

Remaindered Life of Citizen-Man, Medium of Democracy

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Abstract

The widely-lauded progressive achievements of U. S. colonialism in the Philippines during the early decades of the twentieth century included the installation of modern technologies of public sanitation, mass transportation, communication and education as necessary conditions of a developing democracy and its underlying humanism. This article discusses how emergent media of communication established under U. S. colonial rule contributed to the implementing of universal standards of human life and experience towards the formation of citizen-man, as the currency and code required for Filipinos' political self-rule. I analyze the reorganization of perceptual and subjective forms entailed by U. S. imperial forms of governmentality, including the gender and race effects of social accommodations to the protocols of personhood of citizen-man, through the media apparatuses of literature, photography, and radio. Finally, I examine other modes of sensorial experience and perceptibility and forms of human and social life, which are remaindered, devalued and/or rendered illegible in the reconfiguration of natives according to the normative ideals and structures of liberal democracy, in order to expand the parameters of our understanding of the relation between social media and democracy.

Keywords: Philippine education, U. S. imperialism, democracy, media technologies, humanization

In the mid-1960s, as a vigorous anti-imperialist nationalist movement gained ground in public debates over the direction of political, economic and cultural life in the Philippines, the historian Renato Constantino strongly criticized the nation's existing educational system and its role in creating and maintaining the conditions of neocolonialism [Constantino 1975]. Constantino's influential essay, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," argued that, from its inception under U. S. colonial occupation at the turn of the twentieth century, the educational system in the Philippines was a weapon of colonial conquest, an instrument of the colonial policy of pacification, serving not only to defeat the Filipino nationalism that had just succeeded in overthrowing the earlier colonial power of Spain but also, and more lastingly, to inculcate ideas, attitudes and values that have kept the Filipino people in a chronic state of cultural self-alienation, political apathy, ideological captivity, and, consequently, in continuing political and economic subordination to the interests of its former colonizer. Constantino identified the decision to use English as the medium of instruction as "the master stroke" in U. S. colonial educational strategy. As he wrote:

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English became the wedge that separated Filipinos from their past and later was to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen. English introduced the Filipinos to a strange new world. With American textbooks, Filipinos started learning not only a new language but also a new way of life, alien to their traditions and yet a caricature of their model. [Constantino 1975: 18]

Ostensibly introduced as the language of democracy through which natives could imbibe the egalitarianism of “the American way of life,” English had in fact become “a barrier to democracy,” proving to be an impediment to the development of the broad communication and understanding and independent thinking that would produce a citizenry capable of achieving truly sovereign nationhood. Consonant with ideas about cultural imperialism then circulating in the decolonizing world, Constantino deplored the colonial educational system on the basis of its transplantation of an alien language and alien political institutions that effectively foreclosed “the evolution of native democratic ideas and institutions” [*ibid.*: 22].¹⁾ Yet he held on to the foundational premise of this system that the goal of education was “the making of man,” in this case “the Filipino,” as citizen, who could meet the civic requirements and obligations of an independent democracy.

While in the succeeding decades ideas of cultural imperialism fell largely into disrepute within U.S. academia, since the unilateral wars of aggression of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, issues of U.S. imperialism and democracy have once again returned to the fore of public debate (though, given the transformed global context within which they are raised today, with no doubt altered political significance). Despite its seeming distance from this global present, Constantino’s essay frames the same concerns in ways that seem to me to remain relevant for us. Articulating the role of education, and particularly English, as a medium for “the making of man” and the introduction of “a new way of life,” Constantino broaches the importance of the mediatic (and not merely ideological) agency of education, language, as well as other communicative technologies (he mentions news, films, comics, press services, “western cultural materials”) not only in the production of hegemonic forms of subjective and social life, but also in the potential realization of a more substantive, liberatory form of democracy (“the full flowering of democracy”) than that exemplified by the formal democracy of independent Philippines. In doing so, he leads us to ask, what kinds of mediated social relations and subjectivities does the citizen-subject of democracy entail? How did negotiation with the emergent media apparatuses of imperial governmentality transform people’s shared affective and perceptual sensibilities, their senses of bodily selfhood and social relations? What forms of subjectivity, feeling, sensorial experience, and sociality are displaced and devalued, in a word, remaindered, in the process of Filipino social accommodation to imperial protocols of social and subjective life? And finally how do we understand such remaindered forms of life in relation to

1) In other words, his argument depended on a conception of a people with a distinct, given national-cultural identity that was fundamentally alienated from itself and as such made incapable of achieving sovereign agency over its fate and future survival.

the question of an unfulfilled potential for democracy?

Values of Citizenship and Literature

In *The Junior Citizen in the Commonwealth*, an elementary textbook written by Filipino educators and published in 1937, we are introduced to the political, civic and human ideals propagated under U.S. colonial tutelage through a father's instruction of his children in the duties and responsibilities of citizenship within the home [Fernandez and Carreon 1937]. From this domestic, paternal instruction, we learn first of all that national citizenship is the highest and most indispensable good. In the chapter, "Why It Is Bad Not To Have a Country," Mr. Santos, the paternal figure, recounts to his son a story written in 1863 by an American patriot, Edward E. Hale, about the life-long misfortune of a man who betrays and disowns his country. The moral of the story, the father concludes, is "A man cannot live happily without a country any more than a child can live happily without a home" [*ibid.*: 27]. Represented in the permanent exile suffered by "the man without a country," alienation from the land of one's birth is an intrinsic evil that is at once the crime and its punishment. Therefore, one should be ready to give up one's life rather than to give up one's country.

"But what in our country is worth loving, living, and dying for?" the junior citizen asks his father. The father responds: "In the first place, it is the home of your father, mother, brother, sister, friends and all who are dear to you and to us all. In the second place, there are many things that our country gives us which cannot be paid for in terms of money. In the third place, there are many things in our country that we are proud to show to other people" [*ibid.*: 36]. In the father's more elaborated answer to the question of patriotic sacrifice, we have a digest of some of the central socio-philosophical precepts that the commonwealth was to instill among Filipinos in their training for eventual citizenship under a democracy. On the one hand, we have a conception of one's "country" as a form of inviolable belonging composed of indissoluble links tying together territory, natality, land, home, and relations of kinship and friendship. On the other hand, we have a conception of the value of one's country ("worth loving, living, and dying for") as composed of both the inalienable value and the exchange value of its nature, both human and non-human. The inalienable value of a country's non-human nature is encapsulated by its comparative beauty, which is attested to by the admiration of people from other lands, and the comparative comfort of its agreeable climate. The inalienable value of a country's human nature can be found in the degree of civilization and freedom achieved by its people, with the freedom of its people distinguished from independence as a nation and defined by liberal tenets of individual freedom and equality under the rule of modern, secular law.²⁾ Its exchange value is

2) "A Filipino is free to live the way he wishes and to follow any occupation that suits him. He is free to select his friends. He may be poor and uneducated, but our laws are made to treat alike the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the wise" [Fernandez and Carreon 1937: 41]. This freedom is contrasted with countries like India, whose caste system, as a form of customary law, takes precedence over

embodied in the potential wealth of its natural resources: “vast forests which contain some of the most valuable trees in the world...rich mines of gold, sulphur, coal, and many other minerals. It has millions of hectares of land that could be worked and cultivated” [*ibid.*: 39].

Insofar as work is the condition for the realization of this wealth, it becomes the paramount obligation of citizenship. Work becomes a form of service that one renders out of a prior debt to one’s government, for the blessings of education, infrastructure, public health, and law and order, and to one’s ancestors, whose continuous labor has yielded the wealth of cleared and cultivatable lands, churches and homes, and who have passed on native skills and knowledge. The value of work determines one’s value as a citizen. Hence the disparagement of “worthless citizens” as those with no regular occupation: “Some of them work only a few days each month. Many are lazy and shiftless. Some are gamblers and drunkards. All such citizens are undesirable. They are a source of poverty and a danger to our country. A nation of loafers and vicious people cannot become great, nor prosperous” [*ibid.*: 5].

I have dwelt on these formal ideals of citizenship explicitly articulated as the new values of imperial democracy because they express what I see as the organizing perceptual principles or precepts of that apparatus called Philippine literature in English, and best exemplified in early works of commonwealth literature. By apparatus, I refer less to Louis Althusser’s concept of Ideological State Apparatuses than to Vilém Flusser’s concept, which designates the black box programming the production of objects of information. Flusser’s concept refers to the apparatus of photography as a form of computational thinking or artificial intelligence encoded in the hardware or “extended matter” of the camera. For Flusser, “the programs of apparatuses consist of symbols. Functioning therefore means playing with symbols and combining them” [Flusser 2000: 38]. While Flusser doesn’t consider literature as an apparatus, and only resorts to the anachronistic example of writers serving as functionaries of the apparatus “language” as merely an analogical illustration of apparatuses proper (which emerge with the production of technical images), my own thinking about literature and literary texts within a broader history of media and communicative technologies finds Flusser’s concept very helpful. As he defines it, “It is a complex plaything, so complex that those playing with it are not able to get to the bottom of it; its game consists of combinations of the symbols contained within its program; at the same time this program was installed by a metaprogram and the game results in further programs; whereas fully automated apparatuses can do without human intervention, many apparatuses require the human being as a player and a functionary” [*ibid.*: 31].

A mediatic understanding of literature as apparatus and the writer as player and functionary is of course the antithesis of literature as it becomes defined or programmed under U.S. tutelage as the cultural achievement of a people, the very proof and vehicle of their humanity. As the writer Federico Mangahas proclaimed in 1940 at a conference celebrating the achievement of Philippine literature under the Commonwealth,

↙ modern liberal law.

[Literature] gets the first choice as medium for immortality; the human race at large has learned to look upon it with uncommon respect and even reverence because, as biography of the human spirit, literature insures the continuance and progress of man towards the fruitful but elusive ideal of perfection and fulfillment. In no epoch of Philippine history is that spirit more aggressive, vital and vitalizing than today. [Mangahas 1973: vii]

The precept of an aggressive, vital and vitalizing spirit as the defining content of literature and “real writers” is, I would argue, precisely the metacategory through which the players and functionaries of literature produce their particular “works” or objects.³⁾ Put differently, that spirit, which would distinguish writing as “craft” from writing as “art,” is what Philippine literature under the commonwealth is programmed to produce, shaping the categories of attention and care through which writers represent and help to construct the world. We might say, this precept, broadly shared in the advanced Euro-American world into which Filipinos were to be benevolently assimilated, marks the reconfiguration of a shared sensible order that the institution of a national literature is tasked with carrying out.⁴⁾ That redistribution of the sensible (as Jacques Rancière defines primary aesthetics) is geared towards the reconfiguration of Filipinos’ mode of being human along the lines of ideal citizenship required by an emerging capitalist society modeled on the imperial liberal democracy of the United States.

Humanization: New Ideals of Life

Today, we witness renewed projects of “democratization” carried out through a civilizing globalizing war against terrorism as well as projects of political emancipation through the broadening of the “rule of law” of liberal democracies, which naturalize the violence of dominant everyday protocols of being human embedded in increasingly neoliberal, capitalist ways of life.

3) “Vigorous and alive with the spirit of man,” as R. Zulueta Da Costa qualifies, in a familiar debate with Arturo B. Rotor, about the “function” of literature and the achievement of Philippine writers.

4) John D. Blanco argues that in the nineteenth century, with the liberalization of the economy and reform of Spanish political rule in response to the emerging world market, what we call Philippine literature became a profession tasked with the solicitation of native consent to colonial rule through the production of a new commodity, “culture,” that would synchronize native consent with the new political rationality of colonial governance. He writes: “The task of ‘culture’ under colonial modernity was to organize crowds around the reflection on the new constitution of their social relations, which were informed by the production and ordering of new needs and desires...the production and elaboration of a society capable of disseminating, reflecting on, and multiplying the implications of native consent for colonial rule” [Blanco 2009: 62-63]. While this cultural production of native will and desire through Filipino literature had contradictory and ultimately inimical consequences for the Spanish modern colonial project, as exemplified in the anti-colonial nationalist works of Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio and the Philippine Revolution against Spain in 1898, it is also the case that the emergence of Philippine literature as a technology for the cultural production of “the life of a discretely and wholly Filipino nation” during this earlier moment of colonial transition becomes, from the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the most important institutions undergirding the imperial project of the Philippines’ new colonizer, the U. S.

This is the contemporary context of an ongoing process of “humanization,” whose longer colonial history I am interested in unraveling. To think about this longer colonial history of “humanization” on which contemporary projects of global governmentality depend, we have to see U. S. imperialism as more than simply a historical event of political-military occupation or a form of direct or indirect domination. We have to also understand it as a project of standardization of life forms, as a universalization of norms and their concomitant regimes of intelligibility. As we gleaned from the *Junior Citizen* textbook, these norms include the citizen as a subject of property, based on a conception of nature — specifically, land — as a thing bearing potential exchange value realizable through productive labor.

As an institution of governmentality, the system of mass education established by the U. S. colonizers was an apparatus for the generalization of the social bases of capitalist democracy through the “standardization” of life and the production of “the average” man. While education under Spanish colonialism had aimed to produce obedient subjects of religious doctrinal authority (and only later with the liberal reform of education in 1863, exemplary subjects of enlightened learning and civic as well as moral virtue), the educational system under U. S. imperialism sought to produce a broad citizenry capable of democratic self-government, which meant a new organizing conceit for its policies: “the masses.”⁵⁾ As the Filipino educator and statesman, Camilo Osias wrote, the Philippine Assembly’s passage of several Acts, which provided for the construction of schools in the rural areas, demonstrated the awareness of Philippine leaders that “the stability of democracy here in these Islands depends in a great measure upon the character and intelligence of *the average people*” [Osias 1921: 5]. The conception of “the greater part of the Philippine population” as “the average people” is intertwined with the emerging idea that democracy entails a certain raised “standard of life” among its citizenry as a condition of freedom. Reflecting an amalgamation of prevailing ideas on education in the U. S. that might be described as technocratic humanist, Osias understood the economic independence of individuals as an important component of the freedoms for which education was to train its pupils, a prerequisite for developing in them greater “social efficiency” and higher tastes that would ultimately lead to a richer, larger, better life [*ibid.*: 7–8].⁶⁾ He argued, “[I]n a community where the members are poor and contented, where the people are more or less indifferent to community needs and interests.... In such a community there is need of preaching the spirit of discontent. The people must be led to acquire higher

5) In 1905, James A. LeRoy distinguished the system of education established by the U. S. from that of the Spanish (which despite the reforms of 1863 continued to reflect a trenchant “mediaevalism” in methods and curriculum) by this focus: “Characteristically American was also the determination from the very outset that it was the education of the masses which primarily required attention. Upon this decision has followed, naturally and logically, all the other features which have come to form what is called ‘American educational policy’ in the Philippines” [LeRoy 1905: 214].

6) The technocratic aspect of Osias’s vision is evidenced in his abundant emphasis on “efficiency” as simultaneously a capacity of individuals to be developed, a characteristic of schools to be measured and improved, and an ideal of individual and collective human life (alongside freedom and happiness).

tastes and a desire for better things. The standard of living must be raised" [*ibid.*: 29].⁷⁾ Discontent is the countermeasure to stagnation. It is the obverse of the progressive spirit that must be developed in the new citizen-subject, a spirit which is expressed in the demands and desires for better things and which enables life to be lived beyond the level of mere physical existence and mere family continuity.⁸⁾

From its inception, the U. S. imperial project of education entailed tutelage in calibrating this equation between political ideals of citizenship and economic ideals of capitalist accumulation, despite shifts and differences in particular policies.⁹⁾ During the beginning of his tenure as Superintendent of the Philippine Commission from 1903–09, David P. Barrows, for example, proclaimed: "Material benefits can neither be taken advantage of nor enjoyed by a people illiterate and ignorant. Development of markets and of trade only accompany higher standards of life, and higher standards of life proceed nowhere so quickly as from an advance in education."¹⁰⁾ While Barrows' Jeffersonian educational model for developing those higher standards of life through a more literary (rather than industrial) "character-training" education was short-lived, what is important to note is the emergence of the central tenet around which educational projects as well as other national projects organized their efforts, which is the idea of particular "standards" of life as universal measure and norm by which native life could be restructured in order to transform and elevate "the average" people into proper subjects of democracy.¹¹⁾ In this way, the U. S. imperial project of mass education, which other scholars have also described in terms of an "expansive, imperial project of sentimentalism" through which the full and complete extension of "humanity" to stigmatized others is facilitated [Wexler 2000: 101], can be understood as the metaprogram for the "humanization" of colonial peoples according to the protocols of subjectivity embedded in the practices of what Marx and Engels call "a definite *mode of life*" [Marx 1989]. In this metaprogram of "humanization," the very

7) Osias of course assumes, in this ideological vein, that poverty results in a default individualist self-interest at the expense of community.

8) Hence, higher economic standards of living could serve as indicators of higher standards of life. Osias reproduces the table provided by Patten in *The New Basis of Civilization*, which lines up increasing income levels in the U. S. with terms of increasing civilizational value, or "the income graduation whereby men pass from one stage of progress to another: Dissolution, Poverty, Family Continuity, Economic Freedom, Economic Independence, Economic Initiative, Economic Leisure" [Osias 1921: 30].

9) Although Glenn May argues that the U. S. educational project in the Philippines was a failure (limiting himself to the period under study 1900–13, yet implying the failure of U. S. colonial policy more generally beyond this period), the goals he identifies as driving U. S. colonial policy more generally (and shaping educational policy specifically), i. e., to prepare Filipinos for citizenship and for productive labor, constitute colonial precepts that I would argue has animated and shaped much symbolic production, as well as the material organization of social life, in the Philippines since then.

10) Quoted in LeRoy [1905: 231]. See also May [1984: 97–112]. Barrows subsequently became the ninth President of the University of California from 1919 to 1923.

11) The notion of "standards of living" becomes a conceptual tool for students of "comparative humanity." See Keesing [1935: 21–34].

figuration of valued life, and indeed, of Life itself, becomes essential.

In 1917, the Associate Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court, Charles Burke Elliott, already described the achievement of U. S. occupation in terms of introducing Filipinos to “new principles and ideals of life, and different conceptions of the essential legal and political rights of individuals,” a transplantation of a radically different civilizational culture that broke with the “continuity” of their history [Elliott 1917: i-ii]. As is well known, the so-called progressive achievements of American rule, which continue to be lauded today, included the installation of modern technologies of public sanitation, mass transportation, communication and education as necessary conditions of a developing democracy and its underlying norms of possessive individualism, value-productive labor, racialized citizenship, scientific-technocratic expertise and humanist culture.¹²⁾ These infrastructural technologies were tasked with producing not only the proper material and institutional environment for eventual political self-rule, but also the habits, behavior and sensibilities of proper citizen-subjects of capitalist democracy, that is, tasked with the shaping of the *milieu* of Filipinos as human beings with the potential for political self-rule. By “milieu,” I refer “not only to the medium that human beings are *in*, but equally to the medium that human being *is*” [Levitt 2008: 202]. Indeed, for Elliott, the challenge that American occupation had set for itself, “to give peace, order and justice to the country and prepare the natives, *en masse*, to manage their own affairs,” was an *evolutionary* process in which “new organs would be developed as new functions appeared,” that is, as the conditions necessary “to make good and efficient Filipinos” out of natives were created and set in place.

I approach literary works under U. S. colonial rule thus as practices of coding and mediating the relations constitutive of “citizen-man,” a globally emergent norm of being human as a privileged and compulsory form of social life, that would serve as the enabling medium of democracy. What mode of attention or care and what modality of inhabiting time constitute a valued form of life in these works?

In many ways, Life is itself the subject matter of many of these early works. Let us take for example Paz Marquez Benitez’s “Dead Stars,” the story that is proclaimed the birth of the Filipino short story in English [1925], the inaugural work of proper literature that marks the end of the literary historical period of imitation and apprentice. In this story, Life as love and the vitality of youth is imaged in its vanishing and closure. It is what escapes Alfredo Salazar, a social-climbing young man who allows the desires awakened in him by Julia Salas, a young woman identified with the simplicity of an unchanged small town (without a single American), to be compromised by his impulsive engagement to Esperanza and the proper, ordered life of the urban elite that marriage to her would bring. While Julia, “of a smooth rich brown with

12) Quoting J.S. Furnivall, “the late distinguished student of British and Dutch colonial policies” — “education is not something given in the school or by way of formal instruction, but is the operation of the whole environment ...” — Glenn May suggests that after the failed Jeffersonian experiment of David Barrows, the Philippine Commission “gave more support to road building — to projects designed to change the ‘environment’ — than to public schools” [May 1984: 112].

underlying tones of crimson which heightened the impression she gave of abounding vitality," embodies this very life that he will lose, Alfredo, whose appearance "betokened little of exuberant masculinity," embodies that "indolent ease" and "capitulation to what he recognized as irresistible forces of circumstances and of character" that constitute the condition of life's loss and disappointment. Here, indolence and greed appear in contrast to patient, long-term work, with its cumulative sense of time realized in a future that is itself a form of happiness.

Why would men so mismanage their lives? Greed, he thought, was what ruined so many. Greed — the desire to crowd into a moment all the enjoyment it will hold, to squeeze from the hour all the emotion it will yield. Men commit themselves when but half-meaning to do so, sacrificing possible future fullness of ecstasy to the craving for immediate excitement. Greed — mortgaging the future for the sake of a present interesting reaction. Greed — forcing the hand of Time, or of Fate. [Benitez [1925] 1997: 2]

What we witness in this story is an attention to Life as fullness of meaning immanent in corporeal forms identified with the rural (indeed, a fetishisation of rural landscape and native corporeality as bearers of this hidden value, a fetishisation evident in the "local color" stories for which Manuel Arguilla is most famous).

Paradoxically, the sense or experience of the very diminishment or loss of life exemplified in the tragic or unhappy stories of some of these early writers, is already its affirmation in the subject, whose capacity to recognize and view this hidden value is precisely his defining human spirit. This diminishment or squelching of Life, as well as the reduction of the notion of lifetime to individual biographical time, is embodied in the physical appearance and emotional behavior of indolent, feckless men like Alfredo Salazar; or the meek and subservient masculinity of Mang Tonio in Casiano Calalang's "Soft Clay" ("His lips had a way of twitching nervously that added to the impression of weakness shown by his less prominent chin."), who forever regrets the destruction that his lack of courage wreaks on his life and the life of his true love; or the weak Gerardo Luna in another Paz Marquez Benitez' story, "A Night in the Hills," who chooses the comfort of a convenient remarriage in the terrifying face of the uncertainty broached by his own dreams of an "unlimited and unshackled" soul (embodied in the untamed wild of the rural forest).

Life is thus something that can be wasted, not lived; it becomes alienated as the measure and object of measure of things, of people, of time, with each of these (things, people, time) also serving as an object of aesthetic experience yielding the intangible value of meaning. Expressed by the passage of light of dead stars, the image of "the dear, dead loves of vanished youth," time itself becomes the aestheticized object of Alfredo Salazar's experience of loss. Like "the small key" which comes to stand in for a revelatory and transformative moment, an act of jealousy and betrayal expressive of a hidden but corrosive conflict between a husband and his second wife ("an incident [that] would always remain a shadow in their lives") in Pat Latorena's story of the same name, the aestheticized object bears the fullness of meaning not merely of the actions and the characters within the story but more importantly of the story as a whole — it

encapsulates the prized “theme” that is the particular value of a work, the particular instantiation of the value of literature as a whole, which is the transcendent value of the ever-progressive human spirit that is Life itself.

Yabes calls this spirit “internal divine fire” — “It is that intangible something in an artist which, when transfused into a piece of work transforms it into an enduring, because living, art” [Yabes 1975: xxxi]. The decoding of meaning is thus the partaking of that “intangible something” that is the value of Life, for whom citizen-man is at once sower and reaper, writer and reader. What is human — what marks and makes the human, the process of subjectification that is the program of these literary works — is precisely this recognition of the portent of things, the immanent meaning embodied in material objects (including, exemplarily, the body), which, like the cow that suddenly makes an appearance at the end of Latorena’s story to embody a state of being “blissfully unaware” of such portent (“such things as a gnawing fear in the heart of a woman and a still smouldering resentment in a man’s”), animals do not have the capacity to register, much less fathom.

It is worth noting in these works, the new importance of the notion of “experience” as that fullness of meaning or “content” of existence that education was the very process of enriching and enlarging. This philosophy of education is articulated by Osias, who, besides being the first Filipino division superintendent of schools, was also the author of the 6-volume Philippine Reader textbook series, which served as instructional material for primary schools throughout the country for decades before. “Experience” is a form of “wealth” that can be passed down through the curriculum (“the sum total of individual and social experience worthy of transmission and perpetuation”), “through the agency of which these learners become freer, happier, and more efficient citizens” [Osias 1921: 58]. For Osias, following the pragmatist philosopher of education, John Dewey, the communication and transmission of such “wealth of experience” is a defining condition of democracy.¹³⁾

Life is subject to progress; it has “value in itself beyond mere existence.”¹⁴⁾ Literature provides the software for the recognition of such value through the specific structure of “experience” that it crafts: experience here is precisely the interpretive, subjective event occasioned by the organically constructed aesthetic object. Here we must note the temporality of these stories’ constructive attention, which is developmental and cumulative, building to a revelatory or encapsulatory moment that then becomes the substance and effector of the meaning of the work, a form of attention yielding a definite return or symbolic value, no longer the product of a didactic or instrumental effort, but of an organic process. In contrast to the repetitive, formulaic verbal and performative gestures and movements and discontinuous, fragmented structure of popular literary-dramatic forms such as the *komedya*, whose aim, Resil

13) “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” [John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, quoted in Osias 1921: 26].

14) Paul Monroe, quoted in Osias [1921: 59].

Mojares argues, was the renewal of known ideas and sentiments rather than the discovery of new ones, the formal ideal for the short story, as articulated by Edgar Allan Poe and assiduously pursued by these writers is “an organic structure that creates a single unified impression or effect,” which required an efficiency or regulated economy of expression [Mojares 1985: 78].¹⁵⁾

We might say that early Philippine writing in English, particularly the short story, exemplifies a striving towards the self-evidence of the modern, technical image and a transparency of the mediation of writing, towards the invisibility of the formal device. Charges of didacticism, sentimentality, verbosity and artifice, abounding in literary criticism up to the present moment, might on this view be seen as disciplining measures (or what Flusser refers to as human “feedback” for the system) against the exhibition of the instrumentality of the word and the extrinsic sources of value of literature, which this instrumentality betrays. Criticism of these qualities of flowery, didactic, sentimental expression deemed backward (and characteristic of outmoded writing as well as dramatic and musical arts of the Spanish era) place emphasis, in contrast, on “natural” expressions that do not betray their rhetorical status or for that matter the status of language and literature as *media*. And criticism of unrestrained, outbursts of emotion demonstrate the effort to ward off a violence that was everywhere the condition of the sentimental project of liberal humanization that this literature was tasked with carrying out.¹⁶⁾

Status of the Image

What is upheld in the new literary striving is a new model of perception and experience, a new order of sensibility evident in the naturalist photographic depictions of the visible, physical surfaces of characters and their material surroundings. Such an order is marked by the production of representational objects as bearing a primarily symbolic (rather than, say, allegorical) significance (eg. dead stars, the small key), and the relegation and efficient containment of their potentially excessive, sensuous materiality to the symbolic work of *synechdoche* — or the creation of, as Paul de Man puts it, “the sensorial equivalence of a more general, ideal meaning” [de Man 1983: 190]. No longer reference to a metaphysical realm of significance to which representational objects correspond; instead an identity between matter and meaning, a continuity between material perception and symbolic imagination, symbol as part of the totality that it represents.

We have to view this transformed status of the representational object with respect to the changing character of the image in the context of the mass production and explosion of colonial

15) Lucilla Hosillos argues, “Poe’s method of achieving a single intended effect through organic unity lies deep in the Filipino short story. This basic single influence in the formative period of the Filipino short story in English has endured even in the Filipino short story in the vernaculars” [Hosillos 1984: 94].

16) Leonard Casper praised Manuel Arguilla for the subtlety and restraint shown in his “oppressed labor” stories: “Except for brief outbreaks of violence, even these are noteworthy for their welling but not yet overflowing emotion, their silent threat” [Casper 1966: 40].

photography and cinema at the turn of the twentieth century. Many scholars have written on the role of U. S. ethnological photographs in enacting the racializing dynamics of an imperial gaze. Vicente Rafael writes for example of the way such photographs, alongside the colonial census, serve as apparatuses of supervision and classification, technologies for producing natives as visible objects, made accessible to surveillance, measure, and control — “objects of transitional significance whose present is bound to fade into the past as they are wholly annexed to the civilizing embrace of the future” [Rafael 2000: 38]. Similarly, Laura Wexler shows how photographic images of natives in world’s fairs repeated and extended the construction and highlighting of differences from the unmarked norms of whiteness, “making material the abstract racial premise of the anthropological ‘display’” [Wexler 2000: 276–277]. And Amy Kaplan writes about early U. S. cinema’s exhibition and enactment of American global mobility as the spectacular correlative of imperial power itself [Kaplan 2005].

Photography did not, however, arrive in the Philippines with U. S. colonial rule. In fact, it first appeared in 1841, during late Spanish colonial rule. By the 1850s and 1860s portrait photography had become widespread among the “Filipino” elite classes as a medium of representation of social prestige and status [Guardiola 2008]. In concert with other scholars who note the continuity between early nineteenth century photography and artistic portraiture, Juan Guardiola suggests that, building on and secularizing a long representational tradition of Christian religious iconography, early photography during late Spanish rule exemplified an aestheticizing or “artistic” gaze, that is to say, a gaze that produced images of an enhanced and idealized, rather than naked, empirical, reality.¹⁷⁾ Portrait photography, particularly of the upper class, would often be enhanced with the use of Indian ink, pencil and watercolor, while more “ethnological” kinds of photographs of “natives” reflected folkloric conventions of social and natural “types” that can be seen as continuous with practices of representation within the literary genre of “costumbrismo”¹⁸⁾ (see Figs. 1 and 2).

In each case, the production of the photographic image demonstrated a fidelity to the principles of representation of a world that the images sought to uphold, or to a prescribed order of proper sentiment, moral attitude, or philosophical regard with which they were to correspond. While undoubtedly the contradictions of liberal reforms in late Spanish colonial rule produced a context for the emergence of critical and antagonistic uses of prevailing genres of

17) Guardiola notes the way Francisco van Camp’s photographs of the 1880 earthquake in Manila reflected this extant aesthetic gaze shaping early photography: “these images of violence and devastation reflect an aesthetic interest in the photographic medium that goes beyond the documentary value all photographs entail; an artistic gaze that was shared by three other photographers, Félix Laureano, Manuel Avias Rodríguez and Francisco Pertierra in the last decade of the nineteenth century...” [Guardiola 2008: 213]. See also M. Bianet Castellanos [1999].

18) See John D. Blanco [2009] for a discussion of the role of “costumbrista” articles in staging the impasses of late Spanish colonial rule. Blanco argues that the costumbrista articles rehearsed the advent of authentic literary representation of an autochthonous reality, which would be fulfilled by the novel.



Fig. 1 Digital Reproduction of Philippino Women Washing beneath a Banana Tree, an Oil Painting by C. W. Andrews
Source: [<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rafael-minuesa/5302647947/>] (accessed March 27, 2011)



Fig. 2 Digital Reproduction of Indigena de la Clase Rica, Photographic Print by Francisco von Camp.
Source: [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fotograf%C3%ADa_en_Filipinas] (accessed March 23, 2011)

Note: "While *Illustracion Filipina* benevolently aims to grant the native an aesthetic representation through his idealized harmony with a sublime and unexplored Filipino nature, the idealization itself contained a critique of both as lacking in civilization"[Blanco 2009: 167].

visual and literary representation, as evidenced by the paintings and writings of emergent Filipino nationalists in the late nineteenth century, a growing shift in the status of the image from expressive medium to reality artifact (that is, the technical image as evidentiary part of the reality it represents) becomes quite marked and arguably fully realized under U. S. imperialism.

U. S. imperial deployments of the photographic and cinematic image as technical reproduction of the objective reality of imperial power thus contrast sharply with the efforts of self-fashioning as well as gift practices that Rafael describes as characteristic of the production and circulation of the photographic image among Filipino nationalists in the nineteenth century [Rafael 1990] (see Fig. 3). In this context, the photographic image served as token of affection, commemorative object, proof and memory of love. While such practices would continue during the U. S. colonial period with the production and circulation of portrait photography in the early twentieth century, suggesting, as Rafael argues, "the existence of another world that existed within but was not wholly absorbed by colonial representation,"¹⁹⁾ a survey of the vast archive of photograph images "taken" and "captured" by amateur as well as professional

19) As Rafael argues, "Filipino portraits indicate another path for the recognition of native remains. They constitute a kind of anti-ethnology in their insistence on an empirically unassailable subjectivity and the evidence of their indeterminate and unknowable reception in the future" [Rafael 2000: 99].



Fig. 3 Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Graciano Lopez Jaena
Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Filipino_Ilustrados_Jose_Rizal_Marcelo_del_Pilar_Mariano_Ponce.jpg]
(accessed March 27, 2011)

Note: "One could think about this photograph as part of a larger attempt at nationalist self-fashioning" [Rafael 1990: 605].



Fig. 4 Photograph from the Collection of Dean Worcester
Source: [Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998]



Fig. 5 Photograph from the Collection of Dean Worcester
Source: [Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998]

photographers, with the development of “scientific,” anthropological, criminological and, later, snapshot photography, manifests a decidedly new perceptual sensibility reflected in the altered status of the image (see Figs. 4 and 5). As these photographs from the Dean Worcester collection show, the image became “evidence” of an objective reality that stood outside the process of production of the image, a mechanism of “truth”-revelation and surveillance, and the record-keeping and classifying activities of the normative, empiricist disciplines and institutions of the modern Euro-American order.²⁰⁾

Within the reconfigured sensible order mediated by the democratized apparatuses of literature and photography under U.S. colonialism, to “author” the meaningful image that would capture something *real* (the elusive content of Life) would be to attain the status of that transparent imperial gaze, which Rafael argues is embodied in the ethnological photograph and the colonial census, and which, in an article on U.S. imperial nature photography, Donna Haraway argues is frozen in the hardware and logic of the camera and gun.²¹⁾ As in the aesthetic regime, which Rancière argues emerges in Europe in the nineteenth century, “the image is no longer the codified expression of thought or feeling.... It is a way in which things themselves speak and are silent” [Rancière 2007: 13]. The ideal of representation in commonwealth literature is this aspect of the technical image as “silent speech” or “the eloquence of the very thing that is silent, the capacity to exhibit signs written on a body, the marks directly imprinted by its history, which are more truthful than any discourse proffered by a mouth” [*ibid.*]. This ideal of “silent speech” is notably exemplified by one of Manuel Arguilla’s celebrated achievements as a short story writer, that is, his use of English as a vehicle of native dialect. In Arguilla’s stories, rather than an object or body, snippets of character dialogue act as the “things themselves [that] speak and are silent.” Representations of vernacular speech, like his “local color” representations of native landscape and bodies, are the marks of native life, bearing the immanent truth of its localized, and ultimately (racialized) national, humanity (see Figs. 6 and 7).

It is not surprising to find that Commonwealth stories’ approach to imagery and their realist aesthetics should appear vastly different from the social realism of Jose Rizal. Lucilla Hosillos notes that before his own discovery of “love of country and national consciousness,” and “under the influence of Flaubert, Anderson, and Hemingway, [Arguilla] had found Rizal ‘unbearably wordy, downright sentimental, embarrassingly inept, and inexcusably didactic’”

20) The literature on the transformation and hegemony of vision under modernity is vast. See for example, Jonathan Crary [1992], David Michael Levin [1993].

21) Donna Haraway comments on the ideology of realism and construction of temporality informing U.S. imperial nature photography: “To make an exact image is to insure against disappearance, to cannibalize life until it is safely and permanently a specular image, a ghost. It arrested decay.” Nature photography hints at an apocalyptic future, provides “a transfusion for a steadily depleted sense of reality.” “The image and the real mutually define each other, as all reality in late capitalist culture lusts to become an image for its own security. Reality is assured, insured, by the image...” [Haraway 1993: 264].



Fig. 6 Photograph from the Collection of Dean Worcester

Source: [Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998]



Fig. 7 Photograph from the Collection of Dean Worcester

Source: [Sinopoli and Fogelin 1998]

Note: The technical image as “silent speech”: “The capacity to exhibit signs written on a body, the marks directly imprinted by its history, which are more truthful than any discourse proffered by a mouth” [Rancière 2007: 13].

[Hosillos 1984: 119]. In contrast to Rizal’s foregrounded rhetoric and authorial voice (the “flourishes” of direct address of the reader, the present tense frequently punctuating the proper past tense of the narrative, which Benedict Anderson [1998] shows to have been excised in Leon Ma. Guerrero’s English translation of *Noli Me Tangere*), Arguilla’s achievement would be precisely the transparency of language that would lend it to the conveyance of that difference of speech called dialect.²²⁾ What Arguilla would later find to appreciate in Rizal — what he articulated as “the rediscovery of one’s native land,” and “the consciousness of a body of people weaving out of their separate and often clashing destinies the fabric of a national character” — would constitute the implicit program of Philippine literature, more generally, but it is in the representational craft of the short story where we can discern the new organizing perceptual rules that such a program entailed.

What is the principle of intelligibility or experienciability organizing these representations? Not simply a conception of the sovereign, possessive individual that is the substrate of liberal

22) Anderson notes the effect of Guerrero’s exclusion of Rizal’s direct address of the reader in the present tense: “At a stroke Rizal’s wittily insinuating voice is muffled, a silent wall is set up between author and reader, and, once again, everything urgent and contemporary in the text is dusted away into History” [Anderson 1998: 240]. This “silent wall” between author and reader is the effect of the new representational precept, which I discuss as a striving towards the “silent speech” of the technical image.

democracy, but more importantly the very form of value-abstraction intrinsic to the commodity. In the altered status of the aesthetic image as simultaneously matter and meaning, in the silent eloquence of things themselves, which short story writers strove to craft (Arguilla's contribution to Philippine literature acknowledged as "his blending of fact and symbol, his creation of congruence of style and language and experience" [Hosillos 1984: 119]), we recognize the perceptual effects of the separation between abstract exchange-value and concrete use-value defining the commodity-form.²³⁾

The separation performed in this mode of symbolizing is crucial to the distancing within the subject that the short story performs between the reflective self and his nature, a distancing that Paul de Man argues is the structure of irony. Indeed, I would argue that the program of the short story is the performance of this structure of irony, which de Man reads in Baudelaire in terms of "*dédoublement*" as the characteristic that sets apart a reflective activity, such as that of the philosopher, from the activity of the ordinary self caught in everyday concerns" [de Man 1983: 212]. Baudelaire's description of the reflective self as "un homme qui ait acquis, par habitude, la force de se dédoubler rapidement et d'assister comme spectateur désintéressé aux phénomènes de son *moi*" articulates the subjectifying effect of this mode of symbolizing [quoted in *ibid.*: 211-212]. The "disinterested spectator" is constituted through the differentiation (alienation or separation) of the experiencing human self from the self caught in and as part of the (nonhuman) natural, empirical world. If irony is a synchronic structure, in which the process of distancing between selves takes place in a single moment, the commonwealth short story distills this single moment in the instantaneity of the symbol.

The aesthetics of the commodity form, as a secularized, subjectifying relation to social power, thus becomes generalized as the principle for decoding social relations and individual behavior and for constructing meaningful experience, a hermeneutic or principle of intelligibility that was to apply more broadly to the world at large. Paradoxically, it is through the Filipinization of qualities and themes conveyed by the apparatus of "national literature" that a particular practice of abstraction is universalized and a colonial history of remaindering of alternative forms of life is extended.

23) Following on Alfred Sohn-Rethel's thesis that "the formal analysis of the commodity holds the key to ... the historical explanation of the abstract conceptual mode of thinking and of the division of intellectual and manual labor that came into existence with it," Žižek argues that the structure of the commodity-form articulates the anatomy of the Kantian transcendental subject, which serves as "the a priori frame of 'objective' scientific knowledge" [Žižek 1997: 16]. My argument is slightly different in that I am not claiming that the short story installs the Kantian transcendental subject. Rather, I am arguing that writers labored to approximate the protocols of perception and proper "modern" mode of symbolizing, which they diligently learned from U. S. and European writers of the short story, in order to convey Filipino humanity to an international community, by participating in "the world republic of letters." In doing so, they visibly display the aesthetic precepts of capitalist modernity.

Gender and Race Effects of “Freedom”: Citizen-Man

If the novel serves as a “modern technology of self-reflexivity” on the level of social identities, under imperial tutelage, the short story becomes a technology of “experience,” a technology of modes of perceptibility and sensibility for the humanist production of subjectivity. This emergent subjectivity is constituted as individual capacity through a mode of attention and care that seizes on an immanent meaningfulness and vitality that is shut down by a controlling sociality, which orders one’s existence into enervating or dead forms. Note the last line of Benitez’s “A Night in the Hills” in which the closure of the protagonist’s individual freedom is registered: “He felt, queerly, that something was closing above his head, and that whoever was closing it was rattling the keys.” The longing for freedom from social conventions that other women writers such as Angela Manalang Gloria also expressed, is in Benitez’s stories articulated through the construction of the individual male subject against an oppressive sociality that is gendered by the figures of women. Arguably entering the vocabulary of Philippine literature for the first time, “queer” marks the ambivalent effects of the gendered and racial entailments of that individual subject, citizen-man, as it becomes produced as the only site for the recognition and realization of an essential, natural freedom.²⁴⁾ It signals the new conditions under which dominant U. S. gendered roles were being installed through institutions of governmentality such as the home economics educational programs which sutured private domestic life to a Jeffersonian domestic national economy and to an emerging international economic order.²⁵⁾ Under these conditions, the challenges of freedom would have to be negotiated on the secular terrain of gendered, sexualized individual subjectivity, no longer on the mythical, even sacred, terrain of a shared social fate, on which revolutionary struggle had been waged.

If we understand racialization in terms of this program for the production of subjectivity rather than a visible mark of social difference, a code rather than a representation or a specific

24) See Ponce for discussion of the queer erotics of Jose Garcia Villa’s high modernist rebellion against the colonial project of Benevolent Assimilation and the nationalist reproductive heterosexuality generated as anti-colonial response [2012].

25) The gendered roles are manifest in the differences between the Barrio Boy’s Creed and Barrio Girl’s Creed and their respective areas of training, which Osias describes. It is clear that Jefferson’s ideal of an independent yeomanry continued to inform the rural education emphasis on training in farming and housekeeping, the growing of home gardens, and so on. While boys were to be trained in productive labor (“to kill weeds, increase crops, double the output of flock by keeping more chickens and careful breeding; growing larger crops; keeping a home garden to increase, vary and improve the diet; increasing the value of the land with fruit trees, fence vines, shrubs and flowers”), girls were trained for naturalized, free, domestic, “caring” labor (“to love chickens and pigs and goats and puppies as well as dolls and dresses ... to take care of some domestic animals as well as my brother, who does not love them as much as I; homemaking; to give away flowers and cook vegetables which I myself raised”) [Osias 1921: 37-38].

inscription, then the decoding of meaning through which one becomes this subject of freedom is the activation of a racial code. In the story above, what is “queerly felt” — a closing in, a caged feeling that is at once the recognition of one’s stymied, stunted freedom and the proof of one’s immanent, transcendent freedom — constitutes the condition and negative imperative of one’s underdeveloped humanity. This is the affective registration of that differentiation between the free self and the self of nature, a “splitting” that others have noted as constitutive of the colonial condition, which is also importantly a foreclosure of other gender and sexual relations and meanings.²⁶⁾ The effect of personhood produced in these literary exercises is undoubtedly a racialized humanity though it remains submerged beneath the more legible inscription of race as discursive category of marked being (exhibited through skin color, behavior, demeanor, capacities). Yet the valorization of “brownness,” of “local color,” and ultimately of “culture” is not a deviation from a more pernicious, subterranean process of normalization. It is in fact the very technique of specification of humanity through which the universalization of the economic form of the human — the medium of liberal capitalist democracy, “citizen-man” — is achieved.

Remaindered Forms of Social Media

Despite its intermittent achievements, the work of commonwealth literature would produce imperfect, contradictory and surplus effects (never after all reaching the status and achievement of world literature, failing to register as having programmatic capacity, i.e., the creative capacity to alter or shape the software for the production of “man”). Meanwhile, other older as well as emergent kinds of media technologies — theater, radio and film — became spaces for both the refurbishing and capture of remaindered forms of sociality, sensual being, personhood and mediatic modes.

The citizen-making practices in the well-crafted short story in English can hence be contrasted to the practices of subjectivity and sociality enacted in these other media, including for example, the seditious plays, outlawed nationalist dramas which drew elements from the older popular and vernacular theatrical genres of the *komedya*, *sinakulo*, and *sarsuwela*. For Rafael, who counterposes these plays to the operation of the colonial census, they acted as a space of seditious sociality — practices of collectivity and social understanding that contested the sensibilities and social intelligences being carefully crafted through the media of imperial governmentality, by calling upon proclivities of behavior and sense, characterized in terms of mimicry, social indebtedness, and fated life, which were so racially denigrated by the new colonizers as a threat to their ideal freedoms.

While Philippine literature in English purveys a particular mode of abstraction attuned to the recognition of value, the seditious plays mobilized another mode of abstraction through the

26) Fanon [1994]; Chakrabarty [2007]; Rey Chow notes some of the gender and sexual foreclosures performed by Fanon’s critique of this racial splitting [1998].

practice of allegory and emblematic naming. Using abstract nouns (“Suffering,” “Avarice”), allegorized and personified as social characters (Philippines, U. S. colonial government), this older “platform,” if you will, did not aim for a transparency of language, but rather foregrounded words, themselves made into objective agencies (proper names) as emblematic sites of collective sentiment and action. This older form of abstraction requires, as Rafael observes, “a way of conceiving the self as fated, and thereby obligated to the other and to a social order predicated on the circulation of mutual indebtedness” [Rafael 2000: 47]. Indeed, the forms of abstraction taught under the modern education system were to be the means of eradicating such backward forms of obligation and indebtedness, on which seditious plays relied for their social appeal. As the Superintendent of Education David P. Barrows (who subsequently became the ninth President of the University of California) exclaimed in 1904, “Two years of instruction in arithmetic given to every child will in a generation destroy that repellent peonage or bonded indebtedness that prevails throughout this country” [quoted in May 1984]. Against this desired mathematical (rational, cognitive) mode of abstraction, the older mode of abstraction mobilized by the seditious plays made use of, rather than disciplined, that Filipino penchant for mimicry so despised by the U. S. colonizers, and subsequently denigrated by nationalists, who both viewed this seemingly inordinate dependence on and openness to external stimuli for the making of one’s internal dispositions, this yielding, “immediate and sensuous relationship” to one’s surroundings, as the antithesis and defeat of autonomous sovereign agency.

The planned obsolescence of such forms of social mediation through the proper programming of education and literature did not however take place. Though not encoded and reified in the technical hardware of dominant media systems, these practices of coding and mediation glimpsed in the seditious plays and other outmoded media platforms can be seen to have migrated into other media technologies such as radio. Though radio was also geared towards the production of the communicative conditions of liberal democracy (in 1927 the services of the Radio Corporation of the Philippines was pronounced “equivalent to the service of thousands of schools, colleges, and universities” [*The Independent* Dec. 24 1927: 4]), the work of Elizabeth Enriquez [2009] shows that this apparatus also became the site for the expansion rather than the restriction of vernacular languages (which even during the time of Constantino was beginning to outpace English), the reinvention of the *komedya* and *sarsuwela* as “radio soap operas,” the spread of older musical forms such as the *kundiman* together with the spread of new forms such as jazz, and through these forms, the cultivation of other mediatic capacities thought to have been superseded. Beyond claims of cultural continuity, which tend to bolster an implicit, reified notion of national identity, whether in the service of apologist arguments for imperial “failure” or critical arguments for native “resistance,” or their opposite, i.e., claims of cultural discontinuity, which serve arguments disproving both, I see the development and movement of older genres of music and performance through emergent technologies not so much as expressions of some evolving substance called “culture,” attributable to a given set of people (defined geographically and racially/ethnically), but rather as an integral part of a more open, though no less specific, history of practices of social mediation (a social history of

technologies) in their constitutive relation to dominant orders of social life.

Tracking older mediatic capacities in their migration and transformation across platforms allows us to see social struggle at the level of shifting sensorial and perceptual modes of being — that is, to see social struggle in the restructuring of selves and socialities, which is a constitutive part of the broader remaking of a dominant mode of life. It allows us to attend not only to those mediatic relations entailed by a new imperial order, but also to those that, despite being destined for obsolescence, persist in transformed ways or are newly innovated as tentative forms of living under new social conditions of exploitation. Not (yet or ever) reified and encoded in the hardware of mass technologies produced and distributed by capitalist enterprise or, in other words, not fully subsumed by capitalism, these other mediatic relations and capacities must nevertheless be viewed in close, even symbiotic, relation to those very emerging technologies of capitalist life that threaten to supersede them.

We might, in this context, read the imitative or mimetic capacities (observed as forms of “mimicry”) abundantly displayed in radio performances not simply in terms of colonial subordination and resistance (the terms in which mimicry has predominantly been discussed), but rather as a mode of reproducibility, a human media technology for the reproduction of art, performance, skills, know-how, looks, styles, and sounds. These mimetic capacities are deployed, in other words, to carry out new imperatives and possibilities of consumption in an age of “mechanical” or technological reproducibility though in a labor-intensive, rather than capital-intensive, form. Stephanie Ng writes indeed about the immense work of exacting imitations of other musical performers that present-day Filipino musicians in hotels and cruise ships around the world perform, whereby every inflection of the original singer is captured with an astonishingly high degree of accuracy. They do not only change their accents on stage, they also learn local songs in different Asian languages, demonstrating a linguistic virtuosity that is also a mediatic capacity.²⁷⁾

Radio becomes a space of enactment, transmission, and transformation of these mediatic capacities. Listening to an early radio recording of Katy de la Cruz singing “Planting Rice is Never Fun” in both its English translation and its Tagalog original, or German San Jose and Leonora Reyes meld two entirely different musical genres into a duet, “Halo-halo Blues,” one can hear the musical and linguistic transcoding practices of virtuosity displayed in these performances as mediatic capacities and sensibilities (of syncretism, synthesis, becoming other, sensuous play) that were to be displaced.

Vital Platforms of Techno-Social Reproducibility

To understand the “imitative” musical performances of these Filipino singers as actualizations of mediatic capacities might help us reflect more carefully on the role of Filipino jazz musicians

27) “Copying entails a high degree of accuracy, achieved through much effort. Singers often spend hours listening to the recordings by the original singers, in order to capture every inflection” [Ng 2002: 284].

coursing through East and Southeast Asia and other parts of the world from the late nineteenth century to the present and mediating different cultural negotiations with Western modernity. As Ng writes, by 1890, Filipinos were already widely-reputed as musicians throughout the region, performing in the first state brass bands and police bands in Malaya, in royal courts and nightclubs of Cambodia, in orchestras and dancehalls in French colonial Vietnam, and in the nightclubs of pre-revolution Shanghai (and subsequently British Hong Kong), as well as teachers and arrangers of music. In his own study of Filipino musicians in Hong Kong during the twentieth century, Lee Watkins shows that the bodily mimetic faculties for which the musicians are at once praised and denigrated are the means through which they negotiated their own passage into modernity and gained “admission to the global economy,” even as they played a pivotal role in the Western culture-infused development of the local popular music and entertainment industry [Watkins 2009: 79–84, 90].

Filipino musicians certainly wielded such abilities in both complicit and subversive ways — on the one hand sustaining colonial domination and authority through the emulation of colonial cultural repertoires and the dissemination of musical codes inherited from colonialism, and on the other hand transgressing the visibility of racial hierarchy and subverting hegemonic cultural practices through the ironic, humorous and carnivalesque qualities of their performance, which Watkins sees as a complex form of minstrelsy (“emulating and passing for the other through sound”) [*ibid.*: 76]. But what I find particularly noteworthy is the role that these mimetic capacities of Filipino musicians played in the new kind of communication infrastructure that Brian Larkin argues emerged as a crucially enabling means for the expansion of U. S. imperial power [Larkin 2010]. As “the first great transnational communications structure dominated by the United States,” cinema embodied the latter’s new decentralized mode of control as distinct from (and indeed challenging) the communicative infrastructure undergirding the older British Empire (and, I would add, that of the Spanish Empire). Cinema was a communications system that produced value not only as a material commodity but also as a generator and regulator of desires and affects that fed back into material production, a mechanism that brought “more and more widely disparate places into a single regime of distribution” [*ibid.*: 177]. Interestingly, migrant Filipino musicians in Hong Kong provided accompaniment for television stars and sound tracks for films as well as musical support for internationally touring U. S. stars (such as Sammy Davis Jr.), in this way serving as cost-reducing auxiliary and subsidiary components of this emergent global communication infrastructure and acting as the means of circulation of those very desires and affects that would aid in the formation of commodity cultures and the subjective protocols of capitalist life.²⁸⁾

28) Since they were widely acknowledged as having inherited Western musical sensibilities through the colonial influences of Spain and the U. S., Filipino bands were deemed adequate to provide backup for these stars, thereby cutting the costs of the international tours of U. S. singers and increasing the profits of their foreign and local organizers.

Performing not only repertoires of U.S. popular music but also exact renditions of individual musical performances by popular U.S. singers, Filipino musicians were also low-cost versions of “original” performers and their recordings (somewhat like “pirated” CDs and DVDs in the current moment). While undoubtedly there were dimensions of their performances and of their broader social lives in general that exceeded the imperatives of the dominant mode of production, my argument here is less about the humanist question of their social agency conceived as resistance and/or assimilation to structures outside of their control (or for that matter social agency understood through a dialectic of self and other) than about the role of the informal cultivation of remaindered sensorial-perceptual mimetic faculties as low-cost communicative media technologies — technologies for the production and circulation of “immaterial” commodities.

While often denigrated as “original” musicians, migrant Filipino musicians were in broad demand for their abilities to bodily reproduce music from desired foreign sources, both as performers and arrangers. As Jum Sum Wong notes in his own study, “The musicianship of Filipinos was considered good and while they may have lacked originality *their ability to play by ear had practical advantages*. Their performing styles also displayed strong American and Spanish influences. They could finish a score for a medium sized orchestra within two or three hours. This was valuable given the demands of the industry in Hong Kong” [quoted in Watkins 2009: 83, emphasis mine]. In other words, it was their mimetic acoustic abilities to “play by ear” — bodily capacities not only of materially registering and performing (as well as notating) cultural musical codes other than their own, but also of aurally absorbing and vocally and instrumentally simulating (recording and replaying) very particular textures and qualities of sound upon hearing them — that were “practically” valued and exploited, and indeed effectively treated as technical capacities of *analog reproduction*. We can consider this mimetic work as a form of analog reproduction to the extent that the work of reproduction relies on the inscription of a material surface (in this case, the “ear” as well as the performing body) for the recording of the original and the “playback” of the copy. Like other analog technologies such as the camera, the phonograph, and the gramophone, “mimetically capacious” machines which Michael Taussig argues attest to the regeneration and refunctioning of the mimetic faculty in the age of technological reproducibility, Filipino performers were treated and served in the capacity of technical apparatuses of media, but without the capital investment in their production that other communicative technologies received in the context of increasing monopolization of media systems (in effect, making them much like third world, home-made technologies) [Taussig 1992].²⁹⁾

On this view, migrant Filipino musicians can be seen as enacting a form of mobility and

29) Taussig follows Walter Benjamin in this argument. He suggests, further, and drawing on Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s critique of Western instrumental rationality, that the refunctioning of the mimetic faculty — “the art of becoming something else, of becoming Other” — proceeds from its repression, distortion and use as a hidden force by Western Enlightenment science and practice.

facilitating a form of circulation that appear in contrast with, yet importantly participate in, the mobility and circulation enabled by and representative of communicative technologies of an expanding global capitalist modernity. Migrant musicians' mobility continues to be viewed solely as the social effects of forces of an expansive movement that they are not an infrastructural part of. However, if we understand how they served in similar ways to and in tandem with the "mimetic machines" of the phonograph and the gramophone, we can also see how these musicians served as media of (re)production and media of circulation of desires and affects in an emergent global communication system. While these hegemonic desires and affects or codes of being may have issued from and ultimately profited the cultural industries of capital (feeding back into material production), they nevertheless also importantly depend on such "informal" (non-reified) social media for their circulation and, more, for their effective role in the generalization of the social bases of capital.

From a humanist perspective, it would be impossible to view migrant Filipino singers and musicians as media (rather than to see them simply as lesser musicians), precisely insofar as it is this kind of human being as medium (as tool) that continues to be the antithesis of the citizen-man capable of independent judgment. As an article written in 1938 in *The Commonwealth Advocate* proclaimed in its title, "The Function of Culture: Human Beings Are More Than Tools, Machines; They Are Human and Therefore Seek Culture," the Humanities were indispensable to prevent the devolution of Filipino citizens into mere tools and machines, as they were considered wont to become under Spanish rule [Buenaventura 1938a: 25-28, 31].³⁰⁾ Indeed, observing the results of the emphasis on the "rote," machine-like memorization under the Spanish educational system, the first American superintendent of education Fred Atkinson disapprovingly remarked on "a tendency on the part of the Filipinos to give *like phonographs* what they had heard or read, and memorized, without seeming to have thought for themselves" [quoted in Robles 1984: 78, emphasis mine]. According to the advocates of citizen-man, such a tendency toward being a *means* or *instrument* of others on the part of the masses would make the latter "a travesty on democracy ... an anemic, enfeebled, exploited class ... undemocratic, inhuman, a standing menace to peace, law and order; a curse which all governments bent on the welfare of the greatest number should spare no efforts to eliminate and wipe out" [Buenaventura 1938b: 23]. And yet, ironically, the availability and capacity of performers to serve as *means* of recording and transmission of not only musical performances but also speech performances of others became part of the very communication infrastructure that undergirded the expansion of U. S. imperial "democracy." Enriquez notes that early radio news programs included seemingly "live recordings" of the voices and public speeches of U.S. statesmen produced by Filipino vocal impersonators. Such early radio broadcasts comprised precisely the kind of communication between government and people expected to serve the

30) Teodosio F. Buenaventura proclaims, "an exclusive diet of vocational or technical training will make a student, not only a *tool* or *machine* merely in the economic process; but it will also violate the doctrine of the well-balanced nation" [1938a: 27].

ends of democracy.³¹⁾ Beyond the content of political ideas disseminated (as in the ideological content of the programming of the imperial news and information agency of the U. S., the Voice of America, a crucial transnational ideological state apparatus of the U. S. during the Cold War), the technologies of communication and transmission of cinema, radio and, later television, comprised the material, social environment for the forms of standardization, commodification, and circulation characteristic of liberal democracy.³²⁾ As I have been arguing here, those very mediatic capacities for which Filipinos were deemed unfit as citizen-subjects for the new order of imperial democracy nevertheless became deployed as enabling media for the latter's establishment and operation. Indeed, it is the Filipino performers' analog capacities that enable them to bring expressive as well as political cultures from elsewhere "live" through the body: a local, vital platform of mediation and techno-social reproducibility.

We can trace precursors of this vital platform mobilized in the musical world in older oral practices of social negotiation and inhabitation as well as cognitive and aesthetic reception, which shocked and dismayed one Western traveler after another as scandalous cacophony — meaningless sound or noise — which they invariably invoked as betokening qualities of lack and underdevelopment. Here for example is Feder Jagor's 1875 description of a *moro-moro* performance that he encountered during his travels:

The noise was so great that I could only catch a word here and there. The actors stalked on, chattering their parts, which not one of them understood, and moving their arms up and down; and when they reached the edge of the stage, they tacked and went back again like ships sailing against the wind. Their countenances were entirely devoid of expression, and they spoke *like automatons*. [quoted in Mojares 1985: 77, emphasis mine]

Jagor notes, "the contrast between [the words'] meaning [had he understood them, he says] and the machine-like movement of the actors would probably have been dull enough," and concludes, "Both the theatrical performance and the whole festival bore the impress of laziness,

31) Radio was seen as the "only means of direct communication between government and other social entities and the masses of the people" ["Radio Broadcasting in the Philippines" *Philippine Magazine* April 1932: 519]. Indeed, the very expansion of radio was spurred by political motivations, not only on the part of the colonial government (as implied in the notion of propaganda) but also on the part of the emergent "audience" of citizenry. The expansion of radio in the rural areas during the 1920s for example was partially attributed to stoked desires to hear the broadcast voice of colonial government: "The latest stunt which has led the provincianos to buy receiving sets is the broadcasting of the inaugural address of the new governor general by the Radio Corporation of the Philippines" [*The Independent* March 10, 1928: 4].

32) As Brian Larkin shows, the project of introducing radio in colonial Nigeria was about materializing a new relationship between the state and its subjects, creating material channels through which movement and circulation, valorized by liberalism as forms of modern freedom, could occur. The infrastructural achievement of radio was seen as an example of "technopolitics, the operation of political rule through the technical workings of social infrastructures" [Larkin 2008: 58–60].

indifference and mindless mimicry” [quoted in *ibid.*].

Compare Jagor’s reaction to that of the American teacher Mary Fee:

I went across the plaza and found two one-story buildings of stone with an American flag floating over one, and a noise which resembled the din of a boiler factory issuing from it. The noise was the vociferous outcry of one hundred and eighty-nine Filipino youths engaged in study or at least in a high, throaty clamor, over and over again, of their assigned lessons. [quoted in May 1984: 94]

In contrast to these responses of shock and dismay at the seeming “noise” of local modes of popular performance and reception, or cultural production and consumption (including reception/consumption within the context of education), Nikki Briones’ insightful study of the *moro-moro* shows how the modes of oral transmission and aural consumption characteristic of the *moro-moro* in fact constituted a distinct form of sensory experience and sensuous pleasure for the play’s audiences [Briones 2010: 82]. For these “aural connoisseurs,” the repetitious, stylized, seemingly arbitrary dictates of performance practices of dialogue as well as choreography were not only sensuous pleasures in themselves (independent of their production of “meaning”); these practices also lent themselves to additional pleasures of improvisation, innovation, and “flourish” — demonstrations of virtuosity rather than the principle of organic development cultivated by the new literary genre of the short story. Even as she observes an oral/aural shift now taking place in more “modernized” urban performances, Briones notes in particular the importance of oral and aural practices of *dicho* or dictation in contemporary versions of the genre, attesting to the continued operation of modes of sensory perception that the perceptual programming of capital-intensive technological apparatuses would ideally have made obsolete if not fully eliminated.

Against the “silent speech” cultivated by literature, “voicing” and “vociferous” speech were thus modes of attention and perceptual practice that people continued to mobilize within new media platforms. Paz Marquez Benitez’s former American high school principal wrote to her many years later, expressing his realization that the “chattering” of her 48–50 classmates, which exhausted him and his co-teacher, nearly driving them insane with such “bedlam,” was in fact the mode in which the students taught themselves English.³³⁾ This bodily, vocal

33) In a letter to her written in 1958, Benitez’s old high school principal recounts: “you pupils drove us nearly insane chattering to each other in Tagalog, explaining our questions and what English words to use to answer our questions. It all exhausted us so much that we could not even sleep nights. It went on that way day after day for sometime. It looked hopeless that we could ever teach geography, history, grammar, mathematics, etcetera through English in such bedlam and often we were on the verge of giving up. But we soon discovered that you boys and girls were actually very intelligent human beings instead of the wild unmanageable savages we took you for, and through all that Tagalog uproar you were actually teaching each other English expressions and how to answer our questions much faster than Wardall and I were teaching you through our supposedly superior pedagogue technique” [quoted in Licuanan 1995: 23].

performativity that Benitez herself engaged in as a high school student is not far from the modality of musicians teaching themselves to inhabit and play other musical forms and styles. The phonograph, automaton, machine — such are the ways in which the analog capacities of human media are denigrated and relegated to the non-human, the political potentials of such media and their other orders of sensibility and community seemingly foreclosed in favor of the privileged medium of democracy, citizen-man. And yet, rather than fully eliminated, these analog capacities proliferated as informal and vital technologies of reproducibility (and as means of livelihood under conditions of capitalist life) in social spaces destined to fall short of the normative ideals of sovereign personhood. They were in effect “surplussed” — not so much foreclosed as much as devalued and abandoned in favor of the privileged medium of democracy, citizen-man.

It is no accident perhaps that radio played such a prominent role in calling forth a form of sociality that was the historic “event” of People Power in 1986, the popular mobilization against dictatorial rule, about which I have written elsewhere. Beyond the specific scripts of the *moro-moro* or *komedya* that scholars such as Raul Pertierra and Tess del Rosario glean in the political dramas leading up to and enacted in People Power II in 2001 and the mass uprising of Edsa Masa, shortly thereafter [Pertierra 2002]³⁴⁾ in the first People Power revolt as well as the two others we can recognize a regime of perception of orders of sense and event making that surpass particular human goals, interests and agencies.³⁵⁾ We can also recognize in all three revolts the mobilization of “listener” as participant in a carnival of signs, gestures and performances through which people exercised ritual power and commanded transformation. What distribution or regime of perception and intelligibility characterizes the *komedya* and how does this medium transform into the mass media of the human platform? How is the stylized, ritualistic, formulaic and conventional character of delivery, facial expression, verbal style, and acting translated into social mediatic capacities mobilized and developed through radio (and to some extent television and cinema)? Although we might witness more “realistic” and “natural” performances in these broadcast media, these performances continue to be based on mimetic reproductions of material, surface properties (eg. for musicians, inflection, tone, timbre, rhythm, and so on). Rather than the hidden meaning (as value, as the accumulable content of “life”) that short story writers tried to perfect the craft of conveying, such performances continue to take and be carried away with sensuous pleasure in the material of the medium (language, sound) — what would be decried as excessive ornamentation. Besides such sensuous play, such performances also continue to display the perception of another level or order of event (what used to be a divine or supra-human plane of significances on which the meaning of social

34) Raul Pertierra writes that people “flocked to EDSA to participate in a live spectacle” [2002: 60], in which people acted both as audience and as *dramatis personae*.

35) See my analysis of the 1986 People Power uprising in my *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* [Tadiar 2004]. Also see Vicente L. Rafael’s analysis of the role of cell phone technologies in People Power II, “The Cellphone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Philippines” [2003].

experience could be located).

Rafael's understanding of the nineteenth century *komedya* as a kind of technology — specifically as a technical medium for the domestication, negotiation, and processing of the mysterious powers of the foreign through the vernacular — is particularly illuminating in this regard. He argues that the *komedya* produced “telecommunicative effects ... bringing distances up close and broadcasting these in a language accessible to those who heard it,” and in this way constituted audiences not wholly within clerical or state control, paving the way for a more proper nationalist imagination [Rafael 2003].³⁶⁾ What I find especially illuminating in Rafael's account for this context is his astute observation of the way “spectral signposts” of Europe and the foreign power it represented were grafted onto the bodies, costumes and speech of the actors — in other words, the way actors acted as a medium of representation and transmission of codes and signs of extrinsic power. On the one hand, in costume, actors assumed a telecommunicative agency that Rafael likens to photographs' capacity to “convey the sense of nearness of what was absent.” On the other hand, in their seemingly atonal, non-affective rhythmic delivery of their lines, they served as “a medium for broadcasting the vernacular.” Rafael's description of this mediatic agency is worth quoting at length:

The sonic quality of the actors' voices made it seem as if the language of the play were mechanically reproduced rather than organically produced by the speakers. That is, their voices did not seem to express a self behind and in front of its words. Instead, no one in particular inhabited their speech. The words they spoke belonged neither to them nor to the characters they portrayed. Rather, they served as the media for the passage and transmission of language that they received from the prompter or *dictador*, literally one who dictates. [Rafael 2005: 115]

The apparent lack of a self that is conveyed by these actors in their seemingly “mechanically reproduced” performance as well as the lack of creative originality attributed to migrant musicians can certainly be taken as evidence of a broader postcolonial failure to accede to the normative subjective agency of citizen-man. However, we might instead view these forms of telecommunicative and mediatic agency as betokening a different (rather than lesser, less human) form of being, similar to the way that Flusser sees the actions and consciousness of the “non-Occidental,” minority branch of Brazilian society as an alternative, mythical form of being that conflicts with the dominant form of historical being of the majority branch of its Western, bourgeois elite [Flusser 2002: 119–122]. For Flusser, the abyss between such conflicting branches within Brazilian society demonstrates the impossibility of democracy in the sense of

36) Rafael's argument both amplifies and departs from Benedict Anderson's famous argument about the role of print-capitalism in the constitution of national imaginations by showing the role of older vernacular theatrical genres such as the *komedya* in calling forth new self-imagining “audiences” (as social identities) into being. “Before the consolidation of ilustrado nationalism, comedias broached the possibility of intermittently imagined communities founded on the recognition of the foreign lodged in the vernacular.”

“a constructive dialogue between the two forms of being” [*ibid.*: 120]. It demonstrates the uneven and contradictory progression of the domination of the logic of the technical image, which he argues is tending toward the making of “a new society of programmed and programming functionaries ... the totalitarianism of apparatuses” [*ibid.*: 123].³⁷⁾ While Flusser continues to maintain an understanding of freedom based on an implicit model of sovereign human agency (calling in effect for a reappropriation of this agency from its alienated form in the apparatuses of a programmed, technocratic society), my own view is that those forms of non-human agency and bodily, perceptual faculties and capacities, which are remaindered by the normative protocols of capitalist democracy, persist and even proliferate in transformed ways as collective means of life, bearing democratic potentials and indeed forms of freedom whose exercise can be fleetingly gleaned in the popular revolts of People Power in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

While I cannot fully expand on this claim here, I would go so far as to suggest that the dramatic, remarkable role of radio, television and cell phone technologies in the first two People Power events show the operation of modes of social being and communication, with their concomitant forms of aesthetic perceptual and sensorial practice, that anticipate the new social media technologies of the contemporary moment. In a sense, both events exemplify a kind of tentative *reverse subsumption* and transformation of the technologies of political rule: broadcast technologies of radio and television, in the first, and cellular communication technology in the second. Built out of extant outmoded social faculties, which Flusser associates with mythical being and magical consciousness and which, not unrelatedly, Taussig associates with a mimetic faculty reinvigorated under modernity and forms of sympathetic magic potentiated by postcoloniality, the mediatic capacities of reciprocal, even multidirectional transmission and networked connection that characterize the use of media for political mobilization during these events can be argued to have developed out of a subterranean or “hidden” social history of communicative technologies, which are not encoded or reified in the dominant technical hardware valorized and produced as means of production for capital (but which they nevertheless also course through, supplement, support as well as interrupt and contend with). I am not arguing that these mediatic capacities have any intrinsic or inherently greater democratic potential than the forms of human being and relation presumed and privileged by the ideal of citizen-man. I am, however, trying to expand the parameters by which we can recognize and understand the possible social relations and kinds of social and personal being that might comprise and define democratic life.

Claims about the waning of regimes of normativity focused on the formation of citizen-man

37) “The absurdity of the new way of being consists in the fact that man no longer plays games for others. Instead, the game is played for its own sake. The game becomes independent of man; it follows its own rules determined by chance; it becomes an autopathic game of permutations, thus transforming humans into game pieces, into numbers, and into functionaries. Programmed human beings — and the game programs themselves — are becoming increasingly well programmed for the programming of the game” [Flusser 2002: 123].

(the so-called withering of civil society and the decline of disciplinary regimes) in the post-industrial, post-liberal democratic polities of the advanced global economy may eclipse the proliferation and transformative effects and inventions of social mediation built out of these formally remaindered yet vital social practices of communication. In the present context of the redefinition of citizenship within the terms of an expanding neoliberalist rationality, we need an archaeology of seemingly defunct forms of life, forms of personhood and sociality, which have been remaindered by a dominant history and understanding of democracy. Such an endeavor will help us move beyond what appears, in current debates about the relation between social media and democracy, to be the persistent restriction and closure of our imagination of revolutionary freedom in the celebration of the ever-advancing technological apparatuses of capitalist forms of life.

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