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Anjeline de Dios

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moral politics in the Philippines will further develop from the book, which will give us a new understanding of Philippine politics beyond the elite democracy arguments.

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Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America

CHRISTINE BACAREZA BALANCE

Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, xviii+230pp.

Tropical Renditions by Christine Bacareza Balance tracks the sounding of Filipino America through its social and cultural geographies of popular music. These geographies traverse three conceptual boundaries that have long constricted the critical understanding of popular music and culture from the United States to (and through) the Philippines: the geopolitical distinction between nation-states; the sensorial separation of visual and sonic forms of cultural production; and the social-aesthetic divisions of music-making as creation, interpretation, and imitation. Assuming a conceptual stance of “disobedient listening,” Balance redraws these boundaries by resisting conclusions made by two discourses dominant in racial-cultural politics. The first, a holdover from imperial colonialism, reads Filipino music as mere mimicry through the lenses of visibility and authenticity. The second is its antithesis: a nationalist project that seeks to render Filipino culture visible through a formalistic categorization of its content as culturally distinctive. Rather than parse what Filipinoness means in light of this essentialist problematic, Balance instead tunes into what is made as Filipino in America through the performative, improvisatory, and participatory, in translocal and alternative spaces of community that continually “[unsettle] dominant discourses of race, performance, and U.S. popular music” (p. 26).

To accomplish this, Balance analyzes four case studies frequently misread or unread by colonial as well as nationalist perspectives on Filipino American popular music. The first chapter is a profile of Invisibl Skratch Piklz, a turntablist-DJ collective from the Bay Area whose futuristic musical aesthetic and artistic branding resist direct reference to their Filipino heritage. The second chapter contemplates karaoke from two disparate ends of Filipino American musical labor—performance art and social activity at house parties—to foreground its ability to generate alternative spaces of socialization and vocal pedagogy. The third chapter explores the musical oeuvre of the renowned Filipino American writer Jessica Hagedorn, whose collaboration with the multiracial and multi-genre collective the West Coast Gangster Choir produced a rich rock ‘n’ roll poetics of Third World immigrant subjectivity in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the final chapter, these themes of translocality, sociability, and performativity are located in two cultural histories of Pinoise

rock, pop, and hiphop from around 1995 to 2012: independently-run Filipino-American music festivals in the Bay Area and the overseas performance mobilities of Manila-based indie bands and films making their way through gig and festival circuits in various US cities.

By and large, Balance succeeds admirably in meeting her intellectual objective of “flipping the beat” of cultural analyses of Filipino America. By shifting her scalar focus from the bipolar model of the nation-state (“America” versus “the Philippines”) to the heterogeneous terrain of urban and suburban locales—in New York, Daly City, San Francisco, Manila, and Olongapo—the work registers the significance of performative musical practices that would otherwise be ignored by the dominant scholarly preoccupation with what is categorically and authentically “Filipino.” Likewise, Balance ably demonstrates the necessity of a phonographic approach attentive to music’s “sonic, literary, visual, and bodily” (p. 19) aspects, particularly through the chapters that bookend her case studies with close readings of films, documentaries, and photographs that address the peculiar contradictions of Filipino invisibility and foreignness in the North American cultural imagination. The assortment of popular music personages and practices offered in the book helpfully expands the scholarly purview of what count as legitimate subjects of study in diasporic and migrant music, eschewing explicitly racialized forms in favor of marginalized circuits and communities that continually re-inscribe “new affiliations, politics, and ways of thinking” about/through race and identity (p. 28).

Beyond tangential mentions at each chapter’s close, however, the deeper interconnections and implications of these affiliations, politics, and ways of thinking remain relatively unexplored. One wonders how the greater import of these case studies could have been more strongly delineated had they been compared with one another rather than presented serially as alternative examples to the limiting tropes of both scholarly and popular cultural criticism. Though a comparative internal synthesis could draw from the many intriguing lines of inquiry sketched throughout the work, two themes that cross-cut Balance’s case studies—translocality and, to a lesser extent, temporality—present a promising itinerary for developing the intellectual agenda of listening disobediently not just *against*, but *toward*, a tropical rendition of race, place, and identity in the performative register of popular music.

First, an in-depth notion of translocality as a socioeconomic and institutional dynamic is implicit, but never comprehensively addressed, in Balance’s accounts of music-making sites across various cities and communities in the Philippines and the United States. There is something of a missed opportunity to articulate how these micro-geographies of performance intersect with what Georgina Born (2012) calls the other planes of musical mediation. Born identifies four interrelated contexts of activity and signification in the mediation of music: the first involves the physical, affective, and embodied dimension of performance; the second pertains to publics of belonging aggregated by the participation in the first plane; the third refers to music’s stratified formations of sociocultural through and beyond the second; and the fourth indicates the industrial and institutional

conditions that enable (or discourage) certain processes of musical production. The idea of a US-Philippine musical translocality in *Tropical Renditions* is configured primarily according to the first, second, and third planes of mediation—the intimate socialities of musical participation and genre culture-formation through the performative practice of “Filipinoness”—but does not confront the ways in which this rich sociospatial diversity of DJ contests, house parties, poetry readings, community events, arts festivals, and club gigs might be mediated by a broader translocal context of musical consumption and production. For instance, how are the listening practices of fandom that informed Jessica Hagedorn’s performance as rock ’n’ roll poet shared by those that animate the stylings of Filipino families enjoying karaoke—and how does this labor of listening subsequently accrue differential value in the purported spatial divide between public performance and private enjoyment, through the performativities of guerrilla “art” and mainstream “leisure”? How do the spaces of the DJ contest and the international industry festival legitimate the labor of Filipinos as performing artists, circulating a persistent, hegemonic ideal of artistic value—whether or not they are explicitly branded according to their racial-national identity? Are there qualitative differences between the performance mobilities of Pinoise and other, more overtly Filipino, artists in the mainstream and traditional categories, which emerge in the translocal space of the Filipino-American city and perhaps attest to the valence of popular music by Filipinos as a cultural export to the United States? In answering the latter, Balance makes a critical distinction between a *community* and *scene*, similar to Born’s differentiation between the second (genre-based) and third (identity-based) planes of musical mediation; taken further, such a nuancing adds much-needed precision to the understanding of translocality as encompassing different, and not always congruent, scales and spaces of affiliation.

Second, Balance’s study offers a unique space from which to contemplate a temporality that emerges in the translocal geographies of music between the United States and the Philippines. Balance’s prose thrums with a vitality and contemporaneity appropriate to the subjects of its study. What emerges in these translocal scenes—that listens against predictable tropes not only of place but also time—as life stages, generations, and epochs? Among these modes of disobedient listening, are there perhaps contrapuntal rhythms to be perceived between (for instance) the “Filipino futurism” of Invisbl Skratch Piklz’s sonic abstractions and the ever-replenishing nostalgia of Filipinos’ karaoke singing; or the generational differences between current Pinoy indie music acts and the throwback appeal of traditional and mainstream Filipino performers, within the US translocal and diasporic context? How might these contradictory rhythms flip the beat of what we perceive as the continuing history of US-Philippine relations? While these questions are yet to be addressed in a more direct and thematic way, *Tropical Renditions* offers a script from which to begin rehearsing a multiscalar phonography of place, race, and music that is “alien, experimental, archipelagic and moving” (p. 186)—that is, relentlessly and productively disobedient.

Anjeline de Dios

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The Hybrid Tsinoy: Challenges of Hybridity and Homogeneity as Sociocultural Constructs among the Chinese in the Philippines

JULIET LEE UYTANLET

Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016, xx+261pp.

How do present-day Tsinoy (colloquial term for Chinese living in the Philippines) self-identify? How can Christian churches in the Philippines use this knowledge to better carry out their mission to Christianize them? These are the two main questions that drive this latest work on the ethnic identities of Chinese in the Philippines. Sub-questions include: Do they see themselves as “Filipino,” “Chinese,” or cultural hybrids? What factors help them to identify more with one identity than another? Divided into six chapters, *The Hybrid Tsinoy* specifically focuses on Chinese and Chinese mestizos in Manila and utilizes an ethnographic method (e.g., conducting surveys, using participant observation) to analyze how 86 respondents of varying gender, class, immigration status, religion, and generation understand, negotiate, construct, and reconstruct their ethnic identities.

Chapter 1 spells out the aims, goals, research methods, significance, and limitations of the study. It also has a section on the definition of key terms and a review of related literature. The second chapter provides an overview—from the Spanish colonial period to the present—of how Chinese and their family members have been categorized and racialized. It demonstrates how through time the local population and the state “liked and disliked, welcomed and unwelcomed” them (p. 55). Chapter 3 discusses the different theoretical frameworks on ethnicity used for the study. Examples include Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s concept of hybridity and Fredrik Barth’s situational identity model. Chapter 4 can be considered the “meat” of the study, in which the author presents the results of her investigation. She divides the respondents into six categories: Old Immigrants (OI), New Immigrants (NI), Tsinoy, and first-, second-, and third-generation Chinese mestizos (CM1, CM2, CM3, respectively). Accounts that are included in this chapter include how the OIs viewed the NIs, how Tsinoy encountered resistance from family members to date or marry Filipinos, how CMs of different generations self-identified, and how Tsinoy experienced living as an ethnic minority in the Philippines (as well as abroad for those who emigrated). Uytanlet