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# WHAT EMERGES FROM A “RUINED WORLD”: THE DUELING PHILIPPINE HUMANISMS OF NICK JOAQUIN

Juan Carlos Coden Fermin

**ABSTRACT.** For canonical Philippine writer Nick Joaquin, the American occupation rendered insurrectionary action unfeasible. Thus, Joaquin is often read as lionizing the Spanish period in comparison. I challenge such readings to argue that Joaquin’s engagement with the Spanish past reflects a search for the conditions of possibility for revolution. I examine how, in three of his works, Joaquin commendably depicts nonnormative, counter-hegemonic examples of a Philippine historical and revolutionary subject. Though the tenability of his representations remains delimited by a cosmopolitan mestizo episteme, I argue that nonetheless, his efforts represent an attempt to *transcend* the limitations of his own positionality.

The writings of Nick Joaquin largely concern the shadows of Spanish and American imperialism on Philippine society, bringing to bear the multifarious layers of psychic fragmentation (for the colonized Filipinx) and physical ruination (for the colonized Philippine cityscape) that comprise the archipelago’s postcolonial context. Across Joaquin’s writings, a clear sense emerges that the United States’ interventions on Philippine language and culture have thrown Filipinx identity-formation into a crisis. Generally, Joaquin appears to lionize the Spanish colonial period as the American occupation has proven untenable for insurrectionary action. For instance, it could be argued that, in the play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, Joaquin is speaking through the character of Don Perico—a friend of the titular portrait’s artist, Don Lorenzo—who laments what has been lost between his generation and the next: an appreciation for the Classical tradition, culturally disseminated onto Filipinx by the Spanish. Likewise, in Joaquin’s work, the United States’ influence on the Philippines is more often an object of critique than Spain’s. This can motivate a critique of Joaquin that would claim he harkens back to the Spanish system that imposed a colonial caste hierarchy, from which mestizos like Joaquin benefitted. Mestizos, or Filipinos of mixed descent with foreign ancestry, had greater

access to a European education (much like Fanon's example of 'the colonized intellectual' in *The Wretched of the Earth*), such that the *Ilustrado* movement of male Filipino intellectuals could eventually campaign for reforms of Spain's dominion over the Philippines. In contrast, American neocolonialism largely imposed the structural homogenization of Filipinx, such that mestizos lost the relative privilege they held under the Spanish. Joaquin is even "known locally for his nostalgic take on the Hispanic aspect of Philippine culture."<sup>1</sup> Writing from 1955, scholar Lourdes Pablo applauds Joaquin for his supposed "awareness of the value of [Filipinx'] Spanish past, the past which, with its precious Christian heritage, Joaquin adopts as a standard of comparison to uphold the morally confused and spiritually barren modern world."<sup>2</sup> From popular and academic reception to Joaquin's works, there is a clear belief that he is invested in romanticizing the Spanish past. However, certain moments in Joaquin's works insinuate a greater ambivalence towards the Spanish period than characters like Perico might initially suggest, such that Perico's valorization of European values must be called into question. Perhaps there is another reason for Joaquin's revisiting the Spanish colonial past, then. Perhaps Joaquin searches for the conditions of possibility for *revolution*—something foreclosed under American imperialism—precisely because the revolution of Perico, the revolution of the *Ilustrados*, never properly ended. In the short stories "Doña Jerónima" and "Summer Solstice," Joaquin continues his search while also displaying an investment in counterhegemonic subjectivities that exceed the masculinist cosmopolitanism of Perico. Joaquin's evocations of both indigeneity and femininity respond to such shortcomings. Taken altogether, these stories feature Joaquin's negotiations with humanisms that make different claims about who qualifies as a proper Philippine historical and revolutionary subject. At the risk of reproducing colonial and patriarchal paradigms, Joaquin consciously highlights indigeneity and femininity as alternative and insurgent humanisms to Perico's. "Indigeneity" here is not the espousal of a 'pure-blooded' Filipino condition, but the elevation of the natural landscape—as well as precolonial folklore, practices, and traditions—to counter Spanish colonial hegemony. The patriarchal structures concomitant with the latter provoke Joaquin's emphasis on "femininity," elevating the subjectivity of the Filipina woman that is not only effaced by Spanish colonial patriarchy, but by the predominantly male and mestizo *Ilustrados*.

Because Joaquin was awarded recognition as National Artist of the Philippines in 1976 for his literary contributions, it becomes crucial to unpack the implications of Joaquin's depictions—the acclaim that his canonicity commands calls for an examination of his works and what, ideologically, they produce. However, I am not interested in undermining Joaquin's achievements; rather, I seek to *understand* how Joaquin's search for the conditions of possibility for revolution, while delimited by a mestizo episteme, nonetheless *transcends* such limitations. Where Joaquin challenges a cosmopolitan mestizo/mestiza worldview in *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, I will demonstrate how his project

continues in “Doña Jerónima” and “Summer Solstice,” where he construes indigeneity and femininity as markers for new radical subjectivities.

As seen in the anxieties of Perico, there is a particular humanism at stake in Joaquin’s play, *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*. The play’s main characters, Paula and Candida Marasigan, live with their infirm elderly father, Don Lorenzo, in Intramuros. Before the beginning of the play, Lorenzo has painted for them the titular portrait: a depiction of Aeneas with his father, Anchises, on his back as they flee a besieged Troy. Crucially, Bitoy Camacho, a family friend of the Marasigans, observes that “[their] father has painted himself both as Aeneas and as Anchises.”<sup>3</sup> The image is thus considerably evocative to many characters in the play, itself beholden to their anguished responses. One reaction comes from Perico, who first laments:

My generation spoke European, the present generation speaks American. Who among the young writers now can read my poems? My poems may as well be written in Babylonian! And who among the writers of my time can say that his poems have generated new poets? No one—no, not even poor Pepe Rizal! The fathers of the young poets of today are from across the sea. They are not our sons; they are foreigners to us, and we do not exist for them.<sup>4</sup>

As someone who chose politics over art (with Lorenzo having chosen the opposite), Perico mourns his forsaken potential as a poet, but attributes the demise of his aspirations to circumstances beyond his control. Specifically, Perico attends to an artistic crisis symptomatic of a generational split between those who “spoke European” and those who “speak American”—a split catalyzed by the American occupation of the Philippines, despite the latter declaring independence from Spain. By claiming that “the young poets of today ... are not our sons; they are foreigners to us,” Perico disavows neocolonial American influences on Philippine art, language, and culture. He also condemns the consummation of those influences by the arrival of the “American mestizos,” a “population of children of mixed parentage” catalyzed by the “social interaction between ‘bachelor colonials,’ American males dressed in military and civilian garb, and Filipinas.”<sup>5</sup> Perico’s critiques of contemporary art reflect his rejection of the American neocolonial regime, but he does not seem to consider the raced and gendered power imbalances that occurred between American men and Filipina women during this period.

Though such an observation might sound like a digression, the fact it appears so illuminates certain assumptions about Philippine nationalism embedded in Perico’s claims. For despite belong-

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3. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 303.

4. Joaquin, 366–367.

5. Nicholas Trajano Molnar, “Introduction” in *American Mestizos, the Philippines, and the Malleability of Race: 1898–1961* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2017), 3.

ing to a mestizo class formed during the Spanish colonial period, Perico repudiates this cultural split with American mestizos to advance his own essentialized view of Filipinx identity—a nationalism untainted by American influence. Regarding the painting, Perico says:

Look at your father up there. He has realized the tragedy of his generation. He, too, has been unable to sing. He, too, finds himself stranded in a foreign land. He, too, must carry himself to his own grave because there is no succeeding generation to carry him forward. His art will die with him. It is written in a dead language, it is written in Babylonian ... And we all end alike—all of us old men from the last century—we all end the same. The rich and the poor, the failures and the successes, those who moved forward and those who stayed behind—our fate is the same! All, all of us must carry our down dead selves to the common grave ... We have begotten no sons; we are a lost generation!<sup>6</sup>

With the understanding that Aeneas and Anchises are analogues for a younger and older Lorenzo, Perico insists upon a generational cessation that has occurred under the American occupation. Whatever poetic sensibilities the two men shared, they have failed to legibly pass on those values to future Philippine artists, thus securing their own obsolescence. Hence, Perico believes Lorenzo must indeed “carry himself to his own grave,” despite him having three daughters and a son. Strangely, Perico does not take Candida, Paula, Manolo, and Pepang—the grown Marasigan children—to be adequate inheritors of whatever tradition he shared with their father. While none of the Marasigans have carried a similar passion for art into their own adulthoods—even showing disdain for the composition of the titular portrait—Perico refuses to entertain the possibility of them reawakening to new sensibilities or pursuits. During the twilight of the Spanish period, Perico and Lorenzo cultivated a sense of radical agency that was coterminous with their artistic endeavors, an agency Perico solely attributes to his generation. Somehow, this agency has not been transmitted to the younger Marasigans. Even as he makes these pronouncements to Candida’s face, Perico is not prompted to question his own convictions.

While the Marasigan children did not grow up to share identical values to their father, Perico maintains an essentialized view of the artistic revolutionary subject that necessarily excludes a second generation—almost as if the outcome of the Marasigans’ upbringings would have made no difference. For whether he knows this or not, Perico performs this foreclosure out of an investment in a revolution that has not come to pass but instead remains painfully unresolved. Thus, Perico laments the unfinished revolutionary moment of the *Ilustrados*:

Oh, they talk a lot of solemn nonsense now about the Revolution—we were not solemn! The spirit of those days was

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6. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 367.

one of boyish fun, of boyish mischief! Just imagine us—with our top hats and swagger sticks and mustachios—and imagine the secret meetings in the dead of the night; the skull on the table; the dreadful oaths; the whispers and flickering candlelight; and the signing of our names in our own blood! Oh, we were all hopeless romantics! And the Revolution was a wild melodrama in the style of Galdos! And I drank it all up—all the color and the excitement and the romance! I was a poet then; the world existed only that I might put it to music!<sup>7</sup>

According to Perico, what has not survived into the present moment is this persona of the cosmopolitan Filipino: male, educated in Europe, brought up in the Classical tradition, and fervent with the romantic promises of revolution. Perico appeals to a masculinist, Westernized conception of Philippine nationalism—an image of the Filipino revolutionary—by taking this conception to be irretrievable, as if the only key to transcending the colonial moment has been lost. Reflecting nostalgically on his youth, Perico proclaims what has been lost in the aforementioned generational divide:

Oh, I am amused when I hear these young critics accusing your father of escaping into the dead world of the past! And I pity these young critics! When we were their age, our minds were not so parochial ... We had Homer and Virgil in our bones ... It was as natural for Pepe Rizal to give his novel a Latin title as for Juan Luna to paint gladiators. Oh, you should have heard us—with our Latin tags and our classical allusions and our scholastic terminology—<sup>8</sup>

For Perico, the conditions of the American occupation have made this archetype of the cosmopolitan Philippine revolutionary impossible to recreate, and his retirement from poetry and into politics represents his surrender to this neocolonial paradigm shift. The transition from Spanish to American colonial repression stifled the revolutionary fervor of Perico's contemporaries, snuffing out the continuance of that fervor into future generations. However, we cannot presume that Perico serves as a mouthpiece for Joaquin's own perspective on the Spanish period, such that Perico's lamentations are also Joaquin's. In fact, Paula's actions later in the play—directly in relation to the fate of the portrait—call Perico's pronouncements about revolutionary agency into question. Specifically, she destroys Lorenzo's painting, and invites Candida to claim equal responsibility for the act.<sup>9</sup> To Candida, Paula says, "We are free again! We are together again—you and I and father ... Don't you see, Candida? This is the sign he has been waiting for—ever since he gave us that picture, ever since he offered us our release—the sign that we had found our faith again, that we had found our courage again!"<sup>10</sup> Through

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7. Joaquin, 367-368.

8. Joaquin, 358-359.

9. Joaquin, 418.

10. Joaquin, 419.

its own destruction, this portrait—conceived as the locus for Lorenzo’s artistic achievements, his daughters’ salvation, and the trappings of a poetic age that Perico mourns—becomes a source of artistic freedom.

The play even insinuates the revolutionary potential of Lorenzo’s children through their access to the *Ilustrado* tradition, which foregrounds Candida and Paula’s eventual defiance of it once they destroy the painting. As the Marasigan siblings converse with Perico, Pepang reflects on a time when they were very young, playing games of pretend with their father as they emulated the Greek Olympians. “When [Lorenzo] played Jupiter,” Pepang says, “you could almost see the lightnings round his head ... You forgot that it was all only a game—you really felt yourself on Mount Olympus.”<sup>11</sup> In the play, Pepang and Manolo serve as foils to Candida and Paula—the former pair of siblings having grown frustrated with paying for their ancestral home in Intramuros, while Lorenzo, Candida, and Paula struggle to support themselves. This frustration compounds Pepang and Manolo’s disillusionment with the artistic sensibilities of their father, yet Pepang’s reflections on the painting inspire her to conjure the aforementioned tableau from her past: a scene of her family indulging in Classical imagery that was primarily the domain of Perico and his *Ilustrado* contemporaries. Later, Paula—who is “*smiling dreamily at*” the portrait—even confesses that “I’ve always wanted to go to Europe. Spain and France and Italy ... I’ve always wanted to go to all those places where my father lived when he was a young man.”<sup>12</sup> However, despite these brief moments of wistfulness for the idealistic lifestyle of their father, Pepang and Manolo hold a cynical exchange over the maintenance of their ancestral home, and the stagnation afflicting their sisters’ prolonged stay there. “They are happy enough here,” Manolo says, “they have their own way of life.” “What way of life?” Pepang replies, “Hiding from the world in this old house; turning over the family albums; chattering over childhood memories; worshipping at father’s feet ... Is *that* your idea of life, Manolo?”<sup>13</sup> Hypocritically, Pepang then proceeds to “chatter over childhood memories” in Perico’s presence, reflecting fondly on the same memories that she mocks Candida and Paula for cherishing.

Taken together, Pepang’s declarations insinuate an ambivalence towards her father’s legacy: a longing for the Classical ideals and hopes he instilled upon his children at an early age, and a disillusionment as those same ideals and hopes remain unrealized. Hence Bitoy Camacho narrates the play saying, “I told myself that Lorenzo and my father had taught me nothing but lies. My childhood was a lie; the nineteen–twenties were a lie; beauty and faith and honor and innocence were all just lies.”<sup>14</sup> In the titular portrait, the Classical gran-

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11. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 360.

12. Joaquin, 392.

13. Joaquin, 356.

14. Joaquin, 348–349.

deur evoked by the *Aeneid* coexists with the escape from ruination it necessarily depicts. Aeneas and Anchises serve as twin specters of the promises made by Lorenzo and his contemporaries: promises of “beauty and faith and honor and innocence” left unrealized. For Paula and Candida, their ownership of the painting burdens them with the unresolved hopes of their father. John D. Blanco corroborates this:

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 disenchanted world after their father had fought for the sake of a noble ideal. 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 engineered by inequality.<sup>15</sup>

Oddly enough, the sisters’ “guilt ... for having accommodated to a disenchanted world” also afflicts Perico, whose abandonment of poetry for politics catalyzes his mourning over Lorenzo’s lost “noble ideal.” Even as he and the Marasigans share guilt over their disenchantment with those ideals, Perico does not consider them the inheritors of Lorenzo’s revolutionary ideals—not even Manolo, who, despite being male, seems excluded for being ‘Americanized’ per the generational divide Perico laments. This all reinforces my position that Perico advances a masculinist, cosmopolitan, and European idea of the revolutionary subject.

In Paula and Candida’s destruction of the painting—that which embodies Lorenzo and Perico’s past investments in the Classics—the sisters simultaneously refute those same investments. This rejection eerily resembles a critical moment in Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*:

In its narcissistic monologue the colonialist bourgeoisie, by way of its academics, had implanted in the minds of the colonized that the essential values—meaning Western values—remain eternal despite all errors attributable to man. The colonized intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas and there in the back of his mind stood a sentinel on duty guarding the Greco-Roman pedestal. But during the struggle for liberation, when the colonized intellectual touches base again with his people, this artificial sentinel is smashed to smithereens. All the Mediterranean values, the triumph of the individual, of enlightenment and Beauty turn into pale, lifeless trinkets. All those discourses appear a jumble of dead words.<sup>16</sup>

Here, as in the rest of his book, Fanon offers a generalized portrait of the “colonized intellectual,” a more privileged variation of a colonized subject—neither of whom are exclusive to Black colo-

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15. John D. Blanco, “Baroque Modernity and the Colonial World: Aesthetics and Catastrophe in Nick Joaquin’s *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*,” *Kritika Kultura*, no. 4, (March 2004): 19.

16. Frantz Fanon, “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 11.

nized populations. Though Paula and Candida are not “colonized intellectuals” in the same vein as Lorenzo, they nonetheless manage to “smash” the “artificial sentinel” of Western, Greco-Roman values “to smithereens”—quite literally, in fact, through the destruction of the titular portrait. If the sisters’ interpretation of Lorenzo’s intentions is correct, that the painting was meant to be destroyed and thus liberate them, then Lorenzo has intuited the upper limits of the ideals he once shared with Perico. Because Perico’s interpretation of the painting is questionable, the play itself does not mourn the Westernized *Ilustrado* idealism he once valorized. Perico sees in the painting a model of radical agency that the play considers obsolete, as it is far too predicated on the affordances of a masculinist, colonial humanism. This humanism has set the criteria for who can be considered a revolutionary Philippine subject—thus excluding Paula and Candida’s generation—and the destruction of the portrait heralds the destruction of this tradition. Thus, Paula proclaims, “I *am* free!”<sup>17</sup> To unpack what Paula and Candida’s newfound freedom entails, Blanco argues:

Only [the painting’s] “mortification” can prepare the conditions for 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 *filibusterismo* 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.<sup>18</sup>

In the liberatory gesture of destroying the painting, Candida and Paula lay claim to a tradition that they were implicitly barred from, whether for the generational divide Perico laments or for the mere fact of their being women. Because the painting’s destruction “attune[s] [them] to the experience of that impulse *throughout the whole of Philippine history*,” Candida and Paula reveal that they have always belonged to the revolutionary tradition that Perico now mourns: a tradition that—through their survival—they keep alive, and—through their iconoclastic act—they *transcend*. The sisters’ own revolutionary agency, initially stunted by disillusionment in their father’s art and his inability to prosper under the American occupation, is recovered by severing themselves from the weight of Lorenzo’s “paternal legacy.” His gift to his daughters is not so much the painting itself, but the revolutionary act entailed by its eventual destruction—an act that Perico cannot foresee, given his attempt to “have the painting donated to a new Philippine government, anxious to ground its legitimacy in cultural relics as well as polit-

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17. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 417.

18. John D. Blanco, “Baroque Modernity and the Colonial World: Aesthetics and Catastrophe in Nick Joaquin’s *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*,” *Kritika Kultura*, no. 4, (March 2004): 29.

ical calculation.”<sup>19</sup> In failing to recognize Candida and Paula’s efficacy, Perico forecloses *himself* to recovering that same revolutionary energy.

This causes Perico to overlook Paula and Candida’s radical agential capacities—that which they eventually employ by destroying the painting. In advancing this idea, however, Perico fails to notice a striking absence in the painting: something that, with his own Classical training, he should have caught. Earlier, I quoted Perico’s claim that Lorenzo “has realized the tragedy of his generation ... He, too, must carry himself to his own grave because there is no succeeding generation to carry him forward. His art will die with him.”<sup>20</sup> Though Bitoy establishes early on that Lorenzo seems to be both Aeneas and Anchises, I wonder why Perico, a character who claims that he and his fellow *Ilustrados* “had Homer and Virgil in [their] bones,”<sup>21</sup> is not curious about the glaring absence of *Ascanius*: the young son of Aeneas who joins the flight from Troy and represents a future generation after the present (Aeneas) and the past (Anchises). It is possible that, by excluding *Ascanius*, Lorenzo himself has disregarded any investment in a future generation. However, I have established that the painting does not necessarily represent the tragic resignation that Perico assigns to it. But because Perico’s idea of a revolutionary subject is directly tied to a supposed knowledge of the Classics, perhaps the absence of *Ascanius* *insinuates the obsolescence of all the portrait represents*—including the Western humanism that Perico imputes onto it. By physically destroying the painting, Paula and Candida reject the need for the Western, masculinist values it embodies. Just as *Ascanius* exists outside the painting’s boundaries, so do they.

From what I have established, Perico no longer serves as a conceivable surrogate for Joaquin’s views—not when the play actively works to contradict Perico’s humanist investments. Once again writing in 1955, Lourdes Pablo makes the questionable claim that “The essential elements in the [the play’s] conflict are obviously the sincere idealism and the high integrity of a past whose vivifying feature is its Faith ... and the opportunistic materialism and moral indifference, not to say downright laxity of the modern age of the atheist and the agnostic.”<sup>22</sup> This reading would certainly hold if Perico’s lamentations are taken at face value. As I have demonstrated, however, the play’s generational divide cannot be so easily dichotomized that the newer generation is also more decadent. In destroying the portrait, Paula and Candida begin to forge the conditions of possibility for a future unencumbered by the Spanish past, “the color and the excitement and the romance” of Perico’s youth.<sup>23</sup> Pablo’s argument has likely contributed to current notions of “Joaquin’s

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19. Blanco, 18-19.

20. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 367.

21. Joaquin, 359.

22. Lourdes Busuego Pablo, “The Spanish Tradition in Nick Joaquin,” *Philippine Studies* 3, no. 2 (1955): 202.

23. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 367-368.

alleged nostalgia,” but scholar Marie Arong suggests that Joaquin’s attitude “has always been more than just a recuperation of the Hispanic past. In his attempt ‘to bring in the [Hispanic] perspective,’ Joaquin not only manages to problematize the notion of an ‘authentic Filipino,’ but he also questions the excessive nostalgia for the very Hispanic past he was trying to recover.”<sup>24</sup> Joaquin seeks horizons for Philippine subjectivity by diving into the wreck of the Spanish period, but like Arong, I am skeptical that he uncritically genuflects to its trappings.

However, Joaquin does not seem satisfied with investing radical agency *entirely* in the hands of Paula and Candida. The sisters do have an emancipatory moment by destroying the painting, and even radically subvert the Philippine humanism of Perico and Lorenzo’s past. However, I must ask if they have simply reorganized the terms of that humanism, such that Filipina mestizas can now be the bearers of radical agency. It is worth noting, after all, that even as the Marasigans struggle financially during the play, they nonetheless benefited from the pleasures of high society for a considerable time. As Bitoy testifies in his narration:

I grew up during the hard, hard nineteen-thirties, when everybody seemed to have become poor and shabby and disillusioned and ill-tempered. I drifted from one job to another ... Sometimes I felt I had never been clean, never been happy; my childhood seemed incredible—something that had happened to someone else. When I was working at the piers, I often passed this way late at night. I would see the windows of the Marasigan house all lighted up, and I would hear them up there, talking and laughing—Lorenzo, Candida, Paula, and their little shabby old folk ... I would stand out here in the street—tired and dirty and hungry and sleepy ... But I never felt any desire to go up there again; I despised all those people.<sup>25</sup>

Though Bitoy is not outwardly resentful towards the Marasigans when they interact, his narration attends to a disparity in privilege said family enjoys that he does not. The play centers the hardships of the Marasigans, but Joaquin takes the time to reveal Bitoy’s animosity towards them. If not for Bitoy’s interlocation, the play would imply that the capacity to challenge and subvert notions of Philippine revolutionary agency is solely the domain of the mestizo class. But even as the play goes out of its way to question Perico’s commitment to a masculinist revolutionary agency, Bitoy’s complaints from an underprivileged position address the mestizo/mestiza category under which both humanisms—Perico’s and the Marasigan sisters’—are subsumed. However, Joaquin does not explore the ‘lower’ end of the Spanish-imposed mestizo hierarchy and Philippine indigeneity in *Portrait* as much as in the short stories “Doña Jerónima” and “Summer Solstice.”

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24. Marie Rose B. Arong, “Nick Joaquin’s *Candido’s Apocalypse*: Re-imagining the Gothic in a Postcolonial Philippines,” *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*, no. 6, (November 2016): 118.

25. Nick Joaquin, “A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 348.

While offering a more direct engagement with indigeneity, the short story “Doña Jerónima” also supports Arong’s claim that Joaquin “questions the excessive nostalgia” for the Spanish period. As I will illustrate, the story exhibits a clear tension between an investment in transcendent ideals (the Christian faith) and in worldly immanence (Jerónima’s pagan-ness). Even though “Doña Jerónima” is set in the colonial past, Joaquin does not labor to glorify it. Instead, the circumstances of its ending generate a distinct ambivalence. First, the story concerns a Spanish Archbishop of Manila who spends a year marooned on an island before being recovered by a passing ship. During his isolation, the Archbishop is heavily preoccupied with “the urge to find a ‘stillness’—this ‘stillness’ that he only discovered once he was removed from the modern world and plunged into the natural, pre-Catholic world—though what this stillness is or what it represents he fails to grasp, knowing only that it is within him.”<sup>26</sup> He seems to escape the mystery of this “stillness” upon returning to civil society, to whom “the marvel of his sojourn on the island had grown into legend in the retelling, and he himself had become such a figure of miracle,”<sup>27</sup> prized by the Philippine masses for the fortitude he seems to have gained from his faith. Despite this, the Archbishop, while marooned, had actually “pondered upon himself and had seen what a vanity, what a fraud his life had been. Youthful ambition had probed where lay advancement and had picked the Church as the quickest avenue to the high places of the world; and he had entered religion craving not piety but power.”<sup>28</sup> From this description, Joaquin holds the Spanish period as an object of critique, and not simply a reliable point of return. The Archbishop, for that matter, turns out to have abandoned a Filipina lover in his quest for power: the titular Doña Jerónima herself. Jerónima appears to him as a ghostly figure, “veiled whitely,” who has not aged since the day he abandoned her: a haunting apparition beholden to her very own “stillness” that the Archbishop cannot flee from as he did the island.<sup>29</sup> Jerónima then demands that the Archbishop honor his past vow to her—a vow he had forsaken for his later vow to the Church.<sup>30</sup> When the Archbishop eventually does take responsibility for leaving her, Jerónima feels a sudden remorse for terrorizing him.<sup>31</sup> Though first he suggests her “placement in a house of holy women,” he agrees to her counterproposal of seeking solitude in a cave by the Pasig river to pray in the tradition of Christian asceticism.<sup>32</sup> Through this act, Jerónima

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26. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, “The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin,” *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 487.

27. Nick Joaquin, “Doña Jerónima” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 132.

28. Joaquin, 132.

29. Joaquin, 137.

30. Joaquin, 137.

31. Joaquin, 148.

32. Joaquin, 149.

establishes herself as a devout Christian. Despite this, she becomes ostracized by the local community because they nonetheless perceive her as something external to the values of the Church: a threatening symbol of pre-colonial paganism. Though these two characters ultimately reconcile and achieve a sort of apotheosis into the natural landscape, Joaquin's capacity to imbue a radical agency in Jerónima reveals an effort to think beyond his subject position as a mestizo. Jerónima's narrative represents Joaquin's dual investment in indigeneity and femininity as harbingers for radical change. Though in tethering Jerónima to the landscape, Joaquin risks recreating colonial logics by encoding femininity onto indigenous land, rendering it a domain to be tilled and cultivated by more masculinist imperatives. In searching for the conditions of possibility for revolution, however, this might strike Joaquin as a necessary risk: a problem of representation that Jerónima must move *through* to achieve some form of emancipation on the other side.

Jerónima establishes her connection to indigenous land by mentioning her affinity for Philippine fauna—specifically, bats—and it is by evoking this connection that she reminds the Archbishop of their past. Of bats, she says:

The lovers of the woodland, my lord, know it is time to part when the great bats rumble overhead. The bats there are the friends of lovers, announcing the approach of night no less than its end, and hiding with their wings the trysts on the riverbank. The lovers lie all night in each other's arms until the bats warn of the daylight. How many lovers have cursed and blessed them! Such horrid huge creatures, black and vile. But O they were love's angels to me, and the canopy of love, as many a time said I to my lover when the wings rumbled.<sup>33</sup>

Although she first describes bats as “horrid huge creatures” who are “black and vile,” Jerónima's subsequent assertion that bats are “the canopy of love” suggests she is only speaking from the perspective of onlookers who misunderstand bats' true importance, which overshadows the misconception that bats are cursed. For her to claim that “the bats warn of the daylight,” Jerónima has an awareness of bats' behavioral patterns and usefulness to human activity. Between the “lovers of the woodland” and the “great bats” who “rumble overhead,” there is a distinct symbiosis inapplicable to the villagers who later persecute Jerónima. This symbiosis, made visible to those like Jerónima who are attuned to the natural landscape, remains utterly mystifying to villagers historically inundated with the teachings of Spanish Catholicism. Though the Archbishop was once a victim of a similar mystification, his disillusionment with the Church while on the island precedes a further—and very literal—disillusionment catalyzed by his interactions with Jerónima. For as the Archbishop grows remorseful for once abandoning Jerónima, he realizes that his hermitage is another hollow pretension, another mystification:

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33. Joaquin, 139.

And peering into the hut, where he had spent so many hours of contemplation, he felt no nostalgia for his time there but rather a deep embarrassment, knowing that the contemplative had been no less an absurdity than the popular holy man—one more masquerade, one more disguise. The fleer from illusion was himself an illusion; and this hut but one more shell to be shed, like desert isle or cloister or hose and doublet.<sup>34</sup>

Notably, the Archbishop only comes to understand this upon reuniting with Jerónima. Just as he was once marooned on a deserted island—and thus having had no choice but to expose himself to nature—his proximity to Jerónima is, by extension, a renewed proximity to nature. On both occasions, he achieves a form of demystification that crystallizes in his mind upon realizing that the “fleer from illusion was himself an illusion.” Just as being a “popular holy man” entailed an investment in transcendent beliefs that shunned the world’s immanence, the Archbishop’s hermitage by the Pasig River entails a similar flight—a literal, as opposed to ideological, seclusion—and he finally recognizes it as such. Compelled by Jerónima’s reappearance in his life to contemplate the natural landscape, the Archbishop turns to a symbol she already evokes, that of bats:

Unable to bear the sight of the cell that now seemed a prison, he went out to the grove, and down to the edge of the river, the benevolent river, the brown river that had played with him in childhood and proffered the first love of youth. The water was a mere gleam of ripple to the wind in the dark of the moon. The night was as black as bats’ land upriver; and he thought how wise the bats were to shun daylight and choose darkness, when the world drops its mask and lies unguarded, in the innocence of sleep. But he had prayed for light, which disguises, and not for darkness, which unclothes, revealing secrets in lovers’ bed or dreamer’s cry. Only the bats saw the world naked.<sup>35</sup>

His contemplation of the Pasig River and its importance in his youth reveal what has been lost in his rise to power as an Archbishop. By committing himself to the Catholic Church, the Archbishop has by extension committed himself to a Western colonialist project, and in so doing has severed himself from a connection to the natural Philippine landscape. Granted, he is Spanish, and thus only ostensibly possesses that claim before forsaking it for organized religion. But for him to intuit that “Only the bats saw the world naked,” he understands that no bat is a “fleer from illusion” like himself. Rather, despite their limited vision, bats’ eyes are already unclouded by ideology, by the hegemonic forces of Spanish colonialism that circumscribe the Archbishop’s rise to power. It is no coincidence, then, that for the Archbishop, both his time on the island and his time with Jerónima have trivialized any pretext of such power. Rather than valorize the Spanish period,

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34. Joaquin, 144.

35. Joaquin, 145.

Joaquin challenges its trappings by evoking a severe contrast between the Church as the encroachment of a foreign imperial power and the indigenous landscape as a site of ideological and existential liberation.

The tension between the Spanish Church and Philippine paganism is reinforced by Jerónima's decision to become a chthonic being, retreating to a cave to "dwell there, as penitent, as an anchorite, to expiate [her] sins and to grope [her] way to heaven."<sup>36</sup> However, despite taking on an ascetic Christian practice, the effects of Jerónima's actions appear pagan to the villagers:

When she took up abode in the cave, wondrous things happened to the villages nearby. The river that had been niggard now gave fish in abundance; rain fell in its season and fell prodigally; field and orchard flowed with fruit; cattle fattened and multiplied; barren women suddenly quickened. But the villagers, instead of exulting, shook with superstitious dread and murmured how all this was too good to be true, and therefore could not be good, since what but evil could spring from the illusions of witchcraft? In no one's memory existed a time when bats haunted this region, but now a swarm of them flocked round the cave of the woman on the riverbank; they came at her call; she had been spied talking to them and fondling the black beasts; and the villagers whispered that the woman herself turned into a bat at night and roamed the countryside, sucking the blood of sleepers. Therefore was her cave shunned by the villagers, and stoned by children; and she dared set no foot outside her grove on the riverbank.<sup>37</sup>

Noteworthy here is the villagers' rejection of Jerónima's authentic asceticism, whereas the Archbishop's inauthentic asceticism during his marooning elevated his status against his will. And whereas no one witnessed the Archbishop's sojourn, many witness Jerónima's. Both instances reinforce the hegemony of the Catholic Church and the resulting attitudes of colonized Filipinos, however. The Archbishop's isolation is interpreted as a testament to the powers of religious asceticism, and Jerónima's as a testament to the ungodly wickedness of anything beyond the Church's parameters—despite the fact that Jerónima is not practicing any witchcraft. By remarking that "In no one's memory existed a time when bats haunted this region," Joaquin's narration makes a call to the Philippines' pre-colonial period, to a time when the creaturely, immanent phenomena of the landscape was not mystified to the local populace by the mechanisms of Spanish colonialism. Jerónima stands, then, as a symbol contradicting—if not outright resisting—the protracted reach of Western ideology that descended upon the Philippines under Spanish rule. Just as Paula and Candida reject Perico's commitment to a cosmopolitan Western humanism in *Portrait*, Jerónima's embrace of the landscape

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36. Joaquin, 149.

37. Joaquin, 150.

rejects the transcendent ideals of Christianity. Lily Tope attends to this rejection by delineating Jerónima's presence from that of the Church:

Mistress of the body and soul of the colonized, the Church is a daunting rival. The religious caverns in the Cathedral where the Archbishop received supplicants is a far cry from the cave across the river. Here, proofs of colonial conquest of souls can be readily observed. Doña Jerónima dares to enter the caverns, seeking justice but defeated by a power stronger than woman's love. This powerlessness is caused by the historical inevitability of colonialism.<sup>38</sup>

In maintaining a youthful appearance since the Archbishop abandoned her a lifetime ago, Jerónima exhibits an agelessness that is not so much an affordance as it is a punishment. For as a condition of her aforementioned "powerlessness," Jerónima has been beholden to a historical stasis catalyzed by the Archbishop's past betrayal. Her very own stasis echoes the stillness that once arrested the Archbishop's attention during his time on the island. He no longer preoccupies himself with the pursuit of this "stillness" once Jerónima reenters his life, for it is Jerónima who arrives as its substitute, being the representative and victim of her own "stillness." Just as Jerónima is subject to this "stillness" upon being abandoned for the Church, Joaquin insinuates that the precolonial Philippines is not so much vanished or unobtainable as it is bound to a historical stasis of its own. The precolonial waits, like Jerónima, for some form of revitalization, inhibited though it may be by "the historical inevitability of colonialism."

Joaquin labors to demonstrate, however, that this "revitalization" is no easy task. In their study on the matter, "The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin," Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman meditate on the gravity of Jerónima's revitalization. Her retirement to the cave, her turn to penitent asceticism, represents her "acceptance of the Catholic faith" as "her ultimate sacrifice: She sacrifices her youth, her beauty, and her timelessness, at the request of the Archbishop himself. In the conflict of interests between the Archbishop and Jerónima, it is the latter who concedes at her own expense."<sup>39</sup> Against Delos Reyes and Selman's reading here, I contend that Jerónima's "timelessness"—her aforementioned "stillness"—remains its own punishment. However, I agree with their attempt to illustrate a power imbalance that persists between Jerónima and the Archbishop—that more is demanded from Jerónima than from the Archbishop before the story's resolution. I wonder if, instead of this being Joaquin's inattentiveness to a gendered

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38. Lily Rose Tope, "Nature and Cultural History in Nick Joaquin's 'Doña Jeronima,'" *UNITAS: Semi-annual Peer-reviewed international online Journal of Advanced Research in Literature, Culture, and Society* 91, no. 1, (May 2018): 146.

39. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, "The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 488-489.

power imbalance he might struggle to equitably represent, the shaky resolution to this “conflict of interests” is Joaquin’s representation of a colonial power imbalance. The Archbishop, after all, had no control over the reception to his return from the island, just as Jerónima cannot expect the villagers to accept her seemingly abject otherness. The reactions of the other characters have been circumscribed by colonialist values that permeate their cultural climate. Both characters thus remain beholden to the colonial paradigm, the Archbishop benefitting from his structural position as a clergyman—even when he does not want to—and Jerónima suffering for her position as the ostensibly pagan outsider. This dynamic motivates Delos Reyes and Selman to claim that “it is [Jerónima’s] adopted faith of Catholicism atop this character who represented the pre-Catholic that has made her monstrous, as when she and the Archbishop die, both are reborn and live on, as young and beautiful lovers who live in place of the pre-Catholic, pagan nymph of the cave.”<sup>40</sup> Her surrender to Catholicism—and thus, to the larger colonial project under which it falls—somehow only makes Jerónima more alien to the surrounding populace. In her unwitting hybridity between Catholicism and paganism, she threatens the binarism separating the precolonial and colonial periods, and it is perhaps this destabilizing potential that is more “monstrous” than the way the villagers perceive her. Jerónima’s observance of Catholic rites might suggest Joaquin’s own ambivalence towards any insurgent ground offered by Jerónima’s hybridity, even as the story—through the Archbishop’s disillusionment—actively critiques the religious pretensions of the Spanish period.

Furthermore, the story ends with an anecdote about the aforementioned cave that Jerónima sequesters herself in, which was, “in pagan times ... the abode of a nymph who was gay and kind.” Later, “When Cross and Conquistador came, the nymph departed forlorn. Her cave fell silent ... No more did the cave gleam with lights at night there or twinkle with music and revelry—until Doña Jerónima appeared.”<sup>41</sup> The nymph, who Doña Jerónima replaces, never returns. As a figure of the precolonial past once unmediated by “Cross and Conquistador,” the original nymph *cannot* return—the world from which she fled has no place for her. And to evoke the nymph’s particular Philippine paganism, Joaquin refers to her as a *diwata* (a nature spirit) only once. The choice to continue referring to the diwata solely as a “nymph” does not strike me as the narration’s surrender to the Western paradigms that Jerónima must assimilate to, but as a way of highlighting the difficulty of existing under said paradigms. The colonial world of “Doña Jerónima” has a place for the eponymous character, but only because Jerónima’s coalescence of paganism and Christianity allows her to live in disguise. She becomes integrated into folklore which coexists with, rather than contradicts, the popular tenets of Christianity which

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40. Delos Reyes and Selman, 489.

41. Nick Joaquin, “Doña Jerónima” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 156.

continue to sweep the Philippines. Thus, Joaquin invests an insurgent potential in Jerónima as this hybrid being, who must navigate and pragmatically accept the vicissitude of the Philippines' precolonial past and colonial present. It is worth noting, however, that Jerónima is never *explicitly* stated to be indigenous, and the title of "Doña" even insinuates her mestiza status. But instead of suggesting that Jerónima merely *evokes* indigeneity, I suggest Joaquin is propounding how unstable the distinction between the precolonial and the colonial truly is. To what indigenous heritage, Joaquin seems to ask, can even a mestiza subject search for the conditions of possibility for change? Perhaps Jerónima's apotheosis into the Pasig River is not so much the appropriation of Filipinx indigenous struggles (as one might critique Joaquin of doing), but the rejection of a Western humanism that would occlude her from recognizing her own indigeneity. The nymph likewise represents an untenable distinction between pagan and classical (and thus, Western) traditions by belonging to them both—for in sharing the name of a species from Greek mythology, the "nymph" simultaneously dwells in the pre-Catholic Philippine past and the Western canon.

Another short story, "Summer Solstice," which entertains the same "nascent pre-Catholic spirit ... witnessed only through the female,"<sup>42</sup> brings to bear the same colonial tensions as "Doña Jerónima." Just as "Doña Jerónima" borrows from the classical tradition through the use of the nymph, "Summer Solstice" does so by evoking Euripides' play *The Bacchae* through its depiction of the libidinal excess of a pagan celebration. Set in the 1850's Philippines, "Summer Solstice" witnesses a patriarchal power imbalance between the wife and husband, Doña Lupeng and Don Paeng. Paeng regularly imposes his will on Lupeng, berating her and issuing threats of violence, until both witness the libidinal excesses of the pagan Tadtarin festival. The experience catalyzes Lupeng's eventual rebellion against Paeng, who is forced into submission by his wife's metamorphosis into a more domineering figure. Similarly, in *The Bacchae*, King Pentheus of Thebes is outraged at the droves of women in his city who have been driven by Dionysus' influence to engage in a chaotic festival of their own. In both stories, there is a drive to domesticate "recalcitrant" women, whether it is Paeng attempting to steer Lupeng away from the Tadtarin festival or Pentheus attempting to punish the women worshipping Dionysus. These male characters struggle to contain the women they cannot immediately control, women who deviate from the normative values of their respective setting. In *The Bacchae*, Pentheus succumbs to a Dionysian madness of his own before getting mutilated by Dionysus' female worshippers. In "Summer Solstice," Paeng gets brutalized—but not murdered—by the female venerators of the Tadtarin.<sup>43</sup> He survives

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42. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, "The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 476.

43. Nick Joaquin, "Summer Solstice" in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of*

to instead succumb to the Dionysian impulses of the Tadtarin festival by acquiescing to his wife's newfound sense of authority.<sup>44</sup> Lupeng's triumph over her husband is plainly counterhegemonic against the colonial and patriarchal paradigms Paeng represents. But in conveying the otherness of the Tadtarin as such, how does Joaquin invest radical agency in their indigeneity and femininity? From the start, these female participants of the Tadtarin festival and their real-life precedents cannot be sublimated into "literary articulations in the period after the Second World War of a unitary sovereign nationalist subject as the proper historical agent of anti-imperialist movement."<sup>45</sup> Perhaps noting this, Joaquin strives to represent these women in his own "literary articulation," even though their actions are not translatable to "universal forms of subjectivity and agency, which are meaningful within the dominant field of politics."<sup>46</sup> Thus, Joaquin's stories represent a search for nonhegemonic modes of subjectivity and temporality. "Doña Jerónima" stands as one product of that search, and "Summer Solstice" appears as another attempt to unearth a new subjectivity from within the Spanish period. The resonances between "Summer Solstice" and *The Bacchae* not only indicate Joaquin's familiarity with the Classics, but also a tension between Philippine indigenous superstition and Western canonicity on which "Summer Solstice" meditates.

To elaborate, it is worth juxtaposing the two festivals that take place in "Summer Solstice"—that of the Tadtarin, populated by women, and that of St. John, populated by men. In his depiction of the two festivals, Joaquin describes the motivations for each. The Tadtarin festival mocks colonial religious domination, whereas the festival St. John espouses it. Joaquin begins this juxtaposition with a description of the Tadtarin festival as follows:

... up the street came the prancing, screaming, writhing women, their eyes wild, black shawls flying around their shoulders, and their long hair streaming and covered with leaves and flowers. But the Tadtarin, a small old woman with white hair, walked with calm dignity in the midst of the female tumult, a wand in one hand, a bunch of seedlings in the other. Behind her, a group of girls bore aloft a little black image of the Baptist—a crude, primitive, grotesque image, its big-eyed head too big for its puny naked torso, bobbing and swaying above the hysterical female horde ...<sup>47</sup>

The "Baptist" in question is indeed St. John, his likeness mocked by the chaotic procession of women. "For a moment," Delos

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the *Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 49-50

44. Joaquin, 52.

45. Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, "Introduction: Loosed upon the World" in *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 5, Kindle.

46. Tadiar, 5.

47. Nick Joaquin, "Summer Solstice" in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 48.

Reyes and Selman observe, “it is not the pre-Catholic that appears grotesque but the very image of St. John, reassigning all uncanny associations (primitive, grotesque) to the Baptist.”<sup>48</sup> Just as the Archbishop in “Doña Jerónima” is disillusioned with the Church, his lack of faith trivializing any commitment to organized religion, the Tadtarin festival actively trivializes the venerated St. John. For the Archbishop, such trivializing empowers him to join Jerónima as they become a legend on the Pasig River, whereas for the Tadtarin’s adherents, such trivializing ennobles their own indigeneity and femininity by contrast. “Summer Solstice,” however, witnesses a clearer attempt by Joaquin to repudiate the Spanish colonial period, questioning its religious foundations in his representation of the St. John procession:

Up the road, stirring a cloud of dust, and gaily bedrenched by the crowds gathered along the wayside, a concourse of young men clad only in soggy trousers were carrying aloft an image of the Precursor. Their teeth flashed white in their laughing faces and their hot bodies glowed crimson as they pranced past, shrouded in fiery dust, singing and shouting and waving their arms: the St. John riding swiftly above the sea of dark heads and glittering in the noon sun—a fine, blonde, heroic St. John: very male, very arrogant: the Lord of Summer indeed; the Lord of Light and Heat—erect and goldly virile above the prone and female earth [...]<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the Tadtarin festival, this spectacle exudes a distinct regality and orderliness befitting the center of its celebrations. The likeness of St. John appears “shrouded in fiery dust” and “glittering in the noon sun”—undoubtedly more Apollonian in presentation than the Dionysian Tadtarin festival. This dichotomy reinforces the otherness of the latter from what is considered normative under Spanish rule. The festival of St. John is in fact symptomatic of said rule, of the heralding of whiteness as ideal that Western imperial projects impose on their colonized subjects. “The Church in the colonies,” Fanon says, “is a white man’s Church, a foreigner’s Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, beneath the veneer of a transcendent ideal personified by the “fine, blond, heroic” (and therefore white) St. John is a history of domination over colonized Filipinx, who populate “the sea of dark heads” under which the white figure stands. In his attempt to critique the colonialist logic on display, however, Joaquin’s description of St. John as “erect and goldly virile above the prone and female earth” seems

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48. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, “The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin,” *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 485.

49. Nick Joaquin, “Summer Solstice” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 41.

50. Frantz Fanon, “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 7.

at risk of reproducing a gendered colonialist discourse that feminizes indigenous land. “Land and woman are places of tilling and insemination,” Neferti Tadiar explains of this mentality, which “defin[es] the revolutionary action that is performed on them as heteromascuine.”<sup>51</sup> Although Joaquin’s writings do not contain literal “revolutionary action,” such as guerilla tactics against oppressive regimes, his own search for radical agency—by evoking both the indigenous and the feminine—is indeed his form of “revolutionary action.” In his attempt to construe “Land and woman” as the grounds for liberation, Joaquin only speaks of a “heteromascuine” enterprise through a narration that is focalized on a perspective endeared to the St. John procession. Joaquin’s language does not insinuate his own belief in the association between “Land and woman,” but behaves descriptively to represent an attitude he critiques: the same attitude that would venerate St. John over the Tadtarin. Thus, as Joaquin searches for traces of radical agency in these indigenous and feminine representations, he filters “Land and woman” through the heteromascuine logic of the Spanish Church (present through St. John) and the colonized Filipinx (present through the St. John procession and Paeng) to illustrate this logic’s untenability. The logic that necessitates the binarism of Apollonian man and Dionysian woman, venerator of St. John and venerator of the Tadtarin, is vulnerable to a critique personified by Lupeng and her rebellion.

However, to complicate the matter of representation in “Summer Solstice,” Lupeng is drawn to the indigeneity represented by the Tadtarin festival, but as a mestiza, she, like Jerónima, is not indigenous *per se*. Nonetheless, Lupeng the mestiza embraces indigenous Philippine superstition through the spirit of the Tadtarin, albeit differently from her indigenous servant Amada, who serves as Lupeng’s foil. In the beginning of the story, Amada is shown to be overcome with a Dionysian euphoria of her own:

[Amada’s] sweat-beaded brows contracted, as if in an effort to understand. Then her face relaxed, her mouth sagged open humorously and, rolling over on her back and spreading out her big soft arms and legs, she began noiselessly quaking with laughter—the mute mirth jerking in her throat; the moist pile of her flesh quivering like brown jelly. Saliva dribbled from the corners of her mouth.<sup>52</sup>

Entoy, Amada’s husband, thus explains, “The spirit is in her. She is the Tadtarin. She must do as she pleases. Otherwise, the grain would not grow, the trees would bear no fruit, the rivers would give no fish, and the animals would die.”<sup>53</sup> It is through this framing of Entoy’s

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51. Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, “Revolutionary Imagination and the Masses” in *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 272, Kindle.

52. Nick Joaquin, “Summer Solstice” in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 40.

53. Joaquin, 40.

concern and respect for the material repercussions of interrupting Amada's trance that Joaquin asserts, not the religious, but the *political* primacy of the Tadtarin festival over St. John's. How, after all, is the conflict between the adherents of the Tadtarin and the adherents of St. John circumscribed by a conflict of colonial and patriarchal domination? Lupeng's ultimate participation in the Tadtarin festivities undermines Paeng's patriarchal authority, which is itself more at home in the colonial masculinism of the St. John's procession. In contrast, Entoy—who is notably another man, but not a mestizo like Paeng—shows greater reverence for Tadtarin practices. Such a distinction motivates Delos Reyes and Selman's critical contrasts between the way each couple responds to the events of the story. "Whereas Amada's [episode] is always seen as grotesque and comical, Lupeng's is noticeably more intimate, erupting not into hysteria, but a familiar eroticism that produces in her modern husband" an emasculating anxiety.<sup>54</sup> It is precisely this "emasculating anxiety" that drives Paeng into further rage against his wife, Lupeng. Entoy, however, is resigned to his subordinated position, finding himself without reason to doubt the effect the Tadtarin spirit has on his wife, Amada. Because there is a sustained conflict between the more cosmopolitan couple, Lupeng and Paeng, Delos Reyes and Selman maintain that "it must be realized that the two couples do not belong to the same class and must then not share the same superstitions. Clearly Lupeng and Paeng are the more modern couple, affirming their positions after having exhibited distaste for and a certain fear against the pre-Catholic."<sup>55</sup> Necessarily, then, Amada and Lupeng's respective exposures to the Tadtarin fundamentally differ, and it is the difference in these exposures—as well as the dispositions of their respective husbands—that determine the women's treatment. For Amada, Entoy already displays subservience to her in her entranced state. By contrast, Lupeng must insist upon Paeng's subservience and compel him to say, "in his dead voice: 'That I adore you. That I adore you. That I worship you. That the air you breathe and the ground you tread is holy to me. That I am your dog, your slave.'" To that, she says, "*Then come, crawl on the floor, and kiss my feet!*"<sup>56</sup> Paeng subsequently obeys his wife's commands, consummating Lupeng's transformation and liberation under the Tadtarin's influence. Given Joaquin's deliberate juxtaposition of the Tadtarin and St. John procession, this concluding moment witnesses the futility and obsolescence of the Western ideals heralded by St. John. The masculinism of the latter is more agreeable to Paeng's sensibilities before his surrender, but it fails to protect him from the overpowering influence of the Tadtarin, channeled as it is through Lupeng's body and disposition. Thus, like "Doña Jerónima," "Summer Solstice"

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54. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, "The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 485.

55. Delos Reyes and Selman, 486.

56. Nick Joaquin, "Summer Solstice" in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 52.

not only features Joaquin's investment in evocations of pre-Catholic paganism, but also his investment in their capacity to destabilize the Spanish colonial paradigm, even as it must coexist within it.

Despite these affordances, I believe there is no easy approach to a state of prior plenitude to the Spanish period, let alone an approach that is *not* contaminated by a Spanish colonial influence. But given the evident ambitiousness of his representations, Joaquin seems aware of the difficulty of his task. As another point of comparison between "Summer Solstice" and "Doña Jerónima," Joaquin's sustained critique of Spanish colonialism concludes with Jerónima's integration into local folklore. After Jerónima problematizes the colonial order embodied by the Archbishop's authority, her legend survives within the status quo where the nymph—her doubly pagan predecessor—could not. However, Jerónima also serves as a *successor* to the nymph, representing the *survival* of Philippine paganism as opposed to a compromised assimilation to Western Christian norms. The nymph herself represented the survival of a paganism that was sublimated into the Western tradition as Greco-Roman myth, after all. Likewise, Lupeng's transformation offers both a disruption of and pragmatic integration into the colonial status quo:

But what has initially appeared as mere insistence for the modern might actually be reflective of a looming desire for the pre-Catholic, a sentiment supposedly so alien and divergent in such characters that this ripple in their ideologies end up projections of disgust and hate. This is embodied by Lupeng's transformation, arguably the most powerful one despite the lack of semblance to the monster that has appeared in Amada and the women in the festival, precisely because it has appeared in the combined form of the pre-Catholic and the modern.<sup>57</sup>

Lupeng does not externalize her transformation in a frenzied outburst like Amada and the festivalgoers. Instead, her transformation reveals itself in her taking an authoritative tone towards her husband and compelling him to obey. By gaining access to the libidinal influence of the Tadtarin, Lupeng filters her metamorphosis through what are supposedly her modern, more cosmopolitan sensibilities. Whereas Amada's transformation compels Entoy's obedience through fear of agricultural deprivation, Lupeng's transformation compels Paeng's obedience through *reason*: the understanding that her positions cannot be refuted, and that Paeng indulges in his own kind of madness by rejecting her and her truth. "How I behaved tonight is what I am," she says, speaking of the Tadtarin festival. "If you call that lewd, then I was always a lewd woman and a whipping will not change me—though you whipped me till I died." "I want this madness to die in you," Paeng replies, but Lupeng answers with yet more reasons that his protests against her nature are futile, and that ultimately his efforts to punish her are equally point-

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57. Tyra Delos Reyes and Xavier Selman, "The Female Monster: The Pre-Catholic Manifestation as a Response to Modern Anxiety in Selected Stories by Nick Joaquin," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 35, (August 2020): 486.

less.<sup>58</sup> Even as the couple's dynamic experiences a radical shift, Lupeng's transformation into "the combined form of the pre-Catholic and the modern" suggest that Paeng only embraces the pre-Catholic in a diluted form—not the pre-Catholic in the excess displayed by Amada, but the pre-Catholic mediated by the vestiges of Lupeng's modernity, her mestiza-ness. For Joaquin, this mediation does not arrive as a compromise, but as an espousal of the *hybridity* that Lupeng thus represents. Her difference from Amada is not a flaw of "Summer Solstice," but a *feature*. The colonial and patriarchal paradigms which characterize Lupeng and Paeng's relationship are destabilized by Lupeng's liberation through the Tadtarin festival, which hints at how unstable Joaquin finds colonial cultural production to be. Within its foundations are the seeds of its own deconstruction, such that Amada's indigeneity reasserts itself and survives in new forms, including Lupeng's hybridity.

Because of the ways Joaquin explores indigeneity and femininity in "Doña Jerónima" and "Summer Solstice," it is worth considering again the ideological features of *Portrait*. For even if Perico's pronouncements about Ilustrado values are to be regarded with suspicion in *Portrait*, Paula and Candida's liberatory act of destroying the painting bears a radicalism delimited by their positionalities as mestizas. Atop the ashes of one humanism—Lorenzo's, Perico's, and the Ilustrados'—rises Paula and Candida's. And while Joaquin presents the Marasigan sisters' new humanism as one that transcends the previous generation's, his portrayal of the lower-class Bitoy's resentment reveals how neither humanism transcends the broader category they both occupy: that of the cosmopolitan mestizo/mestiza. This is not to say that alone, the Marasigan sisters *not* being mestiza would make *Portrait* more compelling, or that Bitoy being the protagonist would give *Portrait* some well-needed class consciousness. Rather, Joaquin wills *Portrait* to be circumscribed by cosmopolitan mestizo/mestiza concerns, such that the limitations of those concerns are thrown into relief. He searches for radical agency in *Portrait* all so he can say its representations are not radical *enough*, ill-equipped to transcend the feminist humanism that Paula and Candida gesture towards. Hence Joaquin's more direct engagements with Philippine indigeneity in "Doña Jerónima" and "Summer Solstice," which show his investment in the radical agency to be found in both indigeneity and femininity as alternative humanisms to the masculinist cosmopolitanism of *Portrait*'s Perico. In "Doña Jerónima," the precolonial past and the colonial present achieve a sort of synthesis in the legend Doña Jerónima becomes, but only to ensure the pragmatic *survival* of the precolonial. She replaces the pagan nymph, whose existence in the cave by the Pasig River is made untenable by Spanish colonialism, but serves as the nymph's *successor* who inherits her indigenous resonances. Similarly, while Lupeng liberates herself from the patriarchal clutches of her husband in "Summer Solstice,"

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58. Nick Joaquin, "Summer Solstice" in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 50.

her transformation entails a pragmatic synthesis between Dionysian paganism (the Tadtarin) and Apollonian modernity (St. John), if only to ensure the survival of the former. In all this, Joaquin commits to such representations of indigeneity and femininity because the masculinist project of colonialism entails *its own* brand of violent excess: one that the trappings of colonialism labor to efface. By surveying Joaquin's explorations of and propositions for who can be considered a Philippine historical subject, I have sought to illustrate the complexities of representation that inevitably emerge in his work. In engaging with the Spanish period, Joaquin's search for the conditions of possibility for revolution—precisely by his scrutiny of underrepresented, nonnormative subjectivities that suffer from colonial effacement—is bound to be difficult. After all, Joaquin's representations risk being read as inconsistent or beholden to contradictions, much as the history from which he derives these stories is itself fraught with contradiction. But as Vicente Rafael says of Joaquin's work, "We, whoever we are, receive his stories told from a ruined world, hearing and perhaps sharing them as we would the shards of our own lives."<sup>59</sup> I have merely interpreted the shards of Joaquin's representations, discerning their boundaries to attain a fuller grasp of their shape—and they only shine brighter for it, as they illuminate the fractures of the Philippines' postcolonial moment.

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59. Vicente L. Rafael, Introduction to *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropical Gothic* by Nick Joaquin (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), xxxiv.