

Affect and History in Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War**

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Abstract

Drawing upon cultural theories of affect, and Lauren Berlant's concepts of affect and historiography, this paper examines the affective history of the nation in *State of War*, a novel by US-based Filipino writer Ninotchka Rosca, through an investigation of the linkages between historical events, everyday practices, imperial intimate encounters, and the formation of the affective subjects. The paper contends that the public events/history of the nation—war, colonialism, rule changes, institutional violence—invades and reshapes the characters in their everyday lives, and positions them not as national subjects but affective subjects. Historically, under conditions of imperial intimacy,

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transcendental power is folded into the immanent plane of everyday life, creating emotions such as shame, fear, and betrayal in the subjects' "intimate" encounters with colonizers and totalitarian regimes. These emotions are both the result of the characters' affective responses to the pressure of the historical present, and also the affect that catalyzes their becoming otherwise. By means of scrutinizing the formation of affective subjects in the complex colonial histories of the Philippines, as revealed in *State of War*, the paper aims to explore an alternative means of inheriting the past and to reconfigure a postcolonial historiography based upon an affective epistemology.

Key Words: *State of War*, affect, shame, fear, betrayal