's name is that . . . and would someone Pinoy please explain!?!?