

## BAROQUE MODERNITY AND THE COLONIAL WORLD: AESTHETICS AND CATASTROPHE IN NICK JOAQUIN'S *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS FILIPINO*

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### Abstract

The point of departure for these reflections is the status of "Hispanism" as an aesthetic mode (and possibly an elitist position or ideology in Philippine society) in a largely ignored debate within Philippine nationalist circles after World War II. In this instance, Dr. Blanco is thinking of the polemic between nationalist historian and poet Teodoro Agoncillo and Filipino national artist Nick Joaquin following the inauguration of a Philippine national republic formally recognized by the League of Nations. In this paper, he wants to focus on one, perhaps the key, manifestation of this "Hispanism" – Joaquin's recovery of the baroque mode of representation, as a way of returning to the baroque aesthetic of catastrophe in various colonial works (particularly the *Pasyon* and the *Balagtasawit*). By examining the scenography of Joaquin's *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, he will turn to various aspects of Western baroque representation highlighted by Max Weber, Walter Benjamin, and Jose Antonio Maravall in order to highlight the relationship between colonial sovereignty and the onset of colonial modernity as the "disenchantment of the world."

### Keywords

baroque, colonial modernity, Hispanism, Nick Joaquin, Teodoro Agoncillo

### About the Author

John D. Blanco received his PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley. His dissertation focuses on literary representations of the law and sovereignty in late colonial texts (1837-1891), including the peninsular Spanish novel, the Tagalog *awit*, and the writings of the *ilustrados*. Currently, he teaches comparative literature and cultural studies at the University of California, San Diego.

### Editor's Note

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Over fifty years after the publication of Nick Joaquin's first collection of short stories, poems, and the play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* in 1952, critics and scholars still puzzle over the question of whether or not it is possible to legitimately associate him with the literature and historiography of Philippine nationalism. On the one hand, anti-colonial revolutionaries, native intellectuals, and members of a disenfranchised bourgeoisie populate Joaquin's world of colonial and post-colonial Manila—the protagonists and sometimes heroes of a nationalist tradition. Moreover, they wrestle with questions of the relationship of Philippine history to the present, cultural identity, and the patrimonial

legacies of preceding generations: themes central to the concerns of nationalist writers, intellectuals, and statesmen in the 1950s and 60s, such as Senator Claro Recto, Teodoro Agoncillo, Horacio de la Costa, S.J., Cesar Majul, and later, Renato Constantino. Still, there remains something untimely, indiscreet, even indecent, or scandalous in these characters and their stories, which extends to Joaquin's historical studies and genealogical surveys. It is an indecency that drives both historical personalities and fictional creations to extremes of blasphemy, perversity, misogyny, and self-abasement. Certainly few, if any, of them provide the reader with examples of leadership, courage, and dignity—virtues that would ostensibly contribute to the cultivation of a model citizenry and state in the early years of the first Philippine Republic. Yet neither do their extraordinary, at times fantastic dilemmas and situations—a young acolyte's acceptance of his grandfather's insatiable erotic appetite in "Three Generations," a young aristocratic lady's submission to the dark forces of pagan fertility in "The Summer Solstice," the monstrous *Woman Who Had Two Navels*,—suggest either romantic nostalgia or critique (whether of the liberal enlightened, or socialist inspired variant) against the psychology or institutions of colonial rule.

After the "liberation" of Manila and the Philippines by Filipino and US allied forces against Japanese forces during World War II, what was more necessary to the growth of a Philippine national literature than some aesthetic vision of a modern nation state, and the affirmation that its people possessed the strength of character and enthusiasm to realize it? In the writing of history, nationalist historians all to some degree shared a corresponding recuperation of the past for the imperatives of the present: a "usable past" in the service of either the substantiation of national independence or the critique of economic dependency and political mendicancy to the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century. And yet, what could be further from these cultural aesthetic, historically redemptive projects than Joaquin's vicious dramas, enacted by guilt-laden, angst-ridden, and duplicitous Spanish-Chinese mestizos and US educated cosmopolitans, during the twilight years of the nineteenth century or in the catastrophic landscape of postwar Manila? Indeed, the paradox manifests itself on the very surface of Joaquin's prose—a failed English, learned and obeyed at the dictates of US colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century, but with its grammar and syntax perverted, folded back upon itself to more closely resemble the rhetoric of Spanish in the time of Cervantes.

The thesis that this paper pursues takes its cue from a collection of dramatic pieces which included what is perhaps the most well-known modern play to be performed in the Philippines, *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. The play was originally published in 1951, but

reappeared in 1982 under the title *Tropical Baroque*. By taking seriously Joaquin's reference to the baroque, I argue that Joaquin intends this reference as a frame for understanding how Filipino elites and masses alike conceive of modernity and the postcolonial epoch in the Philippines. I take as a starting point the anomaly of Nick Joaquin's literary production at a time when the "necessary fictions" (to borrow a phrase from Caroline Hau) of national integrity and cultural unity began to proliferate in the postwar period of the second Philippine Republic after 1946. By examining key features of Joaquin's *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, I trace the genealogy of Joaquin's sensibility to what José Antonio Maravall called the "baroque mentality" of Spanish culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its peculiar contribution to Western concepts of modernity as their suppressed double or underside.

In the last section, I expand on the philosophical implications of Joaquin's baroque for the study of postcolonial culture, particularly its reproduction of the past as an unfulfilled or thwarted legacy. As I will argue, Joaquin's baroque mode or mentality, which arose with the rise of Manila urban culture between the Philippine revolution and World War II, corresponds to the experience of modernity as the immanence of disaster and disenchantment; and the struggle to adopt an attitude or ethos toward this experience in the present. Paradoxically, however, this attitude manifests itself under the sign of the counter-modern: that is, the deferral or defiance of the colonial subject's conformity to either Western-inspired or Philippine nationalist investments in the reinterpretation of the past in light of the modern nation-state. Instead, she or he conceives an evasive and multiple experience of modernity that extends to the very origins of the Spanish conquest, and that has existed coterminously yet in counterpoint with it up to the present. Such a conception portrays and contrasts two different receptions and projections of Philippine modernity that interact with the colonial legacy in juxtaposed ways.

### (POST-) COLONIAL MODERNITIES: THE QUESTION OF AN HISTORICAL EPOCH

Progress! you cry. Progress and more progress! But what is this progress? I ask you. It is like the tides, you answer. We are caught in the tides! We must move! ... [But] the tides do move. They come and go. Relentlessly. Leaving upon the shore dead weeds, dung, rubbish, shipwrecks and corpses. This is their end. And what is there [sic] principle? Is it not the carcass of a star?

- Nick Joaquin, "It Was Later Than We Thought"

The difficulty of situating the tensions and insights of Nick Joaquin's work immediately reflects a greater conceptual difficulty in formulating a criterion of analysis adequate to the relationship between Philippine culture and the idea of a Western-led or inspired idea that comes to us under the general heading "modernity." In comparing the trajectories of Western—and Philippine-based social sciences and humanities disciplines, one immediately confronts the incongruous weight ascribed to the *concept* and *idea* of modernity as a Western "project" firmly entrenched in its original *past*, when contrasted with the ambivalent reception of modernity as an *ideal* to be pursued in the Philippines and other "developing" nations under the name "modernization." One of the more pithy statements of the problem of Western modernity as a universal one comes from Jürgen Habermas who, following the work of sociologist Max Weber, understands the legacy of modernity as one of historical consciousness, indicated in words like "revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis, and *Zeitgeist*" (7). "Modernity," he writes, "can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; it has to create its normativity out of itself. Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape." The radical negativity of knowledge and its new relationship with science and technology, states and institutions, techniques of legitimation and authority (the law, the university), and disciplines, presented itself from the very beginning as a universal crisis of disenchantment that defined the modern age or epoch.

How different is this understanding of modernity to the ideological foundations of modernization theory, which proceeds not from the demystification or disenchantment of those "models supplied from another epoch," but rather the unquestioned adoption of models supplied from other countries. In a well-known study, Carl Pletsch demonstrated the rise of modernization theory in the era of decolonization (following World War II), when the Cold War led to the organization of the social sciences along a concept of the globe divided into three spheres of interest or "Three Worlds." Whereas the first two (led by the US and the Soviet Union, respectively) provided the two legacies of modernity in the twentieth century—capitalist-democratic on the one hand, and totalitarian on the other—political analysts and social scientists alike ascribed a lack of modernity to the so-called Third World, and a need to develop or "modernize" these regions in accordance with the battle lines being drawn between both sides of the Cold War. "The captains of the third world," Pletsch writes, "could see two forward positions out ahead of them—communist and democratic capitalist. Which path should they follow? [Alfred] Sauvy assumed, we may note, that the leaders of the third world had to choose to follow one of the two.

They *had* to modernize in one of these two modes” (Pletsch 570; italics added). From this assumption emerged the ethnographies, data compilations, and historical syntheses that characterized the hybridity of Philippine area studies, and served to justify or direct US economic, military, and political policy in the region.

But since the 1960s, nationalist scholars like Walden Bello have responded directly to the contradiction of modernization theory — namely, that modernization in practice flatly contradicted its objectives in theory.<sup>1</sup> Instead of economic independence, modernization promoted heavy reliance on US financial and military support and favorable trade relations for US imports; instead of political liberalism, modernization destabilized the constitutional process and often fostered despotism and dictatorship; instead of social equality, modernization reinforced and aggravated social divisions between the elite and the masses, and expanded the military and police institutions beyond all accountability to the law. Such contradictions were embodied in the figure of third Philippine president Ramon Magsaysay, a populist figure who, throughout the 1950s, promoted peace with the peasant-led Huk rebellion and promised extensive land reforms, while also sponsoring the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* (as Secretary of National Defense under President Quirino) and consolidating ties with the CIA-backed Joint US Military Assistance Group (Alip 349).

It thus comes as no surprise, then, that we witness the otherwise striking absence of modernity as a concept and idea in the Philippine social sciences and humanities, particularly in that generation of postwar nationalist scholars such as Teodoro Agoncillo, Horacio de la Costa, and Cesar Adib Majul. As Pletsch makes clear, the displacement or deferral of modernity-as-idea by modernization-as-ideal, is inseparable and in many instances identical to that overarching counter-accusation of aggressive “Westernization,” so central to anti- and post-colonial scholarship.<sup>2</sup> From the technological advances in the nineteenth century that facilitated the penetration of the archipelago to foreign capital, to the role of the educated elite in supporting the colonial state under the US, all the way to the *balikbayan* culture of overseas employment and the remittance economy, modernity and its doppelganger, “modernization,” have often served as euphemisms for the spread of disenfranchisement and exploitation among the many for the sake of the few.

The US-led maneuver to peddle the perpetual deferral of modernity (under the endless project of modernization) as a way of extending the frontiers of the Cold War in the 1950s, thus, did not appear at all new or particularly liberating to early nationalist statesmen and writers in the Philippines — many of whom had grown up under US

colonialism in the first part of the twentieth century. Senator Claro M. Recto, for example, made the observation in 1951 that “we have not yet recovered from the spell of colonialism,” and that the achievement of formal independence belied “our lingering colonial complex” (Recto 9-10). For Recto and others, then, the critique of modernity-as-colonialism in disguise (“modernity for whom?”) in the Philippines had to go beyond the unmasking of exploitation in the name of salvation. The philosophical discourse of modernity had to be placed in an historical context that included Spanish colonialism in the nineteenth century and US imperialism in the twentieth.

Not surprisingly, Recto strongly advocated a return to the writings of the European-educated colonial expatriates or *ilustrados* of the late nineteenth century, particularly José Rizal. For it was writers like Rizal who first comprehended the contradiction between the implementation of modernity as a colonial program and the substantiation of modernity as a process of historical self-assertion or self-determination, guided by the critique of reason and the collective engagement with a constitutional order and due process of law.<sup>3</sup> Readers of Rizal’s 1891 novel *El filibusterismo* [Will to Subversion] will remember his illustration of this contradiction in the ruthlessness with which the Machiavellian character Simoun outlines a plan to modernize *a la Haussmann* the twisting bends of the Pasig River between the Laguna de Bay and Manila. Simoun reasons, by cutting a straight canal that absorbs the river entirely, even at the cost of “destroying populations,” as well as forcing prisoners, women, and children into compulsory labor, one could eliminate all the problems impeding the growth of commerce in the city, “without paying a single *cuarto*.” As for the Spanish clergy, Simoun continues, it would be their task to prevent any popular uprisings. With this anecdote, Rizal’s character sketches and critiques the stakes and consequences of commerce, urbanization, the state role of the religious, and the *carte blanche* of colonial sovereignty for both the colonizer and the colonial subject in the late nineteenth century (Rizal 8-10).

Indeed, the steamboat on which Simoun and his companions travel to Laguna de Bay itself highlights the contradictory aspect of understanding modernity in a colonial context. While the steamboat represented the engine of modernity par excellence in the late colonial period, this ship bearing the standard of the State described by Rizal is heavy, dirty, and slow, “like a triumph over progress, a ship that was not a ship at all, rather like an immutable organism, imperfect but incontrovertible, and however much it wanted to take on progressive airs, it haughtily contented itself with a cosmetic touch-up” [“como un triunfo sobre el progreso, un vapor que no era vapor del todo, un organismo inmutable,

imperfecto pero indiscutible, que cuando más quería echárselas de progresista, se contentaba soberiamente con darse una capa de pintura”]. Divided into two compartments, inhabited respectively by representatives of the colonial order (on the balcony) and the mass of paens in the engine room, the ship “perspires” under the weight of its own divisions and contradictions (Rizal 8).

The image of the Spanish colonial governor-general’s steamship corresponds to a number of central themes of the propagandist movement advocating for the abolition of colonial rule in the nineteenth century: the contradiction between income-generating enterprises and the lack of incentives for native labor; or between the centralization of public order in the Guardia Civil and the proliferation of arbitrary violence; or between the subordination of the religious clergy to state bureaucracy and their increased capacity for corruption and tyranny. From the 1837 passage of the Special Laws decree, which refused to grant the colonies any rights of suffrage or due process of law given to Spanish citizens, colonial modernity sought to combine the most advanced and effective methods and techniques of stimulating productivity, industry, and commerce, with the arbitrary exercise of sovereignty without recourse to the Spanish metropolis. Against the formal legitimacy of the state of exception made manifest under this decree, writers like Rizal and his compatriots, Graciano López Jaena and Marcelo H. del Pilar, advocated for a substantial and effective modernity that would have to recognize its incompatibility with colonial rule.<sup>4</sup> Such a modernity would entail the abolition of censorship, representation in the Spanish Cortes or representative assembly, and the eventual abolition of colonial rule itself.

Within the *ilustrado* critique, then, we see the bifurcation of modernity as a concept and idea into what Immanuel Wallerstein later schematically labeled the “two modernities” — “the modernity of technology and the modernity of liberation.” This bifurcation, so crucial to the nationalist historians of Nick Joaquin’s postwar era, originally enabled the *ilustrados* to demonstrate the impossibility of the former — modernity of technology — without the latter — modernity of liberation (Wallerstein 454-71). After the defeat of Filipino revolutionary troops by US forces, this disjunction became all the more apparent to figures like revolutionary statesman Apolinario Mabini. Whereas US President William McKinley saw the US takeover of the Philippines as the beginning of a divinely ordained mission to “uplift and civilize [the Filipinos]” and to teach them the rudiments of modern democracy, Mabini saw it as a step backward into colonial dependency. Mabini’s personification of the nation as paralytic — a condition that he endured in the later years of his life — dystopically represented the blocked growth of the Philippines’ entrance and

claim to modern legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> Whereas France and the Americas had charted the political course of modernity through the catastrophe of revolution and its stabilization in the tenets of modern liberalism, the “paralysis” of the Philippines brought the dialectic between freedom and necessity to a standstill.

Thus, by the time social scientists began speaking of “modernization theory” and dividing up the globe into “three worlds” in the 1950s, Filipino intellectuals were familiar with the failed promises of a Western-led inauguration into the modern world. Indeed, a whole vocabulary of critical keywords and phrases like “birds of prey” (mga ibong mandaragit), “Americanization,” and “foreignism” (extranjerismo) had become common among critics of such promises in the epoch of direct American colonial tutelage (1901-1942).<sup>6</sup> The culmination of this promise was the destruction of Manila by the Japanese and Americans between 1942 and 1945, the setting of Nick Joaquin’s *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. In many ways, it can be considered the catastrophe, the traumatic event that crystallized the crisis of modernity and its inextricable relations with the acceleration and violent conflict between global powers, at the expense of the Philippines as a nation forever waiting to be born.

This admittedly schematic review of the debates surrounding a fractured or split modernity in the Philippines in the 1950s nevertheless demonstrates the stakes in reconciling the colonial past with modernity as a concept and idea. Beneath the “Great Divide” between the elite and the masses invoked by historian Teodoro Agoncillo in his original history of Andres Bonifacio and the 1896 Katipunan revolution (written in 1948), lay another divide separating two different interpretations of Filipino modernity and two corresponding future paths. The first would effectively realize and consolidate the continuity of colonial domination; the second argued for an *other* way of tracing the past to the present as a means of re-entering or keeping alive an indefinitely postponed or failed modernity. This *other* history—which sometimes took historians to the mysterious, distant, pre-colonial past and other times fixed their sights on the obscure or missing details of the 1896 Filipino revolution—became the basis of a nationalist historiography in the postwar era.

Yet the “split modernity” thesis in Philippine historiography also anticipates the “blind spots” the thesis engenders, particularly concerning the complex relationship between colonialism and modernity as an idea and concept. For, in dichotomizing the two modernities and setting them up in opposition to one another, the critical enterprise opened up by nationalist historiography threatened to lapse into a somewhat uncritical

and belabored defense of (cultural) identity against foreign intervention; and / or a messianic pedagogy that ceded the task of historical study to the idealized resolution of its contradictions. The obsession with a pre-colonial, “pure” indigenous past, the ad hoc criterion of distinguishing “native” from “foreign,” the idealized “unfinished revolution” that would redeem the “damaged culture” of postcolonial Philippines, all demonstrated the derailment of the nationalist critique and its return to myth and metaphysics.

One such example of the postcolonial nationalist pedagogy illustrates the paradoxical transformation of the critical intervention in Philippine history, into an uncritical constitution of “legitimate” history: that was Agoncillo’s devaluation of Philippine history belonging to Spanish and American colonialism, on the grounds that both were produced and seen by “foreign” eyes vs. “Filipino” ones.” In Agoncillo’s view, history was called upon to serve a specific task, which was the propagation of a “Filipino point of view” distinguished from an ostensibly Spanish, American, or “Western” one: “Since in the past and up to the present our people have been accustomed to the foreign climate of opinion,” he writes, “our people have acquired the habit of depending on foreigners to think or do things for them” (Agoncillio Appendix B; 135). Philippine history, then, had to prioritize a pedagogical imperative that necessitated the exclusion and disavowal of anything that did not satisfy an ad hoc criterion of what was “Filipino,” over a more complex understanding of cultural identities shaped by one another over the course of three centuries.

In fact, Agoncillo went so far as to disqualify the study of the Spanish colonial period *in toto* as a legitimate period for studying, envisioning and affirming a “history of the Filipino people”:

When one examines critically the texture and substance of our history under imperialist Spain one wonders, really, whether the Philippines had a history prior to 1872 or thereabouts. For what has been regarded as Philippine history before 1872 is not Philippine, but Spanish. (Agoncillio Appendix A; 122)

History from a “Filipino point of view” thus appeared to be at once identical and antagonistic to the analysis of a split modernity and its anticipated resolution. This is because history “through Filipino eyes” confronts a double imperative whose aims were ultimately contradictory: on the one hand, a reinvigoration of the critical project to unearth

and analyze the foundations of Filipino modernity in the 1896 revolution for national liberation; and on the other hand, a refusal to acknowledge the critical enterprise as belonging to a history that the Philippines shared with the Western world.

One may trace this and other examples in the works of later historians, from Renato Constantino to the historiography of Pantayong Pananaw (“Our Pan-Filipino Perspective”) in the 1980s. These and other approaches to historiography found their ultimate authority in their capacity to return the past to the present moment, in order to critique the way we determine our relationship to ourselves on various levels—our peculiar “modernity” and the relationship with the past that unfolds from within it. But by favoring the imperative to define and enforce the “our” of our modernity over its study and analysis, it often found itself caught in the idealism of a cultural aesthetic and the questions of identity that obscured instead of illuminated the mutual imbrications of colonialism and modernity.

Situated on the margins of these issues, Joaquin’s patriotism or “nationalism” again strikes one as bizarre and counter-intuitive. In this politicized, if not dichotomous, field of debate regarding the sites and events of modernity and modernization, what place does one accord his education in Spanish, his celebration and lamentation over the colonial city of Intramuros in Manila, and his invocation of “gothic” and “baroque” elements in Philippine culture? What relationship does he establish between the Spanish-speaking ilustrados who participated in the 1896 Filipino revolution and war against the Americans, and the succeeding generation of disenfranchised, post-revolutionary, English-speaking bourgeoisie? Doesn’t his seeming “Hispanism” extol the very aristocracy that provided the anchor of Spanish colonial rule for centuries, not to mention that aristocracy’s elite descendants who, today, secure an oligopoly over the nation’s land and resources? A study of Joaquin’s approach, in any case, cannot begin with an attempt to place him on either side of the divide opened up by the two modernities. Rather, as I will argue, Joaquin provokes us to rethink our very notion of the modern, and the insufficiency of both postcolonial and anti-colonial critique to fully account for the presence of the past in Philippine culture. His adoption of the baroque as an aesthetic of catastrophe provides him with a series of motifs or devices that enable him to broach this position.

## BAROQUE SCENOGRAPHY AND THE INVOCATION OF JUDGMENT

The prevalence of ruins in *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* as the natural landscape wherein the narrator Bitoy situates his tale of prewar Manila immediately cues the viewer to a central theme in baroque representation. Indeed, in this play, baroque scenography

and its devices—epiphraasis, allegory, and the *camera obscura*—are not difficult to identify. Joaquin structures the entire dramatic action around a series of elements that stand outside it but orient its transactions: the narrator Bitoy, the imaginary “fourth wall” on which the self-portrait of Lorenzo Marasigan, the “Retrato del artista como Filipino” hangs, and the October procession of La Naval in honor of the Virgin Mary which occurs outside the house.<sup>7</sup> Let us turn to these elements as a way of elaborating the intervention of Joaquin’s aesthetics on the debates over the place, identity, and future, of Philippine modernity.

The narrator Bitoy speaks or appears at the beginning of each scene, as a survivor who has witnessed the devastation of the old city of Manila, Intramuros, which included the house and family that are the subject of the play. From the beginning, Bitoy emphasizes the diverse temporalities that comprise the dramatic tension by referring to the stage as the scene of a pre-war memory, before contrasting it with the sight of Manila as a ruin: “Now look ... A piece of wall, a fragment of stairway—and over there, the smashed gothic façade of old Santo Domingo.... It finally took a global war to destroy that house and the three people who fought for it” (Joaquin 2). His participation in the drama as both a teenager of the prewar period and an adult of the postwar period forces him to shuttle back and forth between two temporalities, crisscrossing over and again the catastrophe of Manila’s destruction by first, the Japanese invasion and later, by the US firebombing of the city in 1945 (see figure 1).



*Fig. 1. Ruins of Sto. Domingo Church behind US tanks in the Plaza de España, February 1945 (photo courtesy of EWebPro, ©1997-2003)*

The experience of transience thus weaves a metanarrative over the catastrophe that Bitoy can designate but not represent or redeem in any meaningful or transcendent way (Maravall 159-235). As Caroline Hau has observed, the catastrophe forever seals the past event from the present, hermetically sealing the former as in a crypt whose dense shadows resound with the silence of death. The result is a contradiction: how can Bitoy connect a hermetically sealed past to a fallen or postlapsarian present littered with “stark ruins, gleaming in the silent moonlight” (Joaquin 65)? As if to emphasize the paradox of the doubled, impossible identity of Bitoy as a survivor of the war whose life is stretched across two incommensurable epochs, Bitoy himself presents his passage from one to the other in the form of a contradiction: “It finally took a global war to destroy this house and the three people who fought for it.... They are dead now—a horrible death.... They died with their house and they died with their city ... the old Manila. And yet—listen! It is not dead; it has not perished!” (Joaquin 65).

The allegorical treatment of ruins in Joaquin’s play deserves some discussion here, if only to highlight its stark contrast with the demystified, enlightened aesthetic and a philosophy of history that focused on a “usable past” among Philippine nationalist writers of the period.<sup>8</sup> As the previous section of this essay has discussed, both colonialist and nationalist historiography remained committed to the project of connecting the past to the present, of entering or questioning the advent of modernity in order to make claims about the present and its imperatives. Yet in stark contrast to this overriding concern, Joaquin turns his attention to the still, almost eternal repose of ruins, allegorical in nature. Bitoy’s gestures toward this baroque landscape refuses to contemplate the future of the Philippines’ reconstruction or redemption. Indeed, his attention to ruins almost bespeaks a devaluation of that concern, in order to highlight a process of reflection in which experience acquires meaning in a world devastated by catastrophe.

This devaluation can be illustrated in Walter Benjamin’s stirring analysis of the German baroque mourning play, wherein the author points out the mistake of identifying ruins pictured in baroque scenography as representing or pointing to any higher truth or idea, in the manner of a modern symbol. He writes:

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape”; “In nature [the baroque writer] saw eternal transience, and here alone did the saturnine vision of

this generation recognize history. Its monuments, ruins, are ... the home of saturnine beasts. In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting. (111-2)

Applied to Joaquin's scenography, history belongs utterly to the natural forces of death and decay, from which can only arise the supreme doubt of any idea embodied in the symbol to outlast the onrush of time as the seal of human fate (Benjamin 170). Eminent sociologist of the baroque José Antonio Maravall's quotation of a poem by Rodrigo Caro in the seventeenth century, an ode dedicated to ruins, confirms this inversion of history and nature: "así como debajo del sol no hay cosa nueva, así no hay cosa estable, perpetua, ni permanente, porque todo tiene una continua mutabilidad ... Aquello mayormente está sujeto a mudanza y ruina que tiene por ley nuestra mudable y varia voluntad" ["Just as there is nothing new under the sun, so is there nothing stable, perpetual, nor permanent, because everything has a continuous mutability... All that is most subject to uprootedness and ruin has as its law our mutable and variable will"] (Maravall 363). For Maravall, ruins thus emblemized the two experiences of disenchantment that characterize the baroque awareness of fallen time: *mudanza*, uprootedness and *fugacidad*, or transience (Maravall 362, 380).

Paradoxically, the baroque artist responded to the acceptance of temporality "as an element constitutive of reality" in Maravall's words, by multiplying or perhaps "differentializing" versions of history as a fractal might generate an overlapping series of near identical permutations (Maravall 186). Again, Joaquin's choreography of the drama follows this operation, which appears in the form of dividing and spatializing the drama into three different dramas that diverge from one another only for each to offer itself as the other's interpretation or underlying reality. We have already discussed the first, the narrator Bitoy: let us turn to the painting and the procession. The painting depicts the artist, Don Lorenzo Marasigan, as a youth carrying a man who turns out to also be himself, only portrayed as an old man, out of a burning city (in the manner of Virgil's *Aeneid*: Aeneas goes on to found the city of Rome). The procession of the Virgin Mary known as *La Naval de Manila*, is celebrated every second Sunday of October since 1646 (which makes it the oldest Spanish tradition in the archipelago), in commemoration of the Spanish defeat of the Dutch in defense of Manila against seemingly overwhelming odds. This procession occurs outside the house at the end of the play. Taken together, the two invisible dramas both unfurl at the edges of the drama that we do see, insofar as the interactions that take place in the room are

directed toward both painting and procession, as two poles of an electric current.

*The painting.* The central drama revolves around two middle-age sisters, whose upbringing as the daughters of Don Lorenzo has left them proud, with an old aristocratic dignity, but economically destitute and spiritually disenchanted with their fate. While their father is renowned in the Philippines for his participation as a general in the 1896 Filipino revolution against Spain and later the US, as well as for his artistic genius, the daughters nevertheless blame him for the early death of their mother and for their unwed status. Their resentment leads Don Lorenzo to paint one last painting, *Retrato del artista como Filipino*, before attempting suicide and later, to withdraw into the darkness of his room (see figure 2).

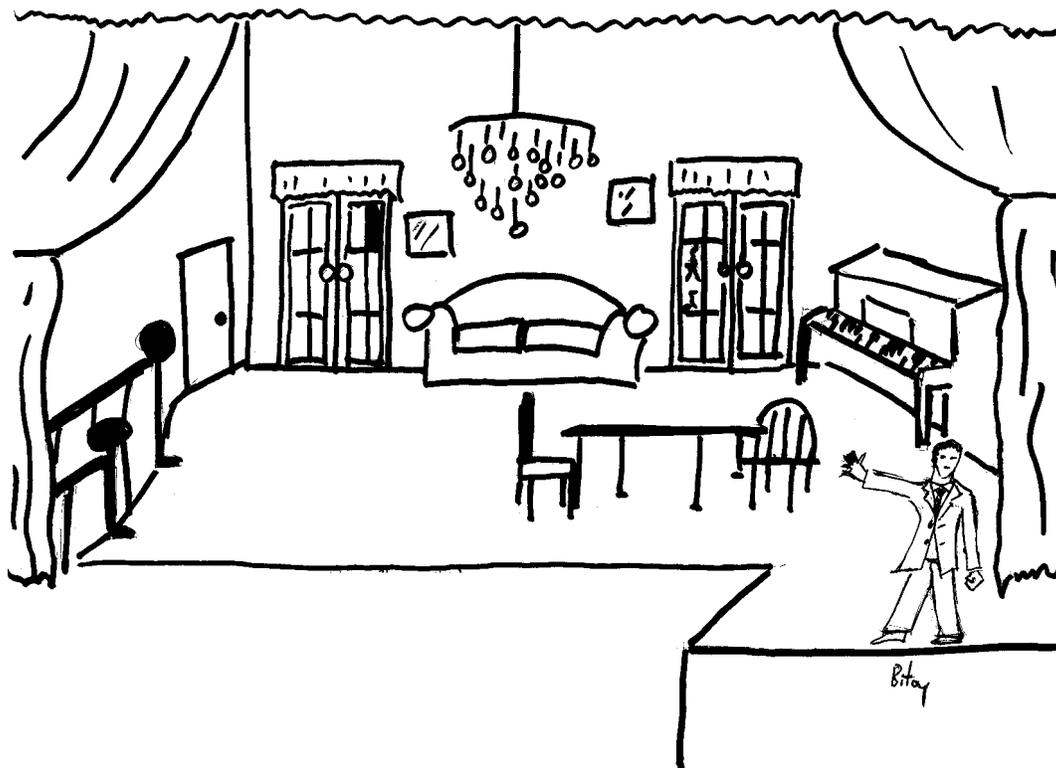


Fig. 2. Joaquin sceneography (imaginary “fourth wall” behind the narrator but before the performance stage)

The gift of the painting hangs in the living room or sala, and we learn about its value through the machinations or schemes devised by various characters to obtain the painting. One character tries to sell it to an American on the black market for \$10,000; another character seeks to have the painting donated to a new Philippine government, anxious to

ground its legitimacy in cultural relics as well as political calculation; a brother and sister who no longer live in the house see the painting as an obstacle blocking the sale of the ancestral home.

For the two sisters who possess the painting as their sole patrimony, the portrait confers the weight of guilt upon the siblings for having accommodated to a disenchanting world after their father had fought for the sake of a noble ideal.<sup>9</sup> That ideal, of course, was the dream of national independence at the turn of the century—a dream that became waylaid into forty years of colonial dependency on the US, followed by a nominal recognition of Philippine independence in the midst of poverty, devastation, and corruption engendered by inequality. Bitoy, the narrator, attests to the degree of his generation's disenchantment when he remarks: "I had said goodbye to ... the world of Don Lorenzo, the world of my father.... I was bitter against it; it had deceived me.... My childhood was a lie; the nineteen-twenties were a lie; beauty and faith and courtesy and honor and innocence were all lies" (Joaquin 85). The two sisters respond to this patrimony with extreme pathos: sometimes this pathos takes the form of guilt ("Oh Candida, we were happy enough then," one sister remarks, "and we did not know it! We destroyed the happiness we had.... Oh why did we do it, Candida, why did we do it!" (21); and sometimes it takes the form of resentment, as when Paula's sister Candida breaks down before the painting with clenched fists and cries: "There he stands, smiling! There he stands laughing at us! ... mocking, mocking our agony! Oh God, God, God, God!" (24).

At issue in the violent seesaw of emotions exhibited by the characters around their respective designs for the fate of the painting is the problem of perspective and judgment. We "see" the painting through the various inflections of its value by the characters of the play, although its ultimate value becomes tied to a narrative that must be followed to its conclusion. Conversely, the indefinite suspension of the ultimate value assigned to the painting enables the viewer to witness how disenchantment, that confidence in a universally valid connection between the past and present, between generations, and between "words and things," interrupts, complicates, and distorts any proper sense of judgment. The problem of judgment expresses itself most acutely in the guilt of the two sisters—the anticipation of a perpetually deferred or withdrawn judgment of the revolutionary father, which in turn prevents the two women from making judgments about their future. For with the onset of disenchantment, all decisions and judgments seem to amount to the same damn thing. Sell the painting? Donate it to the government? Leave the house? All decisions result in the same uprootedness and transience, the irrevocable and irredeemable movement toward the loss of youth, family, and ancestral home.

Joaquin announces this distorted, doubled perspective from the opening description of the portrait in the play: after seeing the self-portrait of the artist / revolutionary Don Lorenzo depicted as both elder and youth, he turns to the two sisters and remarks: "I feel as if I were seeing double" (6). Candida's response is equally telling: "I feel as if I'm looking at a monster." Like the character Segismundo (in Calderón de la Barca's famous play, *La vida es sueño*) who is described by his father as "un monstruo en forma de hombre," the fallen, creaturely existence of humanity in early modernity can only compensate for the sight of monsters by somehow knowing that they allegorically express a deeper truth about the world. In Segismundo's words, "For me, there are no pretenses / Since, disenchanted as I am / I know that life is a dream" ["Para mí no hay fingimientos; / Que, desengañado ya, / Sé bien que la vida es sueño"] (Barca 672, 2341-3).

The position of the painting orchestrates the necessarily faulty judgments of the sisters, as well as the secondary characters scheming to possess or dispose of the painting, without ever revealing the face of the painting to the audience. As the pinpoint on which all the actions of the interior converge, "El retrato del artista como Filipino" mimics the action of a *camera obscura*. One may compare it to the scene in Velázquez's *Las meninas* (1656), an emblematic work of the Spanish baroque. The panoramic view or passions elicited by the characters, which comprises the central drama in both, serves to displace, distort, multiply, reverse, invert, and reinvert the object the characters apprehend or inflect (the painting, or the king and queen in *Las meninas*), to the point that its reality is gradually distilled in a labyrinth of representation (see figures 3 and 4).<sup>10</sup> The paradoxical attempt to "see" the truth of a thing by multiplying and displacing its representations, as well as the spatialization or scission of the drama into painting and action heightens the tension we have already seen at work in the division of the play into different temporalities, separated by catastrophe. As the action unfolds in the multiple inflections of the allegorical emblem that stands above the characters, the increasingly hysterical mood of the play clears a space for the first of the two central developments that take place, which is Paula's confession that she has destroyed the painting and intends to remain, with her sister Candida and her father Don Lorenzo, in the ancestral home.

*The procession.* With the destruction of the painting, the remaining action of the play unfolds swiftly, progressing like the upward swing of a pendulum that mirrors the first downward movement in reverse. From the announcement that the painting is destroyed, the sisters immediately prepare for the visit of the elder Filipino generation to the Marasigan ancestral home who have come to witness and commemorate the procession of

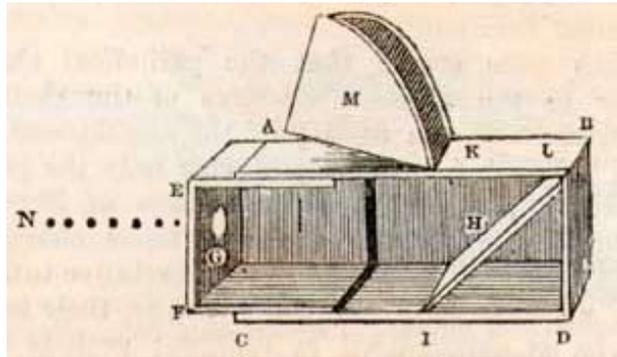


Fig. 3. Early version of camera obscura

the Virgin Mary in *La Naval de Manila*, and ultimately, to defend the sisters against attempts to sell the ancestral home initiated by the sisters' own siblings. The chorus the sisters adopt as their own—"Contra mundum!"—leads to the defense of the two sisters against the scheming siblings, the advent of the Virgin's procession, and the climactic emergence of the father, Don Lorenzo, for the first time in the play from a room that has remained inaccessible from the view of the audience throughout the play. The action freezes; we return to Bitoy's lament of a past destroyed by the war; and the play ends with a spotlight on the ruins of Manila.



Fig. 4. Diego Velázquez, *Las meninas* (1656)

The swing from the sisters' disenchantment with their lives, burdened with the guilt emblemized by the painting that presides over the stage from its outer edge, to the characters' sudden participation in the observation of a scene that takes place outside the house (and beyond the view of the audience)—a procession which is only mentioned briefly by Bitoy at the beginning of the third act—again seems at first sight paradoxical. Yet, similar to the constant scission of one narrative into two and then perhaps four (the scission between Bitoy's narrative and the central drama, between the invisible painting and the characters' estimations or judgments of it, between the eyes of the old artist depicted in the portrait and the eyes of the young artist who carries him), the scene obeys what Gilles Deleuze calls the "baroque operation" that moves from the inflection of reality in appearances to the inclusion or participation of the viewer or audience into the scene of action (14-26). In the narrative of the play, this threshold where inflection becomes inclusion occurs in the gathering of the elder Filipinos with the young sisters to watch the procession; but it is no different from the same threshold we cross vis-à-vis the play every time Bitoy steps out of the central drama to address the audience, inviting them / us to share in his grief at having witnessed the transience of history in the catastrophic theater of the Pacific War. In the same way that the play thematizes our participation in the play by enacting the participation of the characters in the enigma of the portrait, so too does it thematize the threshold at which our disenchanted perspective of the play must give way to a participation and commitment in the very illusions we perpetuate.

This brings us to the emblematic appearance of the Virgin Mary in the street outside the house. This reference to the Virgin Mary and the procession of La Naval are important to Nick Joaquin for at least two reasons. In one of his early essays (written during the Japanese Occupation), he portrays the Naval de Manila as the allegorical performance of "pagan myth vs. Christian freedom" ("La Naval"). More recently, he has placed the original procession of the Virgin Mary in 1646 as an early, prototypical expression of Philippine patriotism, insofar as it expressed the desire of the lowland Tagalogs and Pampangueños to identify themselves with one another, under the banner of Christendom. Yet, both interpretations highlight the reaffirmation of the cult of the Virgin Mary during the iconoclastic years of the Protestant Reformation against which the baroque "mentality" took shape in Germany, Spain and Italy, as well as Latin America and the Philippines. Where the Protestant leaders of the Reformation sought to confine the role of the Virgin to that of a humble, faithful servant or handmaid to God's salvation of the world, the Roman Catholic Church insisted on the doctrine of her immaculate conception, assumption into heaven, and her role of queen, mediatrix (divine intercessor), and co-redemptrix to that

of Christ. Theologians and Catholic religious leaders have tended to downplay these differences after the Second Vatican Council; yet for Joaquin, the differences explain the way in which the plebeian folk understood in concrete terms the participation of the ordinary in the divine, and the dignity of faulty human, all to human judgment, before the absolute and fatal character of divine judgment.<sup>11</sup> In the cult of the Virgin Mary, Mary's understanding and sympathy with the creaturely existence of fallen nature may not "justify" the errors of judgment that bring about sin in the world; but neither does she disavow and deliver them to the law. With the withdrawal of absolute sanction from the order of things, Mary acknowledges that partial judgments and decisions would have to suffice: and their dignity to some degree recognized.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, the most well-known vernacular versification of the Passion of Christ in the Philippines, popularly known as the "Pasyon Henesis" or "Pasyon Pilapil," dramatizes the participation of Mary in the divine plan in a somewhat heretical portrayal of her arguing against God the Father Himself, out of her desire to keep Christ on earth as her only begotten son at the expense of the Divine mission.<sup>13</sup> As Tiziano's late Renaissance portrait of the Virgin Mary's *Pietà* shows (see figure 5), Mary's compassion situates itself at the same threshold that marks the baroque immersion of history into brute nature, where interpretation entails the mortification of the flesh and an appeal to the world for its co-participation in suffering. If myth, as Benjamin contends, imposes the fate of guilt on a fallen, creaturely existence (as the Virgilian "Retrato del Artista como Filipino" seems to imply), the Virgin Mary announces the expiation of that guilt in the affirmation of character before the face of destruction.

### WHAT IS TROPICAL BAROQUE?

To the spiritual *restitutio in integrum*, which introduces immortality, corresponds a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of Messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away.

—Walter Benjamin, "Theologico-Political Fragment"



Fig. 5. Tiziano, *Pietà*, ca. 1577

“The Baroque,” Deleuze writes, “introduces a new kind of story in which ... description replaces the object, the concept becomes narrative, and the subject becomes point of view or subject of expression” (127). By relaying the portrait into drama, drama into monologue, and monologue into a panorama of ruins, the transformations and distortions of baroque experience seek to orient an object; perhaps a monad in Leibnizian theodicy, capable of representing a world that appears inaccessible until we realize it already somehow resides within us. The implication, of course, is that in estimating or judging the object, *Portrait of the Artist as a Filipino*, we are also in a way judging our adequacy to meet the demands of a disenchanted world: for Joaquin, this act is a

constituent aspect of a substantive modernity, an affirmation of thought rather than a mere advance in technology or bureaucratic administration. With the baroque operation of folding the moment of inflection into the moment of inclusion, we arrive at the question we began with: why does Joaquin resurrect the baroque mode from the catastrophe of seventeenth-century Europe, as a lens for analyzing the Philippines in the postwar, post-colonial era? What is his intervention into the debates on modernization theory, the colonial legacy, and the writing of a nationalist historiography during that crucial decade of the 1950s in the Philippines?

To begin with, the catastrophe of the Pacific War waged in the Philippines aligned the experience of modernity in the Philippines with that of early modern Europe, in a manner akin to Benjamin's own reflections on baroque experience during the period of World War I. In both, the experience of modernity unfolds not according to a Hegelian dialectic of terror and Enlightenment, which brings about the realization of the universal subject of consciousness and the actualization of the nation-state.<sup>14</sup> Such a model, Joaquin would argue, is implicit in both the position of modernization theory and the nationalist revival of the 1896 Filipino revolution. In contrast to both, the baroque experience of modernity adopts a dialectic that explores the unfolding and refolding of a disenchanted, rooted, and transient point of view that identifies the site of modernity as an endless series of catastrophes, beginning at the dawn of Spanish colonialism and including the war in the Pacific. This perspective perpetually shuttles back and forth between the awareness of humanity's fall into creaturely, guilt-laden existence or fate, and the expiation of that state by mortification and the participation in the permanent transience of nature and history without appeal to divine intervention (see figure 6).

From a political standpoint, this critique of modernity as the onset of catastrophe aligns Joaquin with the nationalist critique of progress as achieved by the "developed countries" for the sake of the "developing" ones. Despite their divergent interpretations of Philippine history, both Nick Joaquin and nationalist historian Teodoro Agoncillo witnessed the destruction of Manila by the Japanese and Americans as a devastating, senseless consequence of the struggle between two imperialist powers on Philippine soil. But from an aesthetic standpoint, Joaquin's baroque moves in a direction opposite to that taken by the nationalist historians of the 1950s and 60s who sought to provide the bases for developing or cultivating a "Filipino consciousness" and the formation of a "national community" (Cesar Majul) predicated on the contestation and defiance of colonial rule. In the formulations of the nationalist project discussed above, this could only be done by



Fig. 6. US bombing of Binondo in Manila, February 1945  
(photo courtesy of *Time-Life* Books, Inc., ©1979)

first disavowing the impact of Spanish and American colonialism. Joaquin's resurrection of the baroque, with its relentless skepticism of any premature negations or dialectical overcomings of metaphysics by the rhetoric of secularization of either the "modernization" or nationalist variety, seems to suggest that such efforts too quickly and easily capitulate to the very philosophy of history that brought about modern imperialism in the first place.<sup>15</sup>

On a larger level, this baroque critique of modernity from a standpoint within it, this quixotic or Quixotesque adaptation of modern critique and its motifs (epiphraisis, allegory, the *camera obscura*) in order to seek refuge from the modern onset of disenchantment, can in certain ways appear to take a politically conservative hue—particularly when one considers its association with the Catholic Church. Indeed, scholars like Maravall and Anthony Cascardi have traced just such a tendency of baroque culture as a conservative, guided culture, one that sought to control the masses by articulating absolute sovereignty

as a consequence of their desire (Cascardi 105-31). Yet this “conservatism,” and especially its relationship to the extreme popularity of Christian fundamentalisms in the Philippines, allow us an insight into the nature of this conservatism among the masses, which is tied to the acutely perceived need for self-preservation in the face of terror (whether state-sponsored or revolutionary), colonial domination without hegemony, or modern warfare such as that unleashed by the great Pacific imperialist powers. Creaturely existence, existence as “mere life,” bare life, fully recognizes its abjection where it most encounters the brute force of violence, and struggles to move beyond the simple need to survive in the face of that violence.<sup>16</sup> While historians and social scientists of the 1950s felt confident in projects of modernization and community development in the Philippines after World War II—projects that necessitated a “rational” subject of an autonomous nation-state—Joaquin remained faithful to a culture that flourished in a centuries-long state of emergency:

Many an October evening, while watching this procession of the Naval ... [the Manila resident] has heard the cries and trumpets of the passing concourse dissolve into the cries and trumpets of battle ... and he has understood afresh how these various wars were really one, that, in this particular advocacy of hers, Our Lady has been concerned with the same conflict: the supreme and eternal one between pagan fate and Christian freedom ... her beads have ever been wielded against the same foe: despair—and in defense of the same article: spiritual unction. (34)

Indeed, it is in the context of the state of emergency that certain aspects of Christianity, embodied in figures like the Virgin Mary, acquire their greatest relevance and impact as figures of genius or character that alter fate. In a world where outside forces of destruction and corruption appear like fate on the horizon, Mary counters the catastrophe of her Son’s death with an affirmation of her free will to participate in the mystery of redemption. And in a society “blackmailed” by a post—or neocolonial Enlightenment that forces an abject “Third World” to march to the frenetic rhythm of a “First World” drum, Joaquin challenges us to study the affirmation of “freewill” in a context that extends as far back as the Synod of Manila in 1562, passes through the revolutions in France, Spain, and the Americas, crescendos in the years of the Filipino revolution at the turn of the century, and continues to pulse in both local and national struggles for independence and dignity.

This valorization of “Christian freedom” then, must not be read as necessary support

for Church institutions or policies issuing from the Vatican. Rather, it escapes the either / or blackmail of modernity-as-modernization—i.e., “no democracy without transnational corporate capitalism”—by seeking out the practice of freedom in the furthest reaches of the sixteenth century. As Joaquin’s essay on the Naval procession clearly highlights, one need not depend solely on the Enlightenment-inspired ideas of the nineteenth-century native priests and *ilustrados* in order to understand the collective practices of freedom and desire. Where the post-colonial historian feverishly searches the archives and newspapers for that threshold that will unite or synthesize an interrupted European Enlightenment, Joaquin’s Manileño is “at home in history,” history as a virtual present or plane of immanence:

When we talk today of the need for some symbol to fuse us into a great people, we seem to forget that all over the country there lies this wealth of a “usable past,” of symbols that have grown through and through the soil of the land and the marrow of its people.... But the past can become “usable” only if we be willing to enter into its spirit and to carry there a reasonably hospitable mind. As long as we regard it with hatred, contempt, and indignation, so long will it remain hateful and closed to us. (Joaquin 28, 34)

In uncovering what Ernst Bloch called “the principle of hope” in even the deepest obscurity of Christian dogma and the colonial legacy, we are able to bring fresh eyes to the contemplation of the portrait described in *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. The burning city may be said to be Manila in the years of the Pacific War; but it may equally be said to represent the centuries of shipwrecks, earthquakes, and discontinuous and uneven colonial rule, by which the West and native subject struggle to develop the terms of coexistence without the assimilation of one to the other. The reason that the son bearing the father out of the burning city is also the father, or carries the father’s face, is that both the revolutionary father and the post-colonial son belong to the same baroque “modernity”—a modernity that extends as far back as the colonial encounter, when coercion and freewill, fate and character, were first pitted against one another as competing frameworks for a new relationship.

But to rescue that sense of the past-as-present is a far cry from “saving” or preserving that past as some kind of national heritage or patrimony, some “proper” relationship of the present to the past. Such an interpretation goes against the complete

saturation of culture by history that Joaquin seeks to illuminate. Rather, the portrait demonstrates the very reversal of this proper relationship. The portrait illustrates how the *son gives birth to the father*, and how, in a likewise manner, the created work (the portrait) must give birth to the creator—the artist as Filipino, the artist as unmarried daughter (the sisters), the artist as broken and decrepit father, the artist as lone survivor and friend of the deceased (Bitoy). In typical baroque fashion, the painting is the fateful result of the drama that it retroactively emblemizes: it presides over the dramatic proceedings as their truth and fate, even as it undergoes its profanization by the aspirations and machinations of the characters in search of redemption. Only its “mortification” can prepare the conditions for Don Lorenzo’s “resurrection” from the obscurity of his room, insofar as profane experience sets in motion Candida and Paula’s discovery and exercise of their character, their *flibusterismo* or will-to-subversion (“*contra mundum!*”). Far from capitulation to the paternal legacy or patrimony, the daughters destroy it; and in that destruction they attune themselves to the experience of that impulse *throughout the whole of Philippine history*, including even that of the revolutionary father. The sisters “give birth” to the father’s revolution, render it visible, and multiply its consequences. In their task of criticism as destruction, the truth content of the portrait and the past are realized and consumed, not preserved or monumentalized, or signified as the “it was” of myth.<sup>17</sup>

A concluding juxtaposition of Joaquin’s baroque modernity in the colonial world with that of his contemporaries, thus, illustrates the divergent wellspring of his optimism when faced with the new challenges of an avowedly “post-colonial” but effectively “neo-colonial” society. Against both the positivism of modernization and the rhetoric of the unfinished revolution, Joaquin highlighted the immanence of catastrophe in the fashioning of character, opposed to identity (colonial or national). Opposed to both the pernicious quality of colonial domination and the resentment bred by “our lingering colonial complex,” Joaquin attempts to make visible another sense of time—one whose dialectics relinquishes the arrogance of modernization theory, the cynicism of the cultural object as fetish, and the guilt of the failed revolution. For Joaquin, the culmination of history relies not upon some far-flung future of achieved progress, nor upon some imagined past period or event that must be relived anaesthetically as a kind of existential narcotic or refuge from the disenchantment of the present. The culmination happens every day, as the “rhythm” of what Benjamin calls “messianic nature,” where what is, was, and will be work together for their common resolution or passing away. In a somewhat hyperbolic manner, it is this intimacy with the past that makes Joaquin’s artist-as-Filipino surprisingly modern. Forever displaced and interrupted or sidetracked from the project of nation-state building and

citizen-formation, the artist becomes familiar with its many entrances and exits, its dead-ends and escapes, even as she or he struggles to make a home in a world that God and man have utterly abandoned.

## NOTES

- 1 For a critique of modernization as a discourse in the Philippines, see Walden Bello, *Modernization: Its Impact on the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967).
- 2 This has been the enduring source of criticism for scholars studying the economy of underdevelopment since the sixties and seventies. See, for example, Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). For a brief essay on the experience of modernization as Westernization, see Immanuel Wallerstein, "Culture as Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System" in *The Essential Wallerstein*, (New York: New Press, 2000), 264-89.
- 3 The definition is general, and synthesizes the main thesis of Hans Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Thomas Robert Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); and the "normative content of modernity" discussed in Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (*supra* note 1). Michel Foucault's late essay, "What Is Enlightenment?" offers a broad yet striking formulation of modernity as "the critical ontology of ourselves ... not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them." See "What is Enlightenment?," trans. Catherine Porter, in *The Politics of Truth* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 132.
- 4 For a discussion on the Special Laws decree as the formal legitimacy of a state of exception in the archipelago, see John D. Blanco, *Vernacular Counterpoint: Filipino Enlightenment in a Late Colonial Context, 1837-1891*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2001, 7-8.
- 5 For McKinley's speech, see "Remarks to Methodist Delegation," in *The Philippines Reader*, eds. Daniel Schirmer and Stephen Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 22-23. The speech was originally published in *The Christian Advocate*, 22 January 1903, 17. For Apolinario Mabini's comments, see *La Revolución Filipina (con otros documentos de la época)*, ed. T.M. Kalaw, intro. Rafael Palma (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1931), 273 and 276.
- 6 See Fidel A. Reyes, "Birds of Prey," and Teodoro M. Kalaw, "Americanization," in *Rediscovery*, eds. Cynthia Nogales Lumbea and Teresita Gimenez Maceda (Quezon City: National Bookstore, Inc., 1982), 151-8.

7 La Naval de Manila celebrates the successful defense of Manila by Spaniards and natives alike against a Dutch fleet in the bay of Bolinao in 1646. The victory, against seemingly overwhelming odds, was ascribed and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. See the title essay in Nick Joaquin, *La Naval de Manila and Other Essays* (Manila: Albert S. Florentino, 1964), 15-35.

8 Cf. In particular Agoncillo, in Hila, *The Historicism of Teodoro Agoncillo*; and Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Services, 1975), 9-10.

9 This motif is a common one in Joaquin's work, and may be seen in his novel *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (Makati, Metro Manila : Bookmark, 1991), as well as his shorter pieces.

10 Walter Benjamin identifies this distillation as "the mortification of works" by interpretation: "Criticism means the mortification of works...not [the] awakening of the consciousness in living works, but the settlement of knowledge in dead ones" (*Origins* 182). For a classic reading of this painting, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 3-16.

11 For debates on the role of the Virgin Mary, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*, part 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 38-50 and 261-2.

12 See, for example, Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 83-91.

13 *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal ni Jesuchristong Panginoon Natin na Sucat Ipag-alab ang Puso nang Sinomang Babasa* (anonymous); for a commentary on the passage in question, see Bienvenido Lumbera, *Tagalog Poetry 1571-1900* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1986), 95-7.

14 Hegel discusses this dialectic in *Phänomenologie des Geists*, 1807, VI.B.III. See "Absolute freedom and terror," in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1910), 599-610.

15 It is for this reason that Caroline Hau, for example, likens Joaquin's play to the historiography of Reynaldo Ileto, along with the work of the Subaltern Studies collective that exposes the consequences of "domination without hegemony" in the failure of bourgeois nationalism but also in the shaping of a colonial culture. See *Necessary Fictions* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 131-2.

16 This critique is fully outlined in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

17 One finds striking resonances here between Joaquin and Giorgio Agamben's reading of Walter Benjamin: see Agamben, "Walter Benjamin and the Demonic: Happiness and Historical Redemption," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 138-159. "Benjamin therefore has in mind a relation to the past that would both shake off the past and bring it into the hands of humanity, which amounts to a very unusual way of conceiving the problem of tradition. Here tradition does not aim to perpetuate and repeat the past but to lead it to its decline in a context in which past and present, content of transmission and act of transmission, what is unique and what is repeatable are wholly identified" (153).

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