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The Terms of War and Bontoc Eulogy:

Studies in Re-Narrativizing Archival Forms

CRISTINA MARTINEZ-JUAN

Abstract

This article will focus on the work of two media artists who have repositioned Philippine archival materials by using them in deliberately transgressive narrative forms. Terms of War by Jovi Juan repurposes archival photos and texts to give shape to the debates surrounding the British industrialist Nicholas Loney. The interactive piece documents the far-reaching progress/destruction that resulted when Loney is said to have single-handedly introduced industrial sugar production into the economy of the Philippines in the 1850s. But rather than ‘telling’ the ‘story’ with a ‘narrator’, it is presented in an open-ended and non-linear digital form that breaks the narrative boundaries of Loney’s story and lays bare the constructed-ness of history by achieving a form that allows for associative responses, polysemy and nuance. Bontoc Eulogy is a 1995 drama mockumentary directed by Marlon Fuentes and Bridget Yearen. The film uses archival material to reconstruct the story of the St Louis World’s Fair in 1904 and weaves it into a personal account of an immigrant Filipino trying to trace the whereabouts of his long-lost grandfather from the archival remains of what was once called the ‘Philippine village’—a 47-acre site that for seven months became home to more than 1,000 Filipinos put on display. As this paper will show, the film not only acts as an indictment

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of America's new taste for empire, but it also creates a space for interrogating namelessness and lack of agency through the manipulation of cultural memory and fictive form.

Let us stop thinking of photographs as nouns, and start treating them as verbs, transitive verbs. They do things. We need to ask not only what they are of, and what they are about, but also what they were created to do. And when they are preserved or digitized, published, or in other ways repurposed and recirculated, we must ask how their material nature has been altered, and in the process, how the relationships embedded in them have changed, why, and to what end. Archival lessons from these alternative narratives teach that we must [...] expand the range of questions we ask.

– Joan M. Schwartz, “The Archival Garden: Photographic Plantings, Interpretive Choices, and Alternative Narratives”

In “The Archival Garden”, Joan M. Schwartz raises the possibility of viewing the archive not as a noun but as a verb, a provocative analogy that highlights a contrast between treating the archive as a closed repository of immobile and weighted objects, and a transformative, open-ended entity that organically produces, reproduces and consumes different forms of knowledge. In this article, I use Schwartz’s call for an alternative interpretation of the archive as a starting point from which to discuss two instances of archival reframing, a reflexive dismantling, if you will, of the architecture of more static approaches to the acquisition, use and display of archival material.

The broader practical and theoretical debates that surround the archive are exhaustive and well documented. Despite beginning life as an objective science premised on mechanical record-keeping, preserving and cataloguing, the discourse surrounding archival practice has since expanded to include a host of reflections on the archivist and the archival researcher as key players in the mediation and representation of facts. Since the 1960s, this archival turn has been informed by a number of seminal texts, including works by E.H. Carr, Michel Foucault and Ranajit Guha. Despite differing in their aims and emphases, each of these figures explores the broader contestations that surround knowledge production and its relation to power and history. To answer Schwartz’s call, however, I want to focus on Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, using it as a conceptual scaffolding for my analyses.¹ In his fascinating study of archival repositories, constructed around Freud and his practice of psychoanalysis, Derrida teases out a series of concepts around the *arkhe*,

three of which I will use to explore “verbal” approaches to archival studies: the archive as an inscribed but mediated object, its linguistically generative architecture and, most importantly, its futures.

In order to unpack these concepts more thoroughly, I have chosen to focus on two case studies. The first is Jovi Juan’s *The Terms of War* (2001), for its ability to break open the idea of ‘narration’ and its incorporation of historical events into a fixed linguistic structure. I then move on to an analysis of *Bontoc Eulogy* (1995) by Marlon Fuentes, focusing on its attempts to consider the creative and symbolic futures of the archival world, a unique response to an archival imperative that Derrida framed as “the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow”.² In each of these cases, the artists seek to liberate their chosen media—archival photographs, digital copies of manuscripts, ethnographic film clips—and re-establish them as social forms that bridge historical narratives and future imaginations.

Dismantling the Architecture of Archival Narratives

I begin with *The Terms of War*. First exhibited at the Viper Festival in Basel, Switzerland, this interactive digital media piece is a 6 × 4 metre projection of every available primary and secondary source on Nicholas Loney, a British Vice-Consul posted in Iloilo, the Philippines, from 1856 to his untimely death in 1869. The collage consists of digitized reproductions of consular records, government statistics, marriage certificates, economic reports, letters, photos, drawings, land titles and even some of Loney’s poetry. The viewer interacts with the piece by floating the mouse over the collage and triggering events on its surface. The tiled pieces are arranged in no particular order, but rather programmed in an algorithmic loop that reacts to mouse movements. Underneath the collage is a blank narrative space, populated in real time. At the end of the experience, the viewer produces a narrative based upon their choices, and the individually selected archival materials are assembled to reflect their movements through a vast archival landscape. By adopting this approach to archival narration, the work seeks to question the linguistically closed systems of meaning that often surround archival material. The interactive medium allows for a range of data and conflicting interpretations to coexist in one space. Rather than revealing answers through an omniscient univocal narrator, the story is assembled tile by tile, screen by screen, in whichever direction the user moves, thereby creating the visual experience of a seamless image without an edge. As a result, the story that is eventually constructed is a near synaptic experience of associative responses specific to

the individual and all of his/her biases, positions and affective tendencies—a singular narrative event constructed in real time and almost pushed beyond mediation.

Given that the threads that enmesh Loney's person and work are full of fissures, silences and assumptions, this innovative approach to archival display is especially fitting. Was he a hero or a villain? Did he bring about an economic miracle by introducing large-scale industrial sugar production to the Philippine economy, or did he destroy local entrepreneurship by introducing a monocrop economy that continues to have dire consequences to this day? There are no easy answers to these questions. The Philippine social and economic context into which Loney was inserted was already incredibly complicated. The country was in its final century of 300 years of Spanish rule and the last Galleon ship had long sailed between Manila and Acapulco. Moreover, the restrictive—although often circumvented—Spanish trade practices were officially unravelling, and the independence movements in Mexico and Latin America had begun to sever the trans-Pacific trading artery between Spain and Manila.

In 1834, under increasing pressure from the growing free trade movement in Europe, Spain officially agreed to open Manila to foreign merchants. They also agreed, in 1855, to open three other ports outside of Manila for direct international trade. A year later, Loney was appointed British Vice-Consul to Iloilo City on Panay Island in the Western Visayas region, which strategically faced the South China Sea and the busy trading routes between Hong Kong, Singapore and India. The 30-year-old young man from Plymouth, England seemed the perfect choice for the role. He was single, adventurous, fluent in Spanish and had experience in export trading in Asia, having worked for the British trading firm Ker and Co. in Singapore. He also had a good network of associates, from the Spanish Recollect priests in Negros to the Manila Chinese merchants from whom he bought piece goods for his 'sideline' and the Spanish mestizo elites of the Visayas. He was said to be incredibly hardworking, persistent and both ruthless and generous.

The primary sources featured in *The Terms of War* depict Loney in a number of ways—sometimes at odds with each other. One of the main arguments against the perception of him as Iloilo's economic miracle worker stems from the city's ambiguous socio-economic past. Throughout its history, Iloilo and, more broadly, the island of Panay have been depicted as either one of the most developed economies in the Philippines, or, in the same period, a backward provincial centre with a silt-filled coast, a small-scale hand-weaving industry and a flailing economy in subsistence agriculture. All of these references to Panay's socio-economic history can be found in

The Terms of War, including Miguel de Loarca's *Relacion de las Yslas Filipinas* (1582), Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609) and *Estadistica de Filipinas* (1854), which contains figures for goods exported from the port of Iloilo to Manila before Loney's arrival in 1856. Then there are the detailed consular reports, an initial 72-page manuscript sent to Consul Farren in Manila and several follow-ups, each containing data that speaks to the influence of Loney's presence in the area. The figures compiled by Loney in his 1861 consular report, for example, show that, in 1855, sugar shipped to Manila from Iloilo scarcely reached 750 tons (12,000 piculs). Two years later, shipments jumped to 1,800 tons (22,800 piculs). By 1859, when the first direct exportation had occurred, shipments rose to 5,427 tons (86,832 piculs) and to 7,048 tons (112,765 piculs) in 1860. As a result, sugar became Iloilo's biggest export. To accompany these reports, the work also includes valuations of cotton goods imported from Manchester and Glasgow into Iloilo. Additionally, and just to complicate things with domestic affect, the piece also includes the letters written by Loney to his family, containing affectionate quips, occasional poems and various first-hand observations of the city.

Given this wealth of data, it is unsurprising that several narratives have been constructed around the socio-economic history of Iloilo. Yet, rather than constraining the reader's reaction towards a conclusion similar to a narrator's, *The Terms of War* allows readers to visualize its contradictions and reach their own conclusions. Does one go with Alfred McCoy's claim that Iloilo was a "dynamic [...] commercial entrepot" second only to Manila in size and importance, and that "Loney was not the architect of Iloilo's prosperity, but [...] its assassin?"³ Should one believe the assertion that Loney copied local textile designs and had them cheaply manufactured in Manchester to flood the local island market? Or that he lured the local weavers to abandon their looms and move to the neighbouring island of Negros to participate in quick but ultimately disastrous money-making ventures as sugarcane cutting *sacadas*? Alternatively, there are reasons to look into Filomeno Aguilar's argument that the demise of the textile industry in Panay during the late 19th century was not the result of Loney's intervention, but rather the newly installed Cabecilla system, which allowed Chinese merchants to import textiles directly to Iloilo and bypass the wholesale trading of the Spanish mestizo elite.⁴ Was Loney simply taking advantage of an already dying industry by redirecting displaced labour and capital towards the production of sugar?

In addition to socio-economic data, Loney's dual role as a British official and a private entrepreneur—first, as an agent for the British firm Ker and Co. and later as the owner of his own Hacienda in Talisay, Negros—creates an

entire web of entangled motives over personal gain and British mercantilist nationalism. As a British official, Consul John William Perry Farren made it clear to Loney that he was required to “do all in [his] power, by [his] friendly influence with the authorities, to [...] promote the development of the commercial resources, and the extension of British manufactures, in the zone of these possessions, of which Iloilo may be regarded as a centre.” But as an enterprising young man, to what extent were his actions the result of a sense of duty? Or were they merely informed by self-authentication and personal monetary gain? To what extent is it possible to draw a line between individual agency and Loney’s patriotic responsibility to extend Britain’s empire through informal channels?

Finally, Loney’s legacy is further muddled by a posthumous archival assemblage of praise and vilification. It does not help that he died so young and, indeed, so tragically, leaving behind a young wife and child. In a letter dated 2 May 1869, a nephew describes Loney’s death as follows:

You must have heard by last mail the sad news of Uncle Nicholas’ death. I had a long letter from him describing his Canlaon Expedition dated the 15th of April so that his illness must have been very short. We have only just heard of it and can hardly realize it yet. When he hurt his foot, some time ago, he was laid up in the house for some time without exercise and consequently got very fat and the sudden violent exercise he had the other day going up Canlaon must have brought on the gastric fever of which he died, but I can’t say for certain as we have had no particulars yet.⁵

A string of eulogies and accolades immediately followed: “all Yloilo followed him to his grave and that over 100 carriages, besides lots of buffalo carts filled with people, were there.” One year later, a large monument was erected over his grave, which read: “In memory of Nicholas Loney of Plymouth, England, who was H.M. Vice-Consul in this Port, Died the 22nd of April 1869, Age 41 Years. This monument is erected by his numerous friends, Spaniards, foreigners and natives, as a slight testimony of the esteem and remembrance in which his memory will be held by all who knew him.” In March 1904, the Municipal Council of Iloilo issued a resolution that renamed the quay along the Iloilo River as Muelle Loney. And in 1981, luminaries from the Philippine sugar industry raised money to erect a statue of Loney at the end of the Muelle. According to Sir John Bowring, Governor-General of Hong Kong, Loney, “more than to any other individual, the development of the trade of Panay will be due.” Even then-President Ferdinand Marcos dubbed Loney as the “Father of the Philippine Sugar Industry”.

This praise, however, was not universal. The first monument eventually fell into disrepair, and its replacement was blown up with dynamite in 1981. Prior to this, in 1972, Roman Catholic Columban missionaries in Negros published 10,000 copies of *Social Volcano*, an account of Loney's life and its implications for Iloilo. His 13 years in power, it argued, had "killed the city, raped the province, destroyed all local industry and initiative, and had set up an economic system which ensured a life of increasing poverty for the vast majority of the people, and super profits for the rich."⁶ And the list of scathing assessments goes on.

The Terms of War invites viewers to plot their way through these opposing archival materials and subject them to interrogation. In doing so, it produces an interesting dynamic between archival material, associative selection and the unique biases of the viewer. When the piece was exhibited at Arte Digitale, Cuba, in 2002, the general landscape of these narrative tracings was somewhat telling: Cuba and the Philippines share a history of sugar, either as an oppressive form of monoculture—depending on class and race—or the source of a capitalist boom. More specifically, the tracings echoed a series of longstanding claims about the evils of export crops, which presented Loney as the villain behind the scheme. When the piece was exhibited in California at the Art in Motion Festival later that year, the majority of tracings focused on the effects of photographic nostalgia. Comments ranged from surprise ('There were American and British companies in Iloilo that early?') to regional pride. The piece has yet to be shown in the United Kingdom, but if it were to be shown in Plymouth, where Loney was born and his descendants still live, would it transform itself into a genealogical tool? Alternatively, if it were shown in Iloilo, where Loney's statue still stands, would viewers focus on pre-industrialist nostalgia?

In addition to highlighting the non-linear nature of narrativization, *The Terms of War* also addresses the ongoing problem of gaps and bordered frames in closed systems of archival display. Usually constructed by historians, these historical narratives and their gaps are all too often seen as external to the realm of archival practice. Whilst historians are generally excused when they offer readings of archives that are closed, self-sufficient and autonomous—narratives that derive their unity from the formal inter-relations of the available materials—this deferment in turn raises a series of questions for archivists: Who determines what is available? What factors create the possibility of acquisition? Are archivists truly 'innocent' when creating an archive? Is the act of building a repository of materials simply an attempt to conserve what falls into their laps? In order to answer these questions, the prevailing notion that the acquisition of materials is bound up

in their ‘value’ as historical sources needs to be unpacked. Whose history? And value for whom? In this regard, Roy Schaeffer is right to question the claim that archivists are simply saving what is deemed to ‘historically valuable’. Are they to be the values of the records creator, the nation state, the archivist or someone else?

When viewed from this perspective, the task is not simply to view archival narratives as ‘mediated’, but to critique the process of acquisition—and the canonization of archival material that becomes the basis for socially constructed notions of historical truth. New documents are added to the archive(s), records are destroyed, and access restrictions are placed and lifted. As F. Gerald Ham notes, the “historiographical trends of today are the acquisitions policies of tomorrow”. Because they appraise, arrange and describe, archivists become active shapers of the records for which they are responsible. Numerous tacit narratives are hidden in the acts of categorization, codification and labelling. As such, the interrogation of archival practice must also involve making these silences transparent. In response to these developments, there have been various attempts to expand the role of an archivist to include: actively filling in the gaps, increasing the archival representation of historically oppressed peoples and holding the archive to scrutiny, including the practices of record-keeping, the contents of archives, and the history they purport to hold. There is also an ever-increasing emphasis on using modern technology to provide easy and centralized access to increasingly complex and decentralized holdings. Indeed, what use are expansive repositories when only a select few can access them?

The Terms of War attempts to address the problem of archival gaps and access architecturally. The interactive piece is intentionally left open-ended to allow additional archival material to be incorporated into its digital fabric: photos, land titles, oral histories and so forth. In doing so, it suggests an unfixed space for further inscription. Recent additions include more of Loney’s personal musings: an ode that he wrote to Philippine sugar and facsimiles of his letters, including replies to his younger sister Nan. In this respect, the work’s archival format, both in its narrative elusiveness and its open-endedness, echoes Jacques Derrida’s “archontic” expansion by collective enterprise. By deconstructing the ‘objective’ voice of the historian or even the informed archivist, the work reveals the inherent biases and latent power relations that underpin the ‘story’ of Loney. In doing so, it simultaneously attempts to open up the constructed-ness of history and achieve a form that allows for both polysemy and nuance. In this sense, *The Terms of War* does not relativize the truth, but rather dislocates its narrative form, disconnecting a series of fixed linguistic structures and their ability to ‘tell’ history.

***Bontoc Eulogy* and Postcolonial ‘Archive Fever’**

Bontoc Eulogy is a 1995 film written and directed by Marlon Fuentes with Bridget Yearen. In this 56-minute, black-and-white film produced by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the United States, the unnamed narrator is a Filipino-American immigrant who speaks about the loss of his grandfathers: one to death in the Philippine Revolutionary War against Spain, and another when he simply went abroad. The narrator’s meandering recollections of the place he once called home eventually morphs into the quest for the grandfather he lost to the diaspora, a Bontoc Igorot and one of the 1,100 Filipino men and women brought to America to become living exhibits at the St Louis World’s Fair in 1904.

And so Markod’s story begins with a young man from a remote village in the Cordillera Mountains, which was colonized in the early 19th century by the Americans after 300 years of Spanish rule. Despite having a pregnant wife, Markod is persuaded to go to America to find fame and fortune. He is assured that he will be back in time for the birth of his child. Whilst the narrator initially speaks of Markod’s adventures, his boredom and eventual despair become increasingly apparent as the Igorots at the Fair mindlessly re-enact rituals on cue. The narrative arc of the story peaks when Markod wanders around the 1,200-acre site of the Fair, crossing the 47-acre line of the ‘Philippine Village’. Here he is accosted and nearly beaten to death by a group of white men and one collaborator, a Filipino Scout. Markod, however, beheads the Filipino collaborator to vindicate his tribe’s honour before disappearing without a trace. The film ends with the narrator still searching for his grandfather in the archives. Looking for him in the remnants of scientific specimens in natural history museums or in snatches of tales from Igorot men moving on to work in other World’s Fairs. Nevertheless, the inconclusive ending is ultimately hopeful: while the narrator may not locate his grandfather, maybe his children will.

On first encounter, the film appears to include everything necessary to captivate an audience: melodrama, pathos, a haunting soundtrack and expert visual callisthenics. The movie tells a good story and that it is presented as true engenders real feelings of empathy and loss. However, it is only with the closing credits that we realize that the story is entirely made up. Although it is “inspired by actual events”, the film makes clear that “any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental”. Whatever happened to the documentary as form? Yet it is precisely in this double take that Fuentes reveals his ‘archival imperative’. In recent debates on archive theory, there has been an increased emphasis on “archival activism”.⁷ This development not only examines how archival traditions have been used to reinforce unequal

power structures, it also emphasizes the importance of ‘going against the grain’ and actively working against the interests of existing hierarchies. Amongst other things, *Bontoc Eulogy* has been praised for its reflexive, ethnographic approach. Situating itself within the sub-genre of the pseudo documentary or mockumentary, the film seeks to deconstruct colonial superstructures of knowledge production through lens-based media. As a genre, mock documentaries are not new and a significant amount of critical work has been produced on the form. What makes *Bontoc Eulogy* subversive, however, is that Fuentes takes the evidentiary tools and products of colonizing power and repurposes them for his praxis. By turning the familiar and ‘authoritative’ conventions of documentary realism on their head, the film exposes the ideological biases both of the documentary as a genre and the imaging practices used to create it. Indeed, Fuentes goes to great pains to achieve this semblance of ethnographic significance and, by extension, the aforementioned archival imperative. In this respect, he is infected with what Derrida calls the “*mal d’archive*”: “a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.”⁸

In a postcolonial context, however, this compulsion becomes almost perverse. Faced with an irrepressible desire for an authenticating source and yet finding no record of a named character who speaks in his own voice, Fuentes sutures, duplicates and overlays to produce something almost Frankenstein-esque, full of disembodied fragments stitched together by a compelling, albeit fictional, narrative thread. This feverish return to a place of absolute commencement is thwarted at every point and, as a result, Fuentes responds with either a visual trick, a sleight of hand or an elaborate reorchestration. The filmmaker, for example, was unable to find any recordings of Igorots at the 1904 Fair, so he used the voice of Fermina Bagwan, a female Bontoc elder living in Los Angeles instead. Moreover, the text she read was subject to several trans-overlays. Whilst the original material was spoken in Finalig by Chief Imoaley during the 1906 Coney Island Fair, Imoaley’s recording was translated into English, archived and then reused by Fuentes as Markod’s voice, now converted back into Finalig, read by Ms Bagwan and then modulated to make it sound androgynous and old. The overall effect is convincing. The viewer hears Markod’s disembodied voice, which is retrieved from the past and made to speak convincingly of his present. This occurs mostly due to the ‘quality’ of the sound and our inability to understand the source language. Moreover, the fictive grandfather, who is a memorializing construct of the nine Filipino people recorded dead in official reports from the 1904

Fair, is created from an assemblage of several unnamed men from archival photos, random film stock and an actor named Enrico Obusan, one of Fuentes' childhood friends. The spectral instances of these different manifestations of Markod are bound together into a singular identity and made believable by the rhetor, a documentary convention of using a narrative speaking voice that hovers over the images and identifies. When the narrator is eventually exposed as unreliable, the audience's affective investment in the character of Markod becomes hard to disentangle.

This archival fetishism is taken even further in one of the most spectacular sideshows at the 1904 Fair: the dog-killing rituals performed by the Igorots. According to newspaper reports from the period, nothing else seemed to attract and horrify the viewing public more than dog-eating. In the film, brutal dog-killing scenes start at 33:98 and last for 26 seconds. Whilst it is hard to tell from the disorienting close-up exactly where the action is taking place, the absence of patina on the black-and-white film stock suggests that it is a 20th-century production. There is no contextualizing ritual filmed to bookend the scene and one cannot see who is doing it: just a hand cutting the throat and slicing out entrails. In a recent interview, Tommy Hafalla, one of the cinematographers, discusses this scene and its significance to the film. Contingency, pragmatism and the Filipino family web of *paki-usap*, he notes, all play a role in this somewhat jarring instance of archival fever and creative impulse taken to a place that borders on the unconscionable. The 8-mm camera used to shoot the 26-second clip was sent from Los Angeles to Baguio via Markod's wife—or at least the man who plays him. The wife is played by Hafalla's sister. Hafalla's clip and some vintage photos from a local museum in the Cordilleras were then shipped back to Los Angeles and spliced into the movie. Fuentes, faced with no ethnographic footage of what was said to be an almost weekly occurrence at the 1904 Fair, commissioned a scene in the only place where it was culturally and even legally possible to recreate. Even if there had been photos available, they would not have been enough. Fuentes needed the scene to unfold over time to induce a real-time gag reaction. Does the director implicate himself with the spectacle-hungry audience at the World's Fair? Or is his commission an attempt to satisfy this irrepressible desire to return to the origin—to the place where ritual dog-killing has 'naturally' occurring localized cultural and ritual contexts that are alien and inaccessible to a foreign spectator? There is no attempt to explain away the scene in the film. There are no auto-ethnographic caveats that attempt to show how the Igorots might have viewed dog-eating as a spiritual exercise in appropriating animal power. It is simply laid bare, unapologetic in all its grainy, gory self.

When viewed from this perspective, even the frenetic use of stock photos and saturating them with time and movement becomes an exercise in reanimation, a return from the stillness of the dead. Fuentes manipulates the static nature of the photograph by transitioning between different depths of field, angles and foci. He also manipulates the constructed nature of the photograph by removing the processes of image selection, cropping and angle from the shot and by posing a series of questions: what are the borders of this pure occurrence? What has been left out? What happens when you foreground a previously unimportant detail? There have been many post-colonial readings of Philippine ethnographic photography from the early years of the American colonization, and Fuentes addresses a number of the issues raised in these studies: racialized Filipino bodies, Other-ness, a necessary cog in a civilizing evolutionary, God-given excuses to quench a neo-imperial thirst. By reanimating a host of silenced, anonymous images and giving them “startling qualities of voice, subjectivity and agency”,⁹ he tries to reverse the role of ethnographic film and photography in the legitimation of the American colonial enterprise. The outcome is an archival imaginary of subalterns who are not only named but are also agents of their action.

Following its initial screenings, both the public reception of *Bontoc Eulogy* and Fuentes’ response to these reactions has taken its afterlife to a different level. Of course, there was some variation amongst the reactions to the film screenings. Cineastes and academics, for the most part, praised the film for its ability to decolonize visual politics and its use of an ironic, redemptive process that promised “to liberate Filipinos from both the burdens of misrepresentations and the quandaries of visibility”.¹⁰ Fuentes’ work has been shown in over 60 exhibitions and is represented in institutional collections such as the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American Art, the National Museum of American History and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. It was also nominated for the International Documentary Association’s Distinguished Achievement Award. Nevertheless, the film’s reception has not been entirely positive. An alternative reaction, which emerged primarily from the Igorot audience, was anger. Anger that the filmmaker had mislabelled a painful memory, appropriated their stories and taken images in which they might be able to identify a distant relative or acquaintance. For many, Fuentes’ imposition of their identity upon others was disrespectful. Some did not appreciate the muddling of their stories with the insertion of footage that was not necessarily Igorot but identified by the narrator as such. Many felt like they had been played and did not appreciate the presence of a narrator who was not only an outsider but also unreliable and even duplicitous.

It is perhaps in response to these criticisms that Fuentes published an interview between a fictional female academic and himself. Alluding to the dialogue between Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, the move is a logical, albeit tongue-in-cheek, addition to his long-standing practice of subverting authenticating conventions. In addition to assigning the scholar a name, he also assigns her a field of study and a fictional collaborating institution. Her biography reads:

Dr MIA BLUMENTRITT is a cultural anthropologist with interests in contemporary art, visual anthropology, and Asian-American politics and culture. Marlon E. Fuentes is a visual artist and filmmaker. This piece is part of their continuing collaboration under the auspices of the Institute for Multidisciplinary Research in Art, Technology, and Science based in Los Angeles and Manila.¹¹

On first encounter, the interview would appear to have everything that a semi-structured ethnographic interview might contain, specifically dates and a source description. According to the text's preface, the interview was "a condensed transcription of a series of conversations Fuentes and I had during the summer of 1997". Despite the fact that Fuentes admitted to falsifying the transcript in later publications, the essay is still sold online by Taylor and Francis.¹² Ten years later, the same interview was republished in the volume *F Is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, under the title "Extracts from an Imaginary Interview: Questions and Answers about *Bontoc Eulogy*".¹³ This time, however, the piece was attributed solely to Marlon Fuentes and all explicit references to Blumentritt, as well as her hand in the first essay, removed. Whilst he does allude to the Blumentritt piece, these references are simply described as extracts from an imaginary interview. Consequently, the second interview appears more like an attempt to retain a Q&A format rather than an actual performance piece.

Despite differing in their chosen format, what Fuentes reveals in the two interviews is something of a critic's dream: full of insider knowledge and reflexive quips, but also some hints at *mea culpas* along the way. It is disorienting to know, for example, that not one of the Igorot scenes in the film is actually from the 1904 Fair. The archival footage of dances and rituals, and even the mourning women, are mostly taken from the Hilman Footage of the Northern Luzon Tribes held at the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archives. The only footage from 1904 that Fuentes was able to use were the panoramic shots of the exposition grounds and parade scenes, as well as

footage of the Filipino Scouts marching and exercising at the Fair. Everything else was a representation of a representation. The majority of the footage was shot in situ in the Cordilleras and reframed to represent oppressed Igorots in a foreign land. When asked whether the image of the ‘native’ functions as a sign and the extent to which the film is implicated in this process, Fuentes explains his “moral imperative” as follows: the problem is not if a signifier essentializes or totalizes, but whether “the process of representation perpetuates whatever oppressive power relationships may exist”.¹⁴ He also alludes to the artificiality or literariness of his work, presenting it as anti-illusionistic in the Brechtian sense—that is, he made various attempts to parody novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques. By weaving in and out of what is verifiable, Fuentes reinforces the inherent constructed-ness and ambiguity of documentary truth. In addition to demonstrating how archives decontextualize, transforming reality into a flat image and removing it from its temporal and spatial specificity, his practice also raises the question of how it can be reproduced to inhabit a new imaginary. By taking the decontextualized and folding it back into itself, he constructs both memory and history through a series of false signs, thereby forcing the audience to confront the loss of intimacy, humanity and agency that accompanies this gesture.

Conclusion

Both *The Terms of War* and *Bontoc Eulogy* are examples of artistic practice that problematize the tools of knowledge production by engaging with the archive in new and, at times, unexpected ways. In each of these works, archival materials are presented as dynamic sources that fill gaps, extend narratives, create multivocal sites and embody the unnamed. Rather than functioning as a repository for static, weighted objects that embody immobile truths, the archive becomes a locus for both performed consumption and the production of knowledge. In the years since the creation of these pieces, the advent of even newer types of media, digital reproduction technologies and the capacity for simultaneous display via gigabyte capacity and other materials, has resulted in the archive becoming even more malleable, more democratic-making Rankean historicist conceptions of merely telling the truth ‘how it really was’ even more acute. As the two works have shown, the archive is probably best understood as a contested terrain for the construction of memory. Its formal structure not only determines content, it also determines the manner in which content comes into existence and its relationship to the future. In this respect, the process of archiving produces as much as it records an event.

BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

- ¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- ² Ibid., p. 36.
- ³ Alfred W. McCoy and Ed. C. De Jesus (eds), *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982).
- ⁴ Filomeno V. Aguilar, "Beyond Inevitability: The Opening of Philippine Provincial Ports in 1855", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, 1 (1994): 70–90.
- ⁵ Nicholas Loney, *A Britisher in the Philippines, or, The Letters of Nicholas Loney*, ed. Margaret Hoskyn (Manila: The Bureau of Printing, 1964), pp. 117–8.
- ⁶ Larry Jagan and John Cunningham, *Social Volcano: Sugar Workers in the Philippines* (London: W.O.W. Campaigns, 1987), n.p.
- ⁷ See, for example, F. Gerald Ham "The Archival Edge", *The American Archivist* 38, 1 (1975): 5–13 and Patrick M. Quinn, "The Archivist as Activist", *Georgia Archive* 5, 1 (1977): 25–35.
- ⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.
- ⁹ John Homiak, "The Body in the Archives: A Review of Bontoc Eulogy", *American Anthropologist* 100 (2000): 891.
- ¹⁰ Jan Christian Bernabe, "Queer Reconfigurations: *Bontoc Eulogy* and Marlon Fuentes's Archive Imperative", *positions: asia critique* 24, 4 (2016): 727–59.
- ¹¹ Mia Blumentritt, "Bontoc Eulogy, History, and the Craft of Memory: An Extended Conversation with Marlon E. Fuentes", *Amerasia* 24, 3 (1998): 83.
- ¹² The article is still available to download for \$48.
- ¹³ Marlon Fuentes, "Extracts from an Imaginary Interview: Questions and Answers about *Bontoc Eulogy*", in *F Is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, ed. Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. 119–26.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 123.