

Metaphorical Self-Perception, Presentation, and Preservation of Identities in Overseas Filipino Worker Poetry

Irish Chan Sioson
Languages and Literature Department

Abstract

This study aimed to determine the identities of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) working in Saudi Arabia as revealed in the metaphors they used in their own poems. Twenty-nine poems were examined, and results showed that the major metaphors employed by OFWs to represent themselves in poems were: 1) the suffering hero; 2) the Renaissance man; 3) the bank; and 4) the unfaithful. Minor metaphors found in the sample included were: 1) the celebrated hero; 2) the sacrificial lamb; 3) the prisoner; and 4) the shopping mall. Among the metaphors used to represent Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, were: 1) as promised land; 2) as predators; and 3) as temptation. It was also found that biblical recontextualization is a notable feature in these poems. Such metaphors help clarify how the OFWs perceive themselves, and situate these proverbial “new heroes” (*bagong bayani*) in the diaspora.

Perhaps it is due to the collective, rather than individualist, culture that Filipinos are said to value their own families highly. Filipinos are generally known for being family-oriented, and possessing a strong desire for a better life for each family member. In

this case, the economic factor, coupled with the desire to support the family, may then be the strongest driving force for Filipinos to choose to work abroad. De Guzman (2003) noted that more Filipinos are drawn to the attractive employment option of working overseas – a phenomenon that has led to the OFW diaspora.

Perhaps it is the OFW's rich experiences and in predicaments which may have contributed to one form of emergent literature—the OFW literature. This is probably because according to De Guzman (2003), literary forms such as poetry, song, and fictional genres have sprung from the letter-writing practice that is encouraged among the OFWs. The purported emergent OFW literature has then “focused attention on a still uncharted side of migration history” (p. 2) and has become a venue for the OFWs to express their opinions and emotions, their success and failure, and their imagination (De Guzman, 2003).

Migration and OFWs

No longer is the OFWs' plight limited to employment and welfare issues, for it is more of a political issue. To Palma-Beltran (1992), it has become a politically-motivated practice as issues on control of terms and conditions of employment, structural changes and legislations, representations the workers in decision/ policy-making, and the “struggle against corruption within the layers of a ‘freely flourishing industry’” (p. xviii) are already involved. Hence, other problems and concerns are embedded in such issues which include power relations, subjugation, and exploitation of the human capital, to name a few. This may be so as the plight of OFWs may involve perceived inequality between the sending and receiving countries, as psychological, mental and cultural conflicts and struggles surface, and human resources become exploited to a certain extent in the process.

Situated in the OFWs' position as migrant workers, a study done by Sta. Ana (1999) on the metaphors used for immigrant workers is relevant to the present study. Using the printed media texts from the 1994 debate and campaign on the anti-immigrant referendum in California, it was found that the dominant metaphor in the texts was “immigrants as animals” with secondary mappings that reinforce the animal metaphor such as “immigrants are debased people” to include all classes of people whose dignity and worth as humans have been denied.

Historical Context

According to Kurth (1987 in Kurth & Ngo, 1988), “hunger, unemployment, the dream of easy money and an easy life on other shores...drove thousands of workers out of their own homelands” (p.3). Leaving one’s country and family despite the uncertainty of one’s lot, and the possibility of a lonely life abroad all for the benefit of loved one’s entails much sacrifice that OFWs are commonly dubbed as “bagong bayani.” Migration increased at the start of 1980s. While the decision to work abroad was drawn out of personal choice and the attraction of good fortune in another land, it was also a reflection of the lack of local job opportunities that drove Filipinos to work overseas. It was during this time then that President Corazon Aquino’s administration began to use the term “bagong bayani” (De Guzman, 2003; San Juan, 2009; Asis, 2015; Bautista, 2015) for OFWs, as a way to address unemployment issues (De Guzman, 2003). OFW’s remittances served as one of the major sources of government revenues. Furthermore, that many OFWs have experienced many tragedies (De Guzman) and continue to work abroad could also explain why they are deemed as “bagong bayani” who continue “to hold a special place in government rhetoric” (De Guzman, p. 10).

It is in this context and purpose that the study was undertaken to find out how the OFWs see and present themselves through the metaphors used in their poetry specifically on the basis of two thematic categories of poems:

- a. the notion of “bagong bayani” and love of country, and
- b. love for family and search for better life chances

With poetry as a tool for self-expression of the ideals, thoughts and feelings of the writer, it is hoped that this study could problematize the OFWs’ identities as they use this vehicle to express how they perceive or think about themselves and present these identities to the public in a creative work, and in effect, help preserve and even memorialize such identities in written work.

Metaphors

This study focused specifically on poetry written by OFWs. Given the self-expressive nature and function of OFW literature, it was the interest of the study to consider the metaphors used by the

writers as tools for expression of their thoughts and feelings, which in turn could provide a glimpse of OFWs' ideals and perceptions of their experiences, and more importantly of their identities.

While poetry is a literary genre that is considerably different from other genres such as narratives, drama or essays due to the heavy use of figurative language, and in most cases, the use of rhyme or meter and other conventions in poetry, this study analyzed the poems in terms of Lakoff's (1993) conceptual metaphor. He distinguished the poetic metaphorical expressions derived from the linguistic expression from the conceptual metaphors drawn from thought and are therefore part of the mundane, everyday language. He further defined metaphor as "*a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system*" (p.186) and that metaphorical expression "*refers to a linguistic (a word, phrase, or sentence) that is the surface realization of such a cross-domain mapping (this is what the word "metaphor" referred to in the old theory)*" (p.186). Lakoff cautioned, though, that this does not mean that everything is metaphorical; in fact, he made a literal-metaphorical distinction to mean that the former refers to those expressions that cannot be understood in the metaphorical sense. Because metaphor is not only limited to stylistic purposes common to poetry, Fairclough (1992) asserted that metaphors can construct one's reality as they are representations of one's thoughts which then shape one's thinking, one's system of knowledge and actions, thus serving as tools for the creation of different representations of the world (Fairclough, 2003 in Blackledge, 2005). To these functions of metaphors, Beer and Landtsheer (2004 in Gavriely-Nuri, 2008) added that metaphors are used for grooming audiences and framing issues, organizing communities and facilitating cooperation, stimulating division and conflict, and mobilizing support and opposition.

Such characteristics of metaphors can also legitimize actions or practices that are normally deemed as unacceptable. For instance, Gavriely-Nuri's (2008) study on the Second Lebanon War used metaphorical annihilation to exclude or include events or agents for the purpose of mitigating certain features of war, making it a 'normal' event or a 'reasonable' action. This was achieved through the use of four dominant metaphors found in Israeli discourse: war is women's work, war is a medicine, war is business, and war is sport.

Method

The poems analyzed were obtained from De Guzman's (2003) *"From Saudi with Love: 100 Poems by OFWs."* Most of the entries contained in the compilation were entries in a poetry-writing contest held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1997 while some were personally contributed by the writers. According to De Guzman, some poems were excluded because they were either popular songs or translations of English poems. The majority of the writers were males since "Saudi Arabia was still a male-dominated country of destination for OFWs" (p. 4), while it was supposed by De Guzman that only about 7% of the remaining 70 poems were written by women because of the female pseudonyms used. She cautioned, however, that the female pseudonyms used may have been attributed to male writers who used their daughter's or loved one's names as pseudonyms. The writers were composed of skilled and semi-skilled workers with jobs ranging from managerial positions to clerical workers. This particular compilation of poems was chosen as it is of interest to this study how a specific group of OFWs, all working in Saudi Arabia at a specific period of time (late 1990's), see themselves, and that the poems were written for the same purpose of entering a poetry-writing contest and/or for the possibility of publication.

The book is divided into three general themes: 1) the "bagong bayani" idea and love of country; 2) filial love and search for better opportunities; and 3) meditations on life and other musings.

For this study, only the poems with direct relations to, and explicit statements about, working abroad were considered. Fifteen poems from the love of country and filial love categories were analyzed according to metaphors used in the poems; however, due to the varied topics of poems categorized in the last theme on meditations on life and other musings, none of these were included in the study. The poems in the last category talk about nature, folk tales, history and hobbies among others which do not bear relation to the writers' being OFWs. While such topics may be interpreted as signs of longing perhaps for their beloved country and their inclinations, there seems to be no overt association with the conditions of OFWs. Where poems were very straightforward and a conceptual metaphor may not be present or may not be possible, such poems were excluded from the analysis.

The identified metaphors were classified as “major” when one third of the sample from a particular category of poems or at least five poems employed such metaphors; “minor” metaphors are the ones which appeared in two to four poems in each poem category. The metaphors which surfaced only once were excluded from the analyses. Thus, 15 poems reflecting love of country and 14 poems suggesting love of family, for a total of 29 poems, were analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Major Metaphors from *Love of Country / Bagong Bayani*

Two major metaphors were identified in the first category which talk about love of country and the idea of “bagong bayani.” The first is the OFW as suffering hero and the second is as a Renaissance man.

**OFWs as the Suffering Hero*

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Sonata ng Obrero	Mababang boses ng paghihirap ng pagsusumamo , ng pagmamakaawa Pumipiyok na’ng sigaw sa pagkakasakal sa sakit at pagod At ‘di alintana yaring hirap at pasakit
2. Pinili sa Puno	Kaydaming yumurak lahing umalipusta
3. Huwarang Dayuhan	Manggagawang dayo! Tinigis mong pawis, luha at dugo Sa ibayong tiis, tibay ng loob at di pagsuko/ Tawag sa Diyos , kapit sa pag-asa — ang tagumpay matatamo Karangalan mo bang dalhin ang ganito, Pinay na ang laman ay inabuso?
4. Sandali Lang Kabayan!	Maraming pagsubok, pagpapakasakit at panganib ang hindi inalintana/ Mga kalupitan at pagkawasak ng pamilya
5. Maria, Juan at Sisa	Hindi birong hirap ang sinapit ng pangkaraniwan/ Nagtiis , nagsumikap, iniyak ang pangungulila sa mga iniwan

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- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. Si Juan: Ang Dakilang Obrero | Sanay na sa pagdurusa
Na sa bawat kislap ng ginto/ Ang katapat
ay patak ng luha o dugo
Kaydami na, di mabilang, pagyurak sa
karapatan |
| 7. Dangal-Filipino | Kaya niya ang magutom, sampal,
lait nitong amo |
| 8. Sa Lilim ng Ating Bandila | Araw-gabi hikbi't luha mapapait
na salaysay |
| 9. Bayani (Ano at nasaan
ang kahulugan) | Kami'y inapi, pinaglalaruan at
pinagmamalupitan |
| 10. Manggagawa | Dugo na ang pawis sa pagbabanat ng buto |
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This OFW as a suffering hero metaphor involves the use of stark imageries which involve two kinds of abuse: physical and psychological. The former is reflected in lexical items that connote physical pain inflicted by an absent, but implied agent as seen in the use of the words “dugo”, “pawis”, “sampal”, “pagod”, while words that connote psychological distress include “pinagmamalupitan”, “pagyurak”, “pagpapakasakit”, and “panganib,” with “luha” at “sakit” having dual meaning, one physical and the other psychological. It is but natural for work to entail hard labor, but the intensity that these expressions carry concerns the position of OFWs in a foreign land, in that their physical labor is described in a relatively extreme manner when recounting their situation as OFWs, their work seeming to have taken a toll not only on their physical, but also on their emotional conditions. Such metaphor may further support the inequality, not only in terms of employer-employee relationship, but also as it illustrates the OFWs’ plight in terms of the powerlessness and helplessness that such expressions seem to evoke, especially considering their being residents in a foreign country. Overworked and fatigued, the OFWs presented themselves as suffering from exhaustion, human rights violation (“pagyurak”, “pinagmamalupitan”, “lait”, “inalipusta”, “inabuso”) and threats (“panganib”) in their surroundings with the implied agent as overpowering them. With their physical and emotional energy consumed by a ruling agent, this metaphor may represent the OFWs

as slaves who endured abuse, unhealthy working conditions, and other perils posed by their work. In this sense, the “OFW as a suffering hero metaphor” may be understood from one domain of experience in terms of a different domain; that is, this metaphor involves a mapping from the suffering hero as the source domain to a target domain, the OFW. As a set of ontological correspondences constitutes this mapping (“OFW as a suffering hero”), one may be able to reason about OFWs in terms of one’s knowledge used for reasoning about suffering heroes.

OFW as Renaissance Man

The second major metaphor found in the poems in this category is the Renaissance Man where OFWs present themselves as talented intellectuals who make significant contributions to different fields or “larangan.” With this metaphor, a Renaissance man, in a general sense, is a person who possesses knowledge and skills in a wide range of areas. OFWs seemed to take pride not only in their intellectual or academic abilities (e.g. “kahusayan”, “kaalaman”, “talino” and “kagalingan”), but also in their resourcefulness or versatility and “streetmartness” which is associated with the word “diskarte.” With these positive qualities that they seemed to be offering to the world, they may feel more productive in making significant contributions to the world. In this case, they may have deemed themselves worthy of being placed in a higher position. However, the notion of “brain drain” may be a primary concern here. Furthermore, as Waldorf (2008) affirmed, “Intellectual power has now become necessary for economic vibrancy, entrepreneurial spirit, and the attraction of new business form around the world” (p. 111). However, the workers use their intellectual resources for the benefit of another country, and such resources may also be abused by those who are in authority. While there may be OFWs who hold high positions in their workplace, the fact that they live in another country and are subjected to the rules and laws of the country may still suppress the talent or artistry that they possess. Furthermore, this heightens the inequality between the sending and receiving countries as such qualities benefit the foreign country more than the local country which spent for the education and training of the workers. Licuanan (1994) noted that the receiving country saves on the cost of training workers by hiring the educated.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Tagubilin ni Inang	Kaalama’y ipamalas nang may tanging kahusayan
2. Pinili sa Pino	O saan mang bansa, na iyong masumpungan/ Tiyak ay naroon itong si kabayan/ at sigurado kong may diskarte ito’t sideline Sa taglay mong talino kahit sino’y di uubra
3. Ang Lahing Filipino	Ipakikita sa lahat kakayahang Pinoy ninuman
4. Kabalikat, Kabayani, Kabayan	Taglay ang sipag at talino ng ilang katauhan
5. Dayuhan	Na talinong panlaba’t lakas na kalasag
6. Pinili sa Pino	Ibuhos ang iyong kagalingan Na saan mang larangan tunay na may ibubuga

Minor Metaphors from *Love of Country/ Bagong Bayani*

Three metaphors from the same category were derived from the poems: 1) as prisoner, 2) as celebrated hero, and 3) as hero - sacrificial lamb.

OFW as Prisoner

This metaphor involves the use of material objects to signal imprisonment, either literally or figuratively, in the foreign land with words such as “tanikala”, and “kulungan” and the word “preso” to refer to the imprisoned, while the word “hawla” or cage, normally used for animals was also employed, giving the impression that they may also see their situation as mirroring the life of a caged animal, i.e. degradation of human dignity. Other words that connote the prisoner image are “kasalanan”, “paratang”, “parusa” and “bitayan.” With this metaphor, injustice and suppression of freedom are strongly associated, with the OFWs seemingly having surrendered to their lot despite the false accusations (“maling paratang”) against them. Figuratively, the prison metaphor is associated with the boundaries and limitations posed by the cells or “hawla”, and here the “accused” becomes “abused” and oppressed.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Sonata ng Obrero	Matinis ang kalansing ng mga tanikala
2. Huwarang Dayuhan	Tindi ng init at lamig, siil na paghinga sa konkretong hawla
3. Sandali Lang Kabayan	Tingnan mo, ang daming nabulok na kas o, sa kulungan nama'y nabulok na preso
4. Katarungan	Mga kasalanang kanilang pinatong / At pagdudusahan ng mahabang panahon Wala bang panangga sa maling paratang? Tanggap ang parusa kahit sa bitayan Para parusahan isang maralita

OFW as the Celebrated Hero

The next minor metaphor is the celebrated hero which means the OFWs become models (“huwaran”) since their distinctive and commendable characteristics are worthy of emulation, and therefore they deserve shrines (bantayog) in their honor. It may also be related to the Renaissance Man metaphor as OFWs perceive themselves as flexible, simple (“simpleng tao”) individuals who use their talents for the greater good of their fellow Filipinos. However, while their heroism becomes a source of inspiration and hopefulness for Filipinos, again, similar with the Renaissance Man metaphor, their resources may have been exploited by working in another country and being taken advantage of. This may also be interpreted as the OFWs’struggle for power as they may have not fully achieved high status in the foreign country where they work, so they may somehow elevate their image to an important position. It may also be remembered that the lack of employment opportunities, and by extension, poor governance of an administration led to the use of the “bagong bayani” metaphor was which glorified overseas workers to mask unemployment issues.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Si Juan: Ang Dakilang Obrero	Simpleng tao ang siya ngayong bantayog na di mabuwal
2. Ang Lahing Pilipino	Adhikain mo'y ipatupad, bantayog mong titindigan Sana'y maging huwaran ka ng susunod pang lahi mo

OFW as the Hero - the Sacrificial Lamb

Finally, the minor metaphor of the sacrificial lamb identified in the samples, is different from the other two variations of the hero metaphor, suffering and celebrated, in that this kind of hero has grave experiences, giving up something that is highly-valued, even to the point of the ultimate sacrifice of either one's chastity or life. In this sense, therefore, it is an extension of the *Suffering Hero*, and the OFW as prisoner, but that more than being physically or emotionally abused, this metaphor may imply that working overseas may cost someone's dignity and even life. In their desire to help their loved ones ("sa hangad na matulungan"), OFWs present themselves as capable of giving up their life ("pinagbubuwisan ng buhay"), and that nothing, not even death, would hinder them from providing a better life for their family. With so many OFWs being jailed or executed, it may also be interpreted as the powerlessness not only of the OFWs, but also of the sending country. This again highlights the perceived inequality between the two countries, - the sending and the receiving countries as the laws that govern the receiving country are at work and the jurisdiction lies in that foreign country.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Katarungan	Tanggap ang parusa kahit sa bitayan Subalit nangyari'y napugot ang ulo Hatol kamatayan doon s'ya humantong Yamang aming pinagbubuwisan ng buhay sa dayuhang bayan
2. Bayani (Ano at nasaan ang kahulugan)	Sa hangad na matulungan ang kanilang ina/ na napilitang buhayin ang pamilya
3. Maria, Juan at Sisa	Nakakalungkot isipin na ang isang Maria, Juan at Sisa/ Ay sinamangpalad na madisgrasya o malagutan ng hininga
4. May Lubid na Pangarap	Mga Filipinang katulong ginagahasa

Major Metaphors from *Love for Family*

In this second category, three major metaphors were employed in the poems: 1) as bank, 2) as the suffering hero, and 3) as the unfaithful.

OFW as bank

This metaphor consists of words associated with bank terms and transactions such as “hulugan”, “allotment”, “pera”, “dolyares”, “makaipon” and “inuutang” which relates to the idea of asset-liability/gains-losses self-perception of the OFWs because they are deemed as the breadwinner of the family and hence have to provide for the needs of their families. They are somehow functioning as banks as their families may make withdrawals from the OFWs who, in turn, send remittances. By extension, it is not only their families who profit from this “banking transaction” as the sending country also enjoys such benefits which may include, according to Licuanan (1994), foreign exchange earnings, decreased unemployment rate, and increased national revenues. The line from the poem “Bilanguang Walang Pader” also illustrates these benefits to the sending country: “Pagkat **bilyong remittances kabangbayan** nalalagyan.”

The bank metaphor may also be extended to the terms and conditions involved in any banking transactions. For example, the bank (OFW) and the clients (beneficiaries) would close “deals” or agreements under certain terms, (i.e. the time period the OFW would work abroad), the “payment schemes” (i.e. whether the remittances be done on bi-monthly or monthly basis), and other conditions such as using the money for education, housing, or business purposes. Here, mutual trust is assumed, and this also further shows the economic gains (or losses) for both immediate recipients (family) and the “secondary” beneficiary (country). In terms of liabilities, the OFWs may not fully answer to their financial obligations to the family as they may spend the money for another beneficiary, for example, a mistress, as seen in the poem “Ang Sulat ni Bunso” or the mismatch between the profits and the expenses as seen in the line “Sa **sentimong kita’y piso ang gastos!**” in the poem “Bagbag sa Puso ng Isang Obrero.” Or in the case of Tonyo in “Sa Pilipinas si Tonyo’y **namuhunan**” but later was bankrupt due to excessive use of his financial resources gained as an OFW.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Sulat	Ilang hulugan na lang at tuluyang mapapalis/ Ang pangalan ni Ka Matias tiyak walang mintis
2. Ang Sulat ni Bunso (Gayahin ninyo ang Tatay Ko)	Dahilan sa ang allotment ika'y hindi nagkukulang Pagkain ay masarap at marami pa ring pera At ang pera mong padala ay lagi na lang kulang Kaya yaong padala mo ay iyo lang inuutang Lagi naming hinihintay ang ipadadala mong pera Pagkat mahal niya tayo kailangan makaipon Sa sentimong kita'y piso ang gastos!
3. Bagbag sa Puso ng Isang Obrero	Pagkat bilyong remittances kabangbayan nalalagyan
4. Bilanguang Walang Pader	Tuwa pagkat pamilya ko'y tumatanggap na ng pera
5. Tonyo	Sa Pilipinas si Tonyo'y namuhunan Hihiram ng pera pag sahod bayaran
6. Ang Karangalan	Sa padala kong pera ay inyong pahalagahan
7. [Untitled]	Bitbit ang alahas, dolyares at pasalubong

OFW as Suffering Hero

With the same metaphor that surfaced from the “Bagong Bayani” category, this particular metaphor of the suffering hero may be labeled as a typical metaphor for the heroism demonstrated by the OFWs. This metaphor involves the physical and emotional sufferings of the OFWs to sacrifice for their family and endure the pains they experience. This metaphor underscores, in the words of Licuanan (1994), the “psychological strain due to separation for [sic] all family members” (p. 113) that OFWs face.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Sulat	Malapit nang matapos ang hirap mo at pawis
2. Bagbag sa Puso ng Isang Obrero	Tigis ang pawis sa kanyang katawan/ Limpak na ang kalyo sa mga palad
3. Munting Liwanag	Pinarating ang katas ng pinaghirapan
4. To Saudi with Love	Mabibigat mong pagsubok ay aking hinarap Hapding dulot ng lungkot aking nabalikat
5. Ang Karangalan	Kahit luha at pawis ang aking sinapit
6. Aking Mahal	Anumang pait at pasakit dito sa aki'y sumapit

OFW as the Unfaithful / Tempted Spouse

The next major metaphor for the OFWs in this category is the *unfaithful* or the *tempted*. This metaphor involves infidelity to and abandonment of spouse and the children. The OFWs perceive themselves as human beings who can be tempted and can commit sin, which would affect, though not necessarily drastically change or replace, their hero image. This metaphor also sees the OFWs as lonely people who may at times give in to their weaknesses due to homesickness and absence of their spouses. This may be attributed not only to the geographical/ physical distance, but also to the emotional distance that couples experience. Long-distance relationships may pose threats to the Filipino family and may impact the family orientation of Filipinos, for this also concerns the OFWs as parents who may have inadvertently neglected their children, thus, resulting in having rebellious children. This particular issue is seen in the poem “Munting Liwanag” in which the father/ persona discovered that his son became a drug addict which led to the father’s frustration, making him a drug addict himself: *Ako naman ang nasadlak/Tulad sa aking anak na kinahihinatnan*. Licuanan (1994) also noted that such situation may lead to the “erosion of family as institution” (p. 112).

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Ang Sulat ni Bunso (Gayahin ninyo ang Tatay Ko)	Na ikaw d'yan sa Jeddah, may TNT sa 'yong kwarto/Buntis pa raw ang TNT at sa iyo umaasa
2. Puri Kayamanan	Di matanggap kay inang kapusukan/ Di umuwi lalaki ang dahilan
3. Munting Liwanag	Ako naman ang nasadlak/ Tulad sa aking anak na kinahihinatnan
4. Isang Pagsubok	Kabayan, huwag kalimutang saan ka nagmula
5. Kuyum na Pangarap	Ngayo'y maganda at sexy dito nahumaling ang isipan

Minor Metaphors from *Love for Family*

OFW as shopping mall

This metaphor involves specific objects that family members enjoy which somehow connotes materialism. This materialistic aspect as seen in the OFWs' bringing all kinds of "pasalubong" as requested by each loved one may also be seen as compensation for their absence in the household. The OFWs also present themselves as breadwinners who have to provide for their family's basic needs and, oftentimes, even luxuries. Another consideration to be made is that the "pasalubong" are expensive ("mamahalin"), "imported", usually branded goods (e.g. "Ray-ban). In the process, while the OFWs and their families profit from the work abroad, in turn, both the receiving and sending countries also gain from the OFWs' wages.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Sulat	Kailan daw ang uwi at ang pasalubong Lighter at ray-ban daw ang sa tatay dalhin/ Pabango at kuwintas ang sa nanay ay ibig rin
2. Ang Sulat ni Bunso (Gayahin ninyo ang Tatay Ko)	Pagkat lahat ng gamit ko imported na galing diyari Mga kendi't tsokolate at laruang mamahalin
3. [Untitled]	Bitbit ang alahas , dolyares at pasalubong
4. Munting Liwanag	Ang sarap at luho tulad ng isang mayaman

OFW as the Celebrated Hero

This is another minor metaphor in the category *love for family*. This metaphor was employed to demonstrate that OFWs are good models for other Filipinos and worthy to be honored and have shrines (“bantayog”) built after them. The *celebrated hero* metaphor in this context is being a good model for the OFWs’ children (i.e. the children are supposed to make sacrifices willingly for their family). In the didactic poem “Ang Karangalan,” the OFW is a good example for his children to follow; however, the poem “Ang Sulat ni Bunso” is an ironic poem written in the perspective of OFW’s youngest child who addressed his father in the letter as someone whom he can idolize (“idolo”), this is because his father, to the child’s innocent eyes, is so kind that he even takes care of a pregnant woman living with the father abroad. The irony is that the woman is actually his mistress.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Ang Sulat ni Bunso (Gayahin ninyo ang Tatay Ko)	Kaya ikaw, aking tatay, ang gagawin kong idolo
2. Ang Karangalan	Sa ating pagsisikap ito ang kanilang tularan

Other Metaphors

It is also interesting to note other metaphors employed by the OFW writers to represent an agent directly involved in their lives, and that is the people, and by extension, the country where the OFWs work to situate further the plight of the OFWs. The metaphors used were: 1) country as promised land; 2) country/ people as predator; and 3) country as temptation.

As Promised Land

The promises of wealth, stability, and the “greener pastures” of the receiving country have led most of the OFWs to opt to leave their loved ones to provide a better life for the family. “Kinabukasan” (the future) is guaranteed as the new land promises a paradise (“paraiso”), riches (“yaman”) and honey (“pulot”). This, however, puts the sending country (i.e., the Philippines) in a weaker position vis-à-vis the receiving country. The poem “Sandali Lang, Kabayan!” further

highlights the inequality in the lines “Tayo ay Exodus ng bagong panahon/ pilit tumatakas at nais umahon” as the need to escape more from poverty and uncertainty drives them to a wealthy and secured life.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Tonyo	Hahanapin magandang kinabukasan / Sa Saudi ay muli niyang matatagpuan
2. To Saudi with Love	Kinabukasa’y aking kamtin Minimithing ginhawa’y sa iyo umaasa
3. Si Juan: Ang Dakilang Obrero	Nasa paraiso mang malalayo
4. May Lubid na Pangarap	Lalasapin ang pangarap na akala’y Eden
5. Sandali Lang Kabayan!	...baka nga naman yama’y makatagpo / Sa lugar ng pulot at itim na ginto o singkit at sakang o ngiti ng kano Tayo ay Exodus ng bagong panahon, pilit tumatakas at nais umahon

As Predator

This metaphor sees the people in the receiving country as wild, uncultured animals who prey on the weak, with the OFWs as victims. The OFWs see themselves in two ways: as the admirable celebrated heroes who are courageous and enduring, or as the defenseless prisoners and suffering, sacrificial lambs.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Katarungan	Nang hindi lamunin ng buwitreng hayok
2. Dayuhang Filipino	Pagkat ang pangakong perlas sa silangan/ Ay unti-unting nilulon ng gahaman
3. Sa Lilim ng Ating Bandila	Dahil sa “bagyong buhangin” na tangkang maniklot at sumira Manggagawang kababayan parang hayop kung turingan
4. Mapait na Karanasan	Asal hayop itong amo
5. Ang Karangalan	Kararating pa lamang niya nang matipuhan ng amo na hayok sa laman Sa mga amo na lubhang napakalupit

As Temptation

Finally, the temptation metaphor includes the image of the deceitful devil who lures or entices unsuspecting individuals into the material wealth that the receiving country offers. Similar with the predator metaphor, the OFW may fight against this poisonous (“makamandag”), cunning, but still, attractive demon (“demonyo”) either through the brave celebrated hero, who may battle any challenge that may come his/her way, or through the imprisoned, suffering and sacrificing lamb.

Source	Lines from the Poem
1. Tagubilin ni Inang	Halina’y makamandag, mapagkunwari ang pang-akit
2. Sa Lilim ng Ating Bandila	...itong among demonyo ang kaisipan

Recontextualization

Another interesting feature of the poems is the recontextualization through biblical allusions such as “Eden” in the poem “May Lubid na Pangarap,” alluding to the Garden of Eden - a paradise compared to Saudi Arabia - a peaceful and blissful paradise; the Fall of Man story as seen in the poem “Tagubilin ni Inang” where the serpent was alluded to in order to entice the OFWs to come and “taste” the fruit of the receiving country; the “Exodus” in the poem “Sandali Lang, Kabayan!” which refers to the OFWs’ flight from the Philippines to Saudi Arabia, being compared with the Exodus or departure of the Israelites from Egypt, where they experienced oppression, to Mt. Sinai, where they entered into a covenant with God; and in the biblical “pulot” or honey also in “Sandali Lang, Kabayan!” These may somehow reflect the Filipinos’ religious inclination, especially considering that majority of the poems examined included “Diyos”, “Maykapal”, and “Panginoon”, especially in poems that relate to the suffering hero (and which, by extension, to the suffering servant in the Book of Isaiah). “Exodus” and going to the “land of milk and honey” are very much reflected in the plight and flight of OFWs.

Conclusion

The metaphors employed by the OFWs to represent themselves, mirror the way they perceive, present and preserve their identities, the struggle for equal rights, opportunities, and power continues, especially considering the apparent loss of autonomy or control of OFWs over their economic, professional and personal life that they may perceive themselves as the strong celebrated hero or the weak, suffering and sacrificing victims of circumstances. The OFWs see and present themselves through the metaphors used in their poetry. While poetry is a tool for self-expression of the ideals, thoughts and feelings of the writer (or of the persona in a poem), it is hoped that this study could reveal the OFWs' identities as they use this vehicle to express how they perceive or think about themselves and present these identities to the public through creative writing.

The Filipinos abroad are part of a diaspora characterized by "movements through and between locations, and even dislocation" (Procter, 2007). Such movements, at least based on this study, may include the exodus from one's homeland to the land of "milk and honey." These movements may also concern not only the physical, but also emotional (dis)location. The diaspora may pose a threat to the Filipino family as seen in the unfaithful OFW who may have abandoned his wife and children since he finds a more geographically and, perhaps emotionally available woman closer to his location.

These metaphors provide a window to the OFWs physical, psychological, and emotional state. This does not mean to suggest, however, that identity is a fixed, objective construct that may be based solely on the use of metaphors, as identity is dynamic, relative, and even multiple. It is hoped that future studies will be conducted along this line.

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Notes on Contributor

Irish C. Sioson is a former faculty member of the Department of Languages and Literature of St. Scholastica's College. She is currently teaching at Thaksin University in Thailand under the Western Languages Department. She has presented her research papers in national and international conferences, and is also an Associate Editor of the Philippine ESL Journal. She has also conducted seminars on teaching strategies, research writing, assessment, and classroom management to teachers, researchers, and students. Her interests include sociolinguistics, English language teaching, and Philippine English. email address: irishsioson01@yahoo.com