

“WEDDED IN THE ASSOCIATION”: HETEROGLOSSIC FORM AND FRAGMENTARY HISTORIOGRAPHY IN NICK JOAQUIN’S *ALMANAC FOR MANILEÑOS*

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Abstract

Almanac for Manileños (1979) by Nick Joaquin (1917-2004) is “a calendar, a weather chart, a sanctoral, a zodiac guide, and a mini encyclopedia on the world of the Manileño.” Undergirded by Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, Walter Benjamin’s montage method in writing history, and Reynaldo Ileto’s notion of non-linear emplotment, the essay engages with the *Almanac*’s calendars and essays and offers four claims. Firstly, although multiple genres embedded in the *Almanac*—which include, apart from the abovementioned, horoscopes, recipes and light verse—stratify the text, temporal associativeness offers a sense of cohesion. Secondly, the formal strategy of the calendars—typified by correspondence and compression of the categories of nation and religion—allows for both past and future temporal orientations. Thirdly, Joaquin’s fragmentary historiography results in temporal discontinuity as well as conjunction and resemblance: dualities in the essays—the aesthetics and politics of disjuncture and coherence—offer the possibility of recognition and actualization. Finally, the *Almanac*—which takes its cue from modernist techniques—interrogates linear and developmentalist ways in which Philippine history is depicted and the nation is represented.

Keywords

genre, narrative, pastiche

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In the chapter on August, Nick Joaquin (1917-2004) traces relations between an object, a date, a color, a fiesta, and a revolution. St. Bartholomew’s feast, says Joaquin, falls on the 24th, a day devoted to the patron saint of cutlery who “wears red and wields a bolo.” In Malabon’s main street, furthermore, there are “stalls where [fiesta attendees] can buy all kinds of blade: balisong and kitchen knife and butcher’s cleaver, as well as the long bolo known as the *sangbartolome*, the weapon of the Katipunan.” Joaquin points out how “history and folk culture”—and furthermore:

saint, knife, color, date, and revolutionary uprising—are “wedded in the association of August the red month and Bartholomew the red saint with the Katipunan, which also wore red and wielded a bolo” (*Almanac* 207).

“Wedded in the association”: this indicates Joaquin’s aesthetic strategy with regard to marking calendrical time in the *Almanac for Manileños* (1979). Consider the 19 August entry. Here, the references include: (1) the feast day of St. John Eudes; (2) the commemoration of Our Lord of the Holy Sepulchre; (3) the fiesta in Paco; (3) the birth of Luis Yangco in 1841; (4) the birth of Manuel Luis Quezon in 1878; (5) the exposure of the Katipunan in 1896; and (6) the first issue of the *Philippines Free Press* in 1908 (*Almanac* 201). St. John Eudes was a French missionary who founded in 1643 at Caen, France the Congregation of Jesus and Mary; this was comprised of “secular priests who were not bound by vows.” The aim of the congregation was to form a “zealous and virtuous parochial clergy by the conduct of seminaries” (Thurston and Attwater 353). The fiesta in Paco is in honor of Our Lord of the Holy Sepulchre, considered by Joaquin as the “district’s major celebration” (*Almanac* 210).

Yangco was one of the first Filipinos who entered the water transportation industry; he owned boats which delivered timber to and from Manila, Laguna de Bay, Palawan, and Zambales (“Luis R. Yangco”). Quezon’s achievements in politics included the “passage of the Jones Act” in 1916 which ensured “Philippine independence as soon as a stable government was established” and the Presidency of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 (“Manuel Luis Quezon” 122). These successes—the outcome of Quezon’s exposure to the “full range of contemporary nationalist sentiments”—were, for historian Michael Cullinane, made possible by the “careful manipulation of local alliances and issues,” alongside the “cooperation and assistance of influential American colonial officials and prominent Manila-based ilustrados” (335). Elements which, at first glance, appear historically disconnected are calendrically yoked and compressed in a few lines. The description of “association” in Joaquin’s passage on St. Bartholomew suggests his method for compiling elements of his *Almanac*: an assortment of materials, historically discrepant and formally heterogeneous, are nevertheless “wedded” together.

The aims of this essay are four-fold. I first describe the *Almanac*’s multiple subgenres and, taking my bearings from Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, argue that although the *Almanac*’s multiple forms stratify and fragment the text, associative links nevertheless offer a sense of coherence: the *Almanac* is poised between cohesion and dismantlement. Secondly, I examine the *Almanac*’s calendar element. In this section I claim—following German theorist Walter Benjamin’s notion of correspondence—that Joaquin’s calendrical composition is Janus-faced: the calendars are composed by way of correspondence and compression of national and religious

categories and are, moreover, characterized by past and future temporal orientations. These distinctions—the national vis-à-vis the religious, the future juxtaposed with the past—account for the double-sided characteristic of the calendars.

Thirdly, I examine the *Almanac*'s essay element. Engaging with Benjamin's notion of fragmentary historiography, I argue that the essays are structured by way of montage: this method results, on the one hand, in temporal discontinuity. On the other hand, using montage enables Joaquin to represent conjunctions and resemblances. This double-sided strategy occasioned by montage—conjunction and fragmentation—has a corresponding political dimension: incipient possibilities in historical situations may be recognized and actualized by readers. Lastly, I argue, following Filipino historian Reynaldo Ileto's notions of non-linear emplotment, that Joaquin's methods critique linear and developmentalist ways in which history is depicted. By foregrounding innovative aesthetic strategies, Joaquin's *Almanac* offers new possibilities in conceiving of and representing the nation.

THE CROSSING OF CALENDAR AND NEWSPAPER: HETEROGLOSSIA IN THE ALMANAC

In his preface, Joaquin notes the *Almanac*'s diversity of materials and forms: he includes "a calendar, a weather chart, a sanctoral, a zodiac guide, and a mini encyclopedia on the world of the Manileño" (*Almanac* viii). As scholar and critic Doreen Fernandez observes, the *Almanac*'s 12 chapters—one per month—compile what Joaquin "knows, remembers [and] has found out about Manila." For Fernandez, the *Almanac* demonstrates Joaquin's understanding of Manila's "climate and ambiance" as shaped by "history, society, folk culture, need, custom, whim [and] time." Fernandez's catalogue indicates Joaquin's range of interests, especially as they relate to Manila. Moreover, even while materials seem disconnected—references to balisong and St. Bartholomew are in the same chapter—"there is [nevertheless] a system to the delivery of ... information and delight, a discernible pattern." For Fernandez, Joaquin demonstrates two distinct yet intertwined qualities: first, he offers a prodigious knowledge of city and country; second, he finds a suitable frame in which to situate this material and place them in relation.

Similarly, for the critic E. San Juan, Jr., the *Almanac* opens up the prospect of making discrepant things cohere. Joaquin uses the "calendar convention [as a way] of amalgamating discordant facts and incompatible topics." In San Juan's view, the *Almanac* is a textual site where diverse minutiae find coherence and consonance. Moreover, the *Almanac* endeavors to impose a "cross-referential unity on a vast encyclopedic catalogue of material through the device of astrology." Although astrology is not the *Almanac*'s most crucial organizing device—in Joaquin's

case, temporal associativeness holds materials and genres together—San Juan rightly points out the propensity of Joaquin’s chosen form to render coherence to an otherwise diverse and disparate set of material. The *Almanac*, hence, is a text which “yoke[s] together” discrepant elements (8).

San Juan traces Joaquin’s aesthetic debt to modernism: he observes that the “modernist impulse in Joaquin moves him to orchestrate experimental deceptions, the elliptical avant-garde style of stream-of-consciousness and plural perceptions, witty reflexive texture, T.S. Eliot’s luminous symbol outside time, and fugal arrangements, with a compulsive predilection for an art of the hieroglyph, rebus and charade” (196). For San Juan, Joaquin’s formal strategies trouble aspects of structure, character, texture, symbol, perspective and narrative. Although Joaquin does not use a number of these strategies— for instance, the *Almanac* does not have fictional characters—the tendency for non-linearity and disruptiveness is nevertheless demonstrated.

These remarks by Fernandez and San Juan, to be sure, have to be situated within the context of Joaquin’s career: two major capstones of his career are the National Artist Award for Literature in the Philippines (1976) and the Ramon Magsaysay Award (Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts, 1996), considered as “the highest honor for a writer in Asia” (Mojares). These capstones rest on a formidable foundation, foremost of which were his play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (in *Prose and Poems* [1952]) and his novel *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961): throughout his career, apart from producing fiction and drama, Joaquin wrote in genres as diverse as poetry, reportage, history, criticism, children’s stories, biography, and the almanac. He also served as editor-in-chief of *Philippines Free Press*, *Asia-Philippines Leader*, and *Philippine Graphic*. For the scholar Resil Mojares, Joaquin “lived through eight decades of Philippine history and witnessed the slow, uneven, and often violent transformation of the nation” (“Biography”): the American Commonwealth period, the Japanese occupation, the period of independence starting in 1946, the Martial Law period, and the EDSA Revolution.

To return to the *Almanac*: although Fernandez and San Juan rightly take into account aspects of pattern and cohesiveness, there is still the need to consider the aspect of dismantlement. Moreover, the link between coherence and dismantlement—both simultaneously a characteristic of the *Almanac*—should also be investigated. As Bakhtin says, “every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (“Discourse” 272). As per Bakhtin, the *Almanac*’s structural principle is located in the interstice between dissolution and cohesion, centripetality and centrifugality, discrepancy and resonance.

Consider the February chapter. Here, the calendar features feast days of saints such as St. Apollonia (9 February, patroness of dentists). Important dates in Philippine history—such as the burning of Intramuros by the Japanese on 8 February 1945—are also included. The horoscope

for Pisceans speaks of their propensity for “quick spur-of-the-moment jobs”; moreover, Joaquin cautions against Piscean “sluggish[ness] when confronted with projects that demand patience, time and deliberation” (*Almanac* 31).

The *Almanac* proceeds to essays dealing with Philippine history, culture, myths, and cuisine, among others. One essay describes how the Philippine-American war began as a skirmish on a bridge on the San Juan River. On the night of 4 February, gunfire was exchanged between Filipino and American troops within the “vicinity of the bridge between Sta. Mesa and San Juan del Monte” (*Almanac* 34). Joaquin then describes Manila during the last month of the Japanese occupation during World War II, when American troops, who were part of the city’s liberating forces, were greeted with “Hi, Joe!” and “Victory, Joe!” This adulation, though, is the happy side of Joaquin’s account; he tells of “grimmer news” like the southern part of Manila being destroyed by American and Japanese forces (*Almanac* 35).

Elsewhere in the chapter, Joaquin considers Filipino pre-Hispanic courtship rituals, then describes how these practices changed during the Spanish period. Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, Filipino men would resort to *gayuma*, a concoction of “mystic herbs and roots and outrageous substances.” Joaquin also reports that pre-Hispanic Filipinos kissed not with the lips but by rubbing their noses. When the Spaniards arrived, the practice of *harana*—an “evening serenade under the girl’s window”—became more commonplace. Another essay portrays the Manila Carnival. For Joaquin, this “two-week riot” which took place in Wallace Field (just outside Luneta) “before the start of Lent” would be a period of gaiety. At the entrance, one would buy “a mask, a horn and a bag of confetti,” and the younger ones would come dressed as a “harlequin or [in] clown costume with dunce cap” (*Almanac* 39). There were commercial exhibits, parades, nightly balls, and pageants with coronation nights. Like the details in August—the Revolution, the bolo, the balisong, St. Bartholomew—Joaquin culls material associated with February: the destruction of Manila during the latter part of Second World War, an evening serenade, a harlequin costume, a concoction of herbs.

Joaquin’s rearrangements offer a double strategy: firstly, the *Almanac* dislodges events from their appointed places: a dismantling of orthodox linear historiography, which I discuss later; and secondly, the dislodged materials are then assigned places using a method that is associative. For example, as regards dismantling: the materials for February—the onset of the Philippine-American War, the final months of the Second World War, a description of pre-Hispanic courtship rituals, and a description of the Manila Carnival at Wallace Field—are situated in various points in the timeline of Philippine history: 1898, 1945, the pre-Hispanic period, and the American Commonwealth period, respectively. Conversely, Joaquin reconstitutes these elements and reinscribes them not in

a linear fashion, but within a frame typified by temporal association: the elements are all related to February. In San Juan's terms, this method amalgamates discordance; in Fernandez's terms, it is a way of making patterns discernible.

Joaquin claims that his goals are to inform and delight (*Almanac* viii); he offers miscellanea such as facts, weather, history, culture, cuisine, and geography. As regards the weather, for example, Joaquin points out that in January, low temperatures will persist until the feast of Our Lady of Carmel (29 January), and that "winds from Siberia mean chills and fevers, running noses, the trancazo [flu], and harvest fiestas on the countryside" (*Almanac* 3). Adverse weather calls for special recipes: for July, the start of the rainy season ("big water ahead"), Joaquin suggests "rum with calamansi" to "give you a glow." Alternatively, one can "in a heated pan drop a heaping tablespoonful of butter and, as it simmers, a dash of sugar." This mixture can then be poured in cup of rum (*Almanac* 177). Consistent with Fernandez's assessment, the array of topics cannot be viewed apart from the variety of genres: calendars, essays, recipes. Moreover, the delight to which Joaquin refers is characterized not just by the multiplicity of topics but the ways in which these materials are structured and assume myriad forms.

Bakhtin's remarks on the novel are illustrative. For him, the novel permits the accommodation of genres "both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others)" ("Discourse" 320). The novel admits multiple, heterogeneous forms: "in principle, any genre can be included, and in fact it is difficult to find any genres that have not at some point been incorporated into a novel by someone" ("Discourse" 320-21). While accommodation is one of the novel's defining characteristics, genres assimilated by the novel do not relinquish their formal properties: for Bakhtin, "incorporated genres" keep "their own structural integrity and independence" and maintain "their own linguistic and stylistic peculiarities" ("Discourse" 321).

The *Almanac* is neither formless mush nor static rigidity. The inclusion of multiple genres enables dialogue within and between the incorporated genres. The genres, says Bakhtin, "possess [their] own verbal and semantic forms for assimilating reality." When various genres enter the novel, they "bring into it their own languages, and therefore stratify the linguistic unity of the novel and further intensify its speech diversity in fresh ways" ("Discourse" 321). Thus, for Bakhtin, inclusion of discrete genres within the larger structure of the novel engenders two distinct but inseparable implications. Firstly, incorporated genres maintain their marks, peculiarities, and integrities as genres. Secondly, smaller genres stratify the larger genre—in Joaquin's case, the almanac—and offer further evidence as regards its formal diversity. Joaquin's method of accommodating these forms is, for San Juan, likened to an "experimental handling": the "religious

calendar of festivities crossed with that typically modernist invention, the newspaper and illustrated weekly.” The combination, says San Juan, results in an “unrelenting flattening out of everything—the petty, the accidental, the numinous—into exchangeable counters” (9).

Although San Juan rightly notes the *Almanac*’s potential to flatten material, incorporation of diverse genres nonetheless demonstrates a sense of manifold fullness. Apart from diversity of material, which Joaquin culls from various points in Philippine history, the *Almanac* also contains multiple forms. Apart from the genres Joaquin indicates in the preface—calendars, weather charts, sanctorals, and short essays—the *Almanac* also includes minutiae such as instructions on how to make simple things for the household, recipes, and light verse. To be sure, formal heterogeneity has been one of the genre’s abiding characteristics: according to the historians Bernard Capp and Keith Thomas, since the almanac’s inception and emergence in medieval Europe, elements as diverse as calendars, tables of planetary motions and conjunctions, definitions of legal terms, accounts of weather prospects, medical notes, and data on farming and gardening have been incorporated in numerous examples of the form (*Astrology* 25; *Religion* 347). For the scholar Alison Chapman, formal variety is in keeping with the fundamental definition of the almanac, which, although “at its most basic ... [is simply] a calendar that includes useful information,” may also “refer to non-calendrical tables of astronomical and chronological information” and “larger collections of useful information,” as well be used as a “catchall term for compilations of handy reference material” (“Almanacs”). The almanac, in other words, is a text is a compilation of material—variegated in terms of form and topic—organized in terms of calendrical time.

Despite the *Almanac*’s mixture of genres—evoked by the image of mixing butter, sugar and rum—Joaquin nevertheless maintains the integrity of the assimilated forms. Calendars mark events; essays describe, narrate, and offer arguments and propositions; recipes offer instructions; horoscopes prognosticate. Bakhtin evokes taste when describing heteroglossia: the heteroglossic text, for him, is not “an abstract system of normative forms”; by contrast, the “words have a ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour.” Bakhtin points out that genres bring with them traces and marks: instead of effacement of boundaries, he argues for both erasure and maintenance of distinctions: “each word”—and in this case, each heteroglossic text—“tastes of the context ... in which it has lived its socially charged life” (“Discourse” 293). Like Joaquin’s alcoholic drink, it is as if ingredients—butter, sugar, rum—are mixed yet maintain distinct flavors. Joaquin’s endeavor to dismantle and reconstitute aspects of Philippine historical and social reality is not simply a matter of reorganizing material; it is bound up with considerations of form. Each incorporated genre in the *Almanac* keeps its mark of distinction, its taste, its “linguistic and stylistic peculiarity”—essays bear conventions of prose forms (narration, description, comparison and contrast), calendars point to

significant dates, recipes indicate directions on how to work with various ingredients, horoscopes tell your fortune—and yet the sheer amount of detail results in the stratification, diversification, and fracture of what otherwise seems to be a monolithic Philippine reality: rum with calamansi, a warning that cold weather would last until a certain feast, the inauguration of a war. And yet for all its diversity, the *Almanac* nonetheless assumes the shape of association: a serenade shares textual space with a carnival, a calendar with a recipe, delight in disorder on the one hand, pleasure in pattern on the other.

**“GIVING CALENDAR DATES THEIR PHYSIOGNOMY”:
COMPRESSION, CONJUNCTION, AND DIRECTION IN THE CALENDARS**

In this section, I examine Joaquin’s calendars from the standpoint of Benjamin’s notion of correspondence. Firstly, I argue that the calendars are condensations of Philippine history, akin to a Benjaminian time-lapse camera: an extended period of time distilled into a moment; secondly, I claim that they compress and commemorate aspects of nation and religion; and thirdly, I argue that they simultaneously assume opposite orientations: past and future. Hence, the calendars are expressions—in condensed form—of the simultaneously cohesive and dissolute characteristics of Joaquin’s aesthetic.

In a most basic sense, a calendar marks time: by mentioning what makes that day significant, the entry distinguishes one day from another. For the scholar Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Romans marked “the beginnings of months” by calling those days *kalendae*, a word derived from the “ancient verb *Calare*” (which means “to proclaim”). The *kalendae* signified that the “new moon had originally been announced on that day” (29). Joaquin also acknowledges its Roman provenance, as well as its transmutation into Filipino: not only did the *kalendae* “announce the start of each year and of each month,” the term also became the basis for the Filipino word *kalendaryo* (13).

As intimated in my discussion of the 19 August entry, it should be apparent that, in reality, years, sometimes even centuries—as well as geographical and discursive spaces—separate events indicated in calendar entries. A recourse to Walter Benjamin’s notion of correspondence illuminates nuances of Joaquin’s calendrical composition. For Benjamin, correspondences “are the data of recollection—not historical data, but the data of prehistory.” For him, “festive days”—in the *Almanac*’s case, these are embodied in calendar entries—point to, and endeavor to bring closer to the present, an “encounter with an earlier life” (“Motifs” 334). The scholar Christopher Prendergast traces its development from French poet Charles Baudelaire to Benjamin. He begins by distinguishing three aspects in Baudelaire’s deployment of the term: “psychological, aesthetic

and metaphysical” (148). The psychological aspect pertains to the “theory of perception technically known as synaesthesia ... the process whereby one order of sense-perception can evoke or be translated into another order.” The aesthetic aspect refers to the “mutual suggestibility and convertibility of the arts,” an example of which would be that the “colors of painting can evoke the tonalities of music” (148). The metaphysical component pertains to the continuity between the “earthly and the transcendental, the material and the spiritual”; the seamlessness between antipodes has a prelapsarian element: the “analogical language given by God to man before the fall and ensuring an unbroken passage from the natural to the divine” (149).

For Prendergast, Baudelaire’s understanding of correspondence is undergirded by harmony. Common to the psychological, aesthetic and metaphysical aspects is the idea of “overcom[ing] [of] division and fragmentation and the replac[ement] [of] discord with concord.” In other words, Benjamin’s repurposing of the Baudelairean synthesis of disparities leads him [Benjamin] to construe correspondence as part of a “project of repairing broken experiences” (149); the act of putting together what has been torn asunder is enabled by memory: the diverse data of remembrances finding consonance in a temporal reference.

It may seem that Joaquin litters calendrical space with historical trivia. However, seen from a Benjaminian perspective, by letting the day function like a magnet attracting historical disjecta membra, Joaquin evokes another kind of correspondence: the temporal. Temporal conjunction, as an organizing principle, raises the possibility of disparate events having a sense of concord instead of discord. Furthermore, the prospect of evoking one order in terms of another—which is characteristic of Benjamin’s understanding of Baudelaire—is also present in Joaquin. By citing details from distinct categories, Joaquin underscores not only their discreteness in time and place but also their potential for continuity and correspondence in the compressed series of points in calendrical time. As I demonstrate shortly, Joaquin’s calendars enable categories of nation and religion, as well as past and future temporal orientations, to be viewed in the light of each other.

Compression, moreover, is akin to what Benjamin describes as “history in time-lapse mode.” For him, the “initial date of the calendar”—and, by extension, all calendar dates—is an expression of the condensation of history: events and personalities are compressed into an entry. For Benjamin, calendars are “monuments of a historical consciousness” (“Concept” 395); in the *Almanac*, calendars are monuments in miniature.

It is equally crucial to consider the national and religious elements compressed in the calendars, as well as the temporal orientation such compressions suggest. In a study of 191 national calendars, the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel distinguishes between the two types of event commemorated. One set contains “religiously significant events that occurred in the very distant past” and the other set includes “politically significant events that occurred in the last two hundred

years" (327). For Zerubavel, calendar entries demonstrate a "delicate balance between ... national and religious attachments." The distinct yet interfused nature of calendar entries—the mingling of secular and sacred—enables the calendar to become a site of "multiple histories" (331). Zerubavel, however, does not provide extensive examples of the national and religious calendrical cycles of his 191 samples. Christian and Philippine calendrical cycles should illustrate Zerubavel's findings, especially in terms of the Philippine—and more specifically, Joaquin's—context.

The Christian calendar has "four main elements": (1) the "cycle of the liturgical day"; (2) the "weekly cycle of days"; (3) the "Paschal cycle of movable feasts which move with the date of Easter"; and (4) the "cycle of fixed feasts falling on fixed dates" ("Calendar [Christian]"). The Christian calendrical cycle—starting from the liturgical day up to the larger temporal framework of the year—is regarded as both a celebration of "Christ's mystery" and the "expectation of his coming again." The Christian calendar signifies both commemoration and anticipation: the yearly cycle is a looking back at the mystery of Christ's incarnation, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, as much as it is a looking forward to his second coming in the fullness of time ("General Norms").

The most significant period in the liturgical year is the Easter Triduum. During this period, the "passion and resurrection of Christ" is remembered, and the significance of the Paschal mystery is emphasized: "[Christ] destroyed our death, [by] rising he restored our life." The destruction of death and the restoration of life constitute Christian redemption. The seasons before and after the Triduum are also significant. The "fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost" are treated as if they were "one great Sunday." Lenten Season—which begins with Ash Wednesday—is intended to prepare Christians for the commemoration of Easter. Next in significance to the Easter Triduum—and the seasons that precede and follow it—is the Christmas season. During this time, Christians are enjoined to remember "Christ's birth and early manifestations." Advent—the period preceding Christmas—prepares Christians in two ways: (1) it predisposes them to the upcoming Christmas season; and (2) it prepares them for "Christ's second coming at the end of time." Thus, the Christian calendar—emphasizing feasts, devotional practices and anniversaries of saints—can be seen as an "unfold[ing of] the entire mystery of Christ," not simply in terms of the now, but in anticipation of his future arrival ("General Norms").

In terms of the Philippine context, a list of national holidays was indicated in Executive Order 292—which enforced the Administrative Code—in 1987. Regular holidays indicated in EO 292 were New Year's Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Araw ng Kagitingan (9 April), Labor Day, Independence Day (12 June), National Heroes Day (last Sunday of August), Bonifacio Day (30 November), Christmas, and Rizal Day (30 December). Special days observed nationwide were All Saints Day (1 November) and the last day of the year (EO 292). In 2007, Republic Act 9492—an amendment of EO 292—added Eidul Fitr as a regular holiday and Ninoy Aquino Day (21 August) as a nationwide special day. RA 9492 was notable for resituating several previously fixed holidays.

For instance, Araw ng Kagitingan, Labor Day, Independence Day, National Heroes Day, Bonifacio Day, and Rizal Day were all moved to the Monday nearest their initial date of commemoration (RA 9492). More recently, the Office of the President issued Proclamation 1841: the list of regular holidays, special non-working days, and special holidays for all schools for 2010. One interesting aside is that the proclamation does not generally indicate the reasons for marking those days in the calendar. Except for a short note on the EDSA Revolution Anniversary—which “restored and ushered political, social and economic reforms in the country” and now “serves as an inspiration to Filipinos everywhere”—the historical underpinnings of the commemorated events are not mentioned (*Proclamation 1841*).

If, for Joaquin, each day is a locus for the potential cohabitation of elements that are historically, discursively, and geographically disparate—and Joaquin has taken pains to provide entries for each day of the year—then the entire calendar represents the fusion of two sets of complementary yet conflicting temporalities. By grafting two temporalities onto discrete days, Joaquin’s calendars demonstrate—by intertwining national and religious timeframes—the polysemy of time.

Furthermore, temporalities of nation and religion have their own specific origins and future trajectories. For Christians, the liturgical year is the occasion for the “formation of the faithful by means of devotional practices ... instruction, and works of penance and mercy” (“General Norms”). The formation prepares Christians for Parousia, Christ’s second coming. The Christian calendar turns simultaneously to the past and to the future: by commemorating a saint for each day, or by indicating parts of the year that are solemn, the calendar links the present with canonical figures and events, which in turn, serve as examples for emulation and instruction into the faith, and by extension, the possibility of future salvation.

For the Philippine context, commemorating past events is important because not only do they (the commemorated events) refer to past achievements, they also show the prospect of their future recurrence. In this sense, in the calendar, past reality and future possibility mingle in the same entry. In this light, achievements of Rizal become, for sociologist Randolph David, “emblematic for successive generations of young Filipinos who seek personal excellence and achievement as signifiers of their nation’s worth and self-esteem.” Bonifacio, similarly, serves as “an antidote to easy resignation when faced with the seeming impossibility of our current struggles” (25). By indicating 30 November and 30 December as holidays (and here the resonance with “holy day” is apt), the government acknowledges these heroes’ contributions to the nation’s well-being: each generation draws its sense of worth from a particular interpretative grasp of its heroes and its history.

For Benjamin, “to write history means giving calendar dates their physiognomy” (“Central Park” 165); calendar dates are outlines of a face which historical narratives will then fill out. The

outlines of faces in Joaquin's entries reveal a Janus-like quality. The Janus-like characteristic is seen in two ways: firstly, the almanac's commemorative aspect—its potential to proclaim and announce—has two temporal orientations; its commemorative turn to history (a proclamation not just of past events but also of unfulfilled ones) is inseparable from its turn to the future (an announcement of possibilities). Secondly, by employing correspondence and compression, Joaquin enables discrete entries of nation and religion to occupy shared calendrical spaces. In the *Almanac*, calendar entries assume faces that gaze both back and forward in time with expressions that have both national and religious features: a "remind[er] [to] the present that there was a past that will return again in the future: the Golden Age of Saturn when all men were equal" (312).

"THE CRYSTAL OF THE TOTAL EVENT": FRAGMENTARY HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE ESSAYS

In this section I take my cue from Walter Benjamin's montage method of constructing history—and the attendant concept of dialectics at a standstill—and engage with the essays. Firstly, I claim that the essays, constructed in the manner of Benjaminian montage, are characterized by a refusal to resolve into unified, linear narratives. Secondly, despite the discontinuities, Joaquin is nevertheless attentive to resemblances and missed opportunities. Strategies of fragmentation and conjunction have political implications: discontinuous representations interrogate and undercut fixed linear forms of history; attentiveness to conjunction and thwarted opportunities expose not just failures but also the incipient possibilities in historical situations: possibilities which, when recognized by readers, may be actualized in the future.

For Benjamin, dialectics at a standstill is the confluence of a number of methodological and political concerns. As regards method, dialectics at a standstill takes its bearings from the need to "conjoin a heightened graphicness to the realization of the Marxist method." This link between presentation and politics involves the introduction of "the principle of montage into history." This process is related to architectural and engineering work: it involves the "assembl[y] [of] large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components." Such a construction has a metonymic quality: the "small individual moment," once analyzed, can evoke "the crystal of the total event." These jostlings are not fanciful reorderings of historical minutiae: dialectics at a standstill positions itself in opposition to, and therefore "break[s] with[,] vulgar historical naturalism" (*Arcades* 461).

In addition, images evoked by juxtaposition are imbued with sudden and illuminating synchronicity, a confluence of timeframes "wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation." Finely cut components are not set in "temporal" ("what has been" next to "the now") but in "figural" relation (*Arcades* 463): the process is not additive—not the

accumulation of detail—but relational: a montage of materials producing a reaction. The dialectical image, therefore, is a constellation of discrete elements whose new and sudden relationship provokes illumination.

Dialectics at a standstill involves both the “movement of thoughts” and “their arrest as well.” When this double gesture occurs—the act of “thinking [that] suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions”—that configuration is given a “shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad.” For Benjamin, these two seemingly contrapuntal movements—motion and pause, blast and containment—are inseparable: the halt in the flow of the dialectic is the key “constructive principle” on which “materialist historiography” is based (“Concept” 396).

The scholar Rolf Tiedemann’s gloss accentuates this conflation. For him, this “temporal core of history” is where progress “halts for a moment”; the crystalline formation—the dialectical image—is where the “*dynamis* of what is happening coagulates into *stasis*.” In this space, “time itself [becomes] condensed into a differential”: in this space, the “Now identifies itself as the ‘Now of a particular recognizability’” (942). In short, when motion becomes indistinguishable from cessation, the standstill effected enables the present moment to recognize itself as inseparable from the past. For Tiedemann, Benjamin’s historiographical method is also seen in terms of synchronicity and legibility. “Every present,” says Tiedemann, “ought to be synchronic with certain moments in history, just as every past becomes ‘legible’ only in a certain epoch” (935).

Political urgency—an imperative that fuses rescue and remembrance—informs the process of historical assemblage. For Benjamin, elements which constitute the constellation are “phenomena” recovered “from the discredit and neglect into which they have fallen.” However, such obscurities—forgotten objects, sites of ruin—are not the only things marked for rescue; what is equally crucial is to salvage objects that have, “very often by a certain strain in their dissemination,” been “enshrin[ed] by heritage” (*Arcades* 473). Such an “enshrinement” is undergirded by the narrative of conquest: “cultural treasures” are suffused with a “lineage” that the historical materialist “cannot contemplate without horror”: not only are these treasures produced by “the anonymous toil of others,” the manner of their “transmission” is equally deplorable. For Benjamin, cultural treasures are precisely the “spoils” displayed in a procession “in which current rulers step over those who are lying prostrate” (“Concept” 391). Therefore, one task of the dialectical method is to wrest these objects embedded in the narrative of the victor and re-inscribe them into a new constellation that lays bare the “barbaric” process in which they were either transmitted or rendered null and obscure.

The scholar Max Pensky’s gloss on Benjamin illustrates this process further. For Pensky, Benjamin’s method proposes that “*historical* fragments [emphasis in original] ... can be constructed by removing them (via historical research) from the embeddedness in a particular context.” From

such a context, where they have devolved into obsolescence and neglect—the “trash of history”—the historical materialist recasts them in a “series of textual juxtapositions” where the “fragments constitute a constellation.” Pensky underscores the point made by Benjamin that the constellated image is typified by an emergent relation between fragments: a “new, *necessary* [emphasis in original] interpretation of the fragments’ relationship with one another” (186). Moreover, for Pensky, Benjamin’s method demands a critique of the fragments’ original context, as well as the contemporary moment in which the constellation is made. Montage, says Pensky, “oblige[s] an entirely new interpretation of the material culture from which they were wrested, and the relationship of that material culture to the present moment” (186-87). For Pensky, Benjamin’s method of “rescue and redeploy[ment]” interrogates the historical context and the social processes that render them insignificant (187).

Benjamin’s approach, according to the scholar Graeme Gilloch, involves “bring[ing] together elements of the past and present which, though perhaps inert and harmless in isolation, prove highly unstable and combustible in combination” (228). This potentially incendiary combination—whose development in Benjamin Gilloch traces from “Surrealist montage” to the “Proustian interweaving of remembrance and forgetting”—is described in terms of salvage and rescue: the “present recovers an image from the past, as the ‘now of recognizability.’” For Gilloch, the “dialectical image appears at a moment of temporary disturbance and correspondence, within an eddy in the flow of history” (229). Dialectics at a standstill involves dissonance as much as consonance: a break in the progress of time so as to enable the prospect of the mutual recognizability between past and present.

What Benjamin proposes with dialectics at a standstill is innovative and political: a concept and a method where aesthetics and politics are two gestures of the same action. Such an action is comprised of recovery and rearrangement of heterogeneous and often discarded elements whose placement in a new context results in the cognizance of new possibilities: nothing less than the “revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past” (“Concept” 396). Such a “construction,” for the scholar Harry Harootunian, involves the “‘awakening’ to remembrance of something that has been momentarily forgotten but never lost to consciousness.” This awakening is inseparable from stillness and pause: that “sudden, momentary pause, which now instantaneously incorporates for the mobilization of a political purpose in the present, elements that were once dispersed across the blank seriality of time” (79).

For Benjamin, in summary, historiographical work is best described in terms of assembly and montage: a “small individual moment” is juxtaposed to another moment in a method akin to montage. This method, which is undergirded by recovery, is not accumulative but relational:

moreover, for Benjamin, the montage of discrete materials aims to awaken the audience. I now demonstrate how the *Almanac*'s essays may be read in the light of Benjamin's concepts.

For Joaquin, October was the month of Manila's "greatest fiestas [festivals]": the novena of the Santo Rosario and the procession of La Naval. Later, at Santa Cruz, the novena of the Del Pilar started, followed by celebrations at Binondo. This month signified "one long festive chain" where prominent members of the various *arrabales* [boroughs] took part: "proud women [of Santa Cruz], loaded with diamonds," the "wealthy Creole of San Nicolas" and the "new-rich Chinese of Calle Rosario [in Binondo]." A "nippy wind" would "blow over the city" and the "Japanese lanterns at window and balcony" would move; the Chinese stores "in the alleys off the Escolta" would sell "hams and cheeses and apples and grapes and lichees"; one could buy boiled or roasted chestnuts at street corners or at church yards. Every night, there were many things to do: "solemn novena[s]," concerts, and "crowded *feria* [fairs] to be explored." For Joaquin, October—which "glittered with the most magnificent processions of the year"—was a time of celebrations and crowds, cool night breezes, fairs and food (*Almanac* 248).

After describing the festivities, Joaquin looks at the history of the Franciscan order in the Philippines. Joaquin considers San Francisco as "one of the most popular churches in prewar Intramuros": it had the largest patio among the seven major churches in the walled city, and on this patio stood two churches—one housed Our Lady of the Angels, the other held a "gorgeous image of San Luis Rey in full regalia: crown and scepter and ermine robe"—and the Franciscan mother house. Every Tuesday, the faithful would honor Saint Anthony of Padua and the "streets round about crowded up with hawkers and vendors" (*Almanac* 248). For Joaquin, Tuesdays at the Franciscan patio were as "tumultuous" as Fridays in Quiapo. Joaquin traces the history of the Franciscans from their arrival in 1577 to their continued involvement in the Philippines four centuries hence. The Franciscans "spread out all over Southern Tagalog and Bicolandia" [southern parts of Luzon, the largest island of the Philippines], as well as established parishes in Manila and Bulacan, a province north of Manila. Franciscans were also involved in health care: they established hospitals in Manila, Bicol, Los Baños, and Cavite. Furthermore, Franciscans also wrote some of the first grammar books in Tagalog and Bicol—two of the major languages in Luzon—and "translated Scripture, doctrine, the prayerbook and the catechism" into those languages. They also "'translat[ed]' to Christianity" a number of "pagan rites ... [like] the summer fertility feast of Obando, the tatarin ritual of Paco, and the turumba of Pakil" (*Almanac* 265).

After outlining the Franciscans' history, Joaquin looks at the lanzones fruit. Joaquin narrates a myth associated with lanzones: it was a "wild fruit," it was said, "originally ... shunned as deadly." The "golden bunches ripened untouched and rotted on the bough." One day, a "beautiful woman appeared" in the towns plentiful with lanzones, ate a piece of the fruit, and "bade the folk

[to] eat ... without fear." The people did as followed and found the fruit "sweet and wholesome" (*Almanac* 265). According to the myth, the woman was none other than the Virgin Mary herself and that—since the lanzones has a number of dark spots on its surface—"her thumbmark is on the fruit to this day." Joaquin lists various areas in the country where lanzones is prevalent—from Southern Tagalog and Bicol to a number of parts of Mindanao—and describes its chief characteristics: "round or elongated and freckles darkly as it ripens." The fruit and the tree have many uses: the sticky juice of the fruit is used to treat sore eyes; the bark and leaves, when boiled, are used to treat stomach ache; and the "peelings, when dried and burned," were used, back "in the old days" as a fumigant. Joaquin ends this section by recounting the memories a boy in Pakil [a town in Laguna, a province south of Manila] who remembered that, during his childhood, the townsfolk lit bonfires at night "to keep bats away from the fruit" trees, resulting in scenes where "the mountains round the town glowed with lights at night" (*Almanac* 266).

After describing the lanzones, Joaquin tells his readers how to make a fumigant from its peelings. First, the seeds have to be removed and the peelings have to be spread out under the sun until they are "thoroughly withered." Once dry, the peelings can be kept until they are to be used. To make the fumigant, a heap of coals has to be prepared in a suitable container; the peelings should lightly cover the coals. The fumigant can be set "under bed and chairs to smoke out bugs"; in the kitchen to ward off cockroaches; in "dark damp nooks, against fleas and mosquitoes." The fumes "are also said to have a soothing effect on asthmatics." Joaquin, though, cautions the readers and says that these tips are "strictly [an] old wives' nostrum" (*Almanac* 266).

The second half of the chapter reinforces the quality of topical variety and historical disjunctiveness. Joaquin turns his attention to a history of Manila's Chinatown, a discussion of the Octoberian student, an account of the rivalry between the Binondo and Sta. Cruz boroughs of Manila, and a discussion of Halloween.

Joaquin's next section is a brief history of Chinatown. He says that in 1570, "there were only 40 married Chinese in Manila" (*Almanac* 266). In 1589, this number escalated to 4,000, and "by 1600 the number had risen to 15,000." For Joaquin, the rise in the Chinese population—who were "mostly South Chinese and from the lower classes"—could be attributed to their perception that living in Manila under the control of the Spaniards seemed far better than staying in their own country: "even a ghetto in the Philippines" was considered as "a far freer world than their own land and no amount of pogrom could stop them from coming." Joaquin quotes the Spanish historian Morga, who quotes a Chinese scholar writing at the time; the scholar describes the migrating Chinese as "scum, ungrateful to China, of little account"—his bile apparent in his description of the Philippines: "the Island of Luzon is a miserable land inhabited only by devils and serpents." Joaquin then traces the changes in the location of Chinatown throughout Manila's

history: Chinatown was first situated “on the bank of the Pasig where the Chinese traders landed and did business.” Then the location shifted to an area inside Intramuros, “near the convent of the Dominicans, who had been placed in charge of the Chinese.” Afterwards, the site moved to what is now Plaza de Santo Tomas. Another location for Chinatown was the “area that would become Arroceros and Plaza Lawton. Present-day Chinatown developed around two streets in the Binondo district: Calle Rosario and Calle Ongpin (*Almanac* 267).

Joaquin then turns to briefly consider the “Octoberian,” a “prewar term for students who graduated ... in October instead of normally in March.” This is an occasion for Joaquin to digress on the Philippine academic year, which started “originally [as] a unit beginning in June and ending in March,” and the later on “divided into semesters: from June to October, and from October to March.” One consequence of the first kind of academic year was that if a student failed a subject at any point during the year, s/he had to repeat the entire year, whereas, in the second kind, if s/he failed a subject, then s/he only had to make up for it during the first term, and would graduate in October (*Almanac* 268).

Joaquin’s penultimate entry considers the rival Manila boroughs of Binondo and Santa Cruz. Binondo was “the commercial capital of the Philippines through most of the 19th century.” In the 1900s, Santa Cruz took over this pre-eminent position. Joaquin traces Binondo’s origins to the merger of two adjoining areas—Baybay (“most probably the ancient landing place of Chinese traders” [*Almanac* 268]) and Minondoc (the “island across the Pasig from Intramuros”)—in 1594. In the 1640s, Binondo already had a “stone church with 50 large windows”; this church was decorated with “handsome tapestries and paintings.” Moreover, the district was gaining attention as a “printing center, a port, and an emporium” and the wealthier the district became, the more its fiestas “rival[ed] in grandeur” the ones in Intramuros. Concurrent with the rise of Binondo’s fortunes was the development of Santa Cruz as a Jesuit mission and a farming area. Among the crops—“cabbages and peas and cucumbers,” for instance—that were “very probably first raised” in the country were planted here. A school was also founded in the area. Santa Cruz gained a reputation for its “heavy traffic and its commerce”: agricultural products like “grain, milk, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and other foodstuffs” brought from the country were being sold on boats on the canals (*Almanac* 269).

According to Joaquin, when the Chinese started to settle “in such numbers in Binondo,” the elite members of the Tagalog class began to relocate to Santa Cruz. Joaquin traces this shift to the 1900s: by then Binondo “was on the wane.” Furthermore, Santa Cruz became the focal point of an emergent intellectual middle class, and gained renown as an area of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, theaters, and restaurants (*Almanac* 269).

Joaquin's final entry looks at Halloween, the "last of the four great witches' sabbaths of the year," and considered a "holy" time even before Christianity. For Joaquin, Halloween was significant because it was a time of transition: the death of the old year, and the beginning of a new one on 1 November. It was, for Joaquin, a time when "new fires were kindled for the tribe and divinations made for the future," a time for "omens and auguries." Joaquin points out that the "witches" associated with Halloween were "actually priestesses of the old religion" who "invoke[d] the Great Mother Goddess." This goddess, in turn, for Joaquin, is associated with the "primeval cult of the moon": a symbol of the goddess who "died old on this night and was born young again the next instant." For Joaquin, this instantaneity was important: the witches "were both bewailing a death and hailing a rebirth." Joaquin links this lunar motif to the Philippines by noting that during the early years of Spanish colonization there were "witches" (priestesses who resisted the encroachment of Christianity); "wild mountain goddesses" like Mariang Makiling, who Joaquin considers as having affinities with the goddess Diana, a moon goddess; and the occurrence of "witches' sabbaths, like the turumba and the tatarin" (*Almanac* 271).

Benjamin's remarks on fragmentary representations of history illuminate Joaquin's structuring of the essays. The crystalline moments valued by Benjamin appear, in Joaquin's *Almanac*, as finely cut components. The October chapter contains an array of topics: the opulence of religious festivals; the brisk wind and the lanterns it would move; the endeavors of the Franciscans in health care, translation, and studies of grammar; myths and medicinal properties associated with lanzones; instructions on making a fumigant; the constantly shifting locations of Chinatown. Other chapters are equally diverse: in November, a comment on how Filipinos honor their dead—which, for Joaquin, may be traced to the overlaying of Catholic and pagan practices during the early Spanish colonization period—is followed by an account of the parties with Manila's high society during the American Commonwealth period.

Seen in this light, the essays demonstrate a kind of resistance to "vulgar historical naturalism" insofar as they do not resolve into a linear, continuous representation of Philippine history. The lanzones essay, for example, has no ostensible relation to the Chinatown essay, which, in turn, has no relation to the Halloween essay. The lanzones does not grow in Chinatown; Joaquin's discussion of Halloween incorporates lunar imagery and local goddesses: points which are not considered in other entries in the October chapter such as the entry on the Franciscans or the brief history of Binondo and Santa Cruz. The scholar Andrew Benjamin's comments on the dialectical image are instructive. For him, the dialectical image "involves the co-presence of what can neither be reconciled nor rendered synthetic." Such irreconcilability is the mark of the "impossibility of the image's incorporation into the temporality of historicism or into the procession

of concepts and activities that are articulated within that temporal unfolding" (111). The *Almanac*'s elements are not additive but relational; the relation demonstrated by the essays is precisely the difficulty of reconciliation: in the *Almanac*'s terms, the difficulty of resolving materials into a coherent narrative, the essays separated by chronological and causal gaps, each section a self-contained unit with no transition between them—fumigant, wind, grammar, commerce.

For Benjamin, the shock of fragmentation and discontinuity—and the simultaneous reconstitution in new forms—is an occasion for awakening. Disjointed temporalities act as a kind of shock against narcotic of linear retellings of history. This "new [and] *necessary* interpretation of the fragments' relationship," as Pensky indicated earlier, results in that "unstable and combustible" quality which Gilloch describes as a "moment of temporary disturbance." This propensity to disturb—the ability to "create an eddy in the flow of history," in Gilloch's phrase—relates with Joaquin's strategy of rearrangement of historical elements.

For Benjamin, shock is capable of "jolt[ing] the viewer" by making the artwork "tak[e] on a tactile quality." Benjamin, who considers the concept of shock in view of the contrast between painting and then-emergent forms of cinema, says that while the former "invites the viewer to contemplation," the audience of the latter does not have the chance to be meditative: the "train of associations in the person contemplating these images [in film] is immediately interrupted by new images" ("Work of Art" 267). Although much of Joaquin's *Almanac* is textual—and to a certain extent, pictorial—Benjamin's consideration of shock may be instructive. Joaquin develops a topic, offers interesting facts, statistics, anecdotal material, personal insights, then breaks off his discussion and takes up another point. The aesthetics of disruption is prevalent: the capsule history of Chinatown, for instance—a condensed account of the various shifts in the location of the borough throughout the centuries—is followed by a topic unrelated to it: the Octoberian student, which also features Joaquin's thoughts on the structure of the Philippine academic year.

To be sure, Joaquin's work does not take on Dadaist overtones, what Benjamin describes as a "vehement distraction" that endeavors to "mak[e] artworks the center of scandal." However, though disruptions in the flow of Joaquin's essays demonstrate none of the vehemence and scandal associated with Dada, they nonetheless "induce heightened attention" ("Work of Art" 267). This must be seen in the light of Joaquin's aim—articulated in the *Almanac*'s preface—to instruct and delight readers. Moreover, interruption as a tactic to encourage attention is linked to the effect of dismantling and revising the established and "dogmatic fixed picture[s]" of Philippine history (Bresnahan 75).

I have demonstrated how the essays may be seen as discontinuous. In what follows, I show how, despite their fragmentariness, the essays also demonstrate conjunction and resemblance: in

the *Almanac*, attentiveness to detail is emblematic of an awareness of both missed possibilities and incipient redemption. As the calendars indicate, commemoration is directed to the future as much as the past, and, following Benjamin, what commemoration calls attention to are not just actualized events but missed possibilities. Awareness of missed possibilities, therefore, may compel the ones—the *Almanac*’s readers—in the present-day to seek fulfillment and actualization in the future.

For example, 20 January commemorates the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. Chris Antonette Piedad-Pugay summarizes Filipino and Spanish versions of the mutiny and points out crucial factors that led to, and resulted from, the uprising. Among the precipitating factors, she notes the disenfranchisement among arsenal workers and elements of the native army, the implementation of strict policies by the Spanish governor-general, and the participation of Filipino clergy in the secularization movement. The major consequence of the uprising was the execution of the native priests Gomez, Burgos and Zamora; this heightened Filipino animosity toward the Spaniards and prompted them to demand more reforms (“Two Faces”). Equally importantly, the historian John Schumacher’s analysis of the writings of Father Jose Burgos, one of the principal figures of the mutiny, elaborates on the martyred priest’s “appeal to the Filipino past, the impassioned defense of the ability of the Filipino against the insinuations of Spanish racism, [and] the demand for equality before the law.” Burgos’s writings, for Schumacher, were incipient articulations of “Filipino nationalist thought” that found full expression in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (32).

Joaquin’s essay does not depict the conflict. Rather, he focuses on two things: firstly, his depiction highlights the synchronicity between the start of the uprising and the commencement of a fiesta in January. Secondly, he focuses on two errors. One error is in the fiesta’s name. The second error is in terms of the nature of the explosions. The mutineers thought that the fireworks were to inaugurate combat, when in fact they were to signal the start of a nine-day festival culminating on the 29th of January. The mutineers, Joaquin says, “had apparently been led to believe that there would be a simultaneous uprising in Manila, which they were to regard as a signal for their own coup in Cavite” (*Almanac* 20).

After the mutiny, Joaquin says, what was said among the Manileños was that the “mutineers mistook ... ‘the fireworks of Sampaloc’” for “martial explosions.” This is what Joaquin seeks to amend in his essay. He points out that the fiesta of Sampaloc is in December, and could not have been the celebration held concurrently with the mutiny. What Joaquin says is that the mutineers saw fireworks from the Bilibid Viejo fiesta (an area near Sampaloc), and thought, wrongly, that their Manila counterparts had begun to revolt. Joaquin suggests that the fireworks on the night of 20 January 1872 “may well have been splendid enough to have been seen and heard in Cavite”

(*Almanac* 20), some 15 kilometers away from Manila. Hence, the errors with which Joaquin concerns himself in the *Almanac*'s Cavite Mutiny entry pertain to: (1) the mutineers who thought that the fireworks were the start of concurrent revolts; and (2) the subsequent reception of the event, which assumed that the fireworks were for a fiesta meant for another time and location (i.e., it should be Bilibid Viejo in January instead of Sampaloc in December).

This example further illustrates Joaquin's predilection for conjunction: the uprising in Cavite was to have been "simultaneous" with the one in Manila. Furthermore, apart from temporal conjunction, Joaquin describes the adhesion—however ironic, since the mutineers were in error—between the religious and the secular: fireworks for the festivities were interpreted as a "signal" by the participants of the uprising. Besides noting the uprising's importance in the larger context of Philippine history—the event generated "repercussions" until the end of the 19th century—Joaquin's essay is sensitive to the errors and the missed chances evoked by the event: had the uprising been better coordinated, then there would have been greater chance of success.

It may seem peculiar for Joaquin to foreground what seems to be a minor trifle. Most scholarship on the Cavite Mutiny and on key figures like Father Burgos—principally done by historians like Schumacher—highlights the drama and the repercussion, framing the event in terms of the search for Filipino self-determination and the response of Spain to these attempts at emancipation. But Joaquin does not analyze historical forces as much as he highlights seemingly overlooked details. This strategy may be illustrated by a turn to Benjamin.

In "On the Concept of History," Benjamin remarks that the past contains the idea and image of possibility—and the thwarting—of happiness; these, in turn, are "indissolubly bound up with the idea of redemption" (389). Discernible in the present are traces of missed opportunities: the atmosphere of the now contains "a breath of the air that pervaded earlier days" and the "voices that we hear" are resonant with "an echo of now silent ones" ("Concept" 390). The critic Werner Hamacher, commenting on Benjamin's view of history, argues that for Benjamin, the past not only refers to "lived-out facts that survive, facts that could be recorded as positive objects of knowledge." Rather, what also survives are "unactualized possibilities": the resonance of now silent voices. For Benjamin, continues Hamacher, historical time was filled with "the unactualized, the unfinished, failed [and] thwarted" (41). Historical representation, hence, accommodates not just successes and actualities—what usually gets recorded in history—but also possibilities that were cut off before their full fruition.

Two things are crucial with Benjamin's claim and Hamacher's gloss. Firstly: desire for redemption is inseparable from a previous experience of missed chances, which is evoked by Benjamin via imagery like voices and air. Secondly: representations of history should include not

just facts and positive objects of knowledge. Rather, depictions of the past should also account for failures, dead ends, missed opportunities, and errors.

By highlighting the small detail, the overlooked material, the seemingly fanciful evocation, Joaquin's historiography is akin to an accumulation of Benjaminian data of remembrances, and what they commemorate are singular, irreplaceable, unrepeatable possibilities. For example, Joaquin writes about the early 1900s, when Daniel Burnham, the "foremost American city-planner of his day," embarked on a project to expand and modernize Manila. Burnham "envisioned [Manila] as a metropolis inhabited by millions, with multi-laned avenues radiating from its central districts." According to Joaquin, Burnham's other proposals included "a government center occupying all of Wallace Field," a Philippine Capitol building that would be the centerpiece of a group of buildings of different government bureaus and departments, a mighty quadrangle, with a lagoon in the centre and monument to Rizal at its Luneta end" (*Almanac* 214).

The Burnham Plan was "audacious": it was a prospect "dreamed up by a very typical empire-day American" who was "not afraid of the grand manner." The Philippine Legislature "agreed to set aside two million pesos for the execution of the plan"; the London *Times* picked up the story and called the plan a "miracle by an Aladdin." However, several years into the project—and when the fund had reached around 16 million pesos—then-President Quezon diverted the money to support irrigation projects in the countryside. As a result of dwindling funds, only three buildings in Burnham's plan were constructed: the Legislative Building, which was built from 1920 to 1926, and the buildings for the agriculture and finance departments, which were finished at the eve of the Second World War. Quezon had overruled Burnham's plan by "creating a new capital city outside Manila." For Joaquin, the three buildings in central Manila signify "our happiest achievement in the neo-classic manner." For Joaquin, that period—the height of the American empire days—was "a moment in our history" where the "style of the Romans suited our temper perfectly and we created a structure that had grace and dignity" (*Almanac* 214).

Although Joaquin overlooks the imperial connotations of his comparison—the grand manner of the colonizing Americans, the allusion to Rome and neoclassical architecture—what is evident in his account of the city's development during the American period is the sense of transience and the missed chance at greatness suggested by the abandonment of Burnham's plan, in general, and the numerous unreconstructed buildings, in particular. The three existing buildings, for Joaquin, stand as manifestations of a "glorious dream" and at the same time, a reminder that "we can no longer express ourselves confidently in that style." For Joaquin, the unconstructed buildings and thoroughfares in Burnham's plan are as crucial as the actually existing structures: although the Legislative, Finance, and Agricultural Buildings still stand, and the Rizal Monument at Luneta Park still serves as a memorial to the national hero, the other prospective elements in

Burnham's design were abandoned: the avenues unconstructed, the "vast Capitoline group of structures" unbuilt, the miracle and dream untranslated from blueprint to material structures (*Almanac* 214).

This Benjaminian view, which accommodates not just what happened (i.e., the positive objects of knowledge, the facts) but also what could have been (i.e., the errors, the ironic conjunctions) relates to Joaquin's historiography. To return to the passage on Burnham's plan: Joaquin mentions happiness—albeit of the middle and ruling class—and the thwarted plans of the area. Joaquin's essay takes into account impressions that range from grandeur to ghostliness, ending the passage on a simultaneously spirited yet melancholy note: existing buildings—elegant as they are—stand as a memorial to a dream; they are also a reminder of the grandeur that could have been.

This preponderance for citing the seemingly circumstantial, oblique and tangential is nevertheless related to future prospects. The *Almanac* notes both the missed chance and the prospect of happiness had the opportunity been actualized: *Almanac* entries on the thwarted Cavite Munity and unrealized plans of Daniel Burnham offer a "secret index by which [the past] is referred to redemption" ("Concept" 390). Had the mutineers found reinforcements, for instance, perhaps the insurrection might have had a happier result. Had Burnham's plans been realized, perhaps Manila might have had more elegant buildings. But it is precisely by indicating past moments of unactualized happiness—the seemingly festive start of an insurrection, inaugurated by fireworks; the beauty of the architecture in one of the central districts in Manila—that, at some point in the future, current squalor may be transcended. The prospect of future redemption is linked to elements of the thwarted and unfinished past insofar as the past is recognized by the present. Only upon recognition can the present understand that the past demands from them—the ones in the now—a sense of "settlement, correction and fulfillment" (Hamacher 41).

This is why the *Almanac* is replete with compressions and coincidences. Hamacher notes that "in order for another moment to touch another moment, for a Now-point to enter into a configuration with another Now-point, and in order for historical time to arise out of this configuration, this moment has to be constituted as a reference (*Verweis*), an indication (*Hinweisung*), and an instruction (*Anweisung*) towards this other moment" (51). With his aesthetic strategies—a series of dates and not a timeline of events, the fragmentary essay and not the grand narrative—Joaquin's writing of history is open, attentive to associations, observant of both gaps between, and relations among, disparate points in time.

Details seek resemblances and correspondences: dates that coincide, events that match, details that resonate. Joaquin's *Almanac*, far from being a repository of data, comes to terms with the futility and meaninglessness of history. It does so by recovering details and by seeking patterns

while at the same time laying bare the disjunction of materials and the discrepancies of forms. These patterns do not follow “mechanical causal connections” and “mechanical consequences, directions, and consistencies” (Hamacher 51) which Benjamin deplored in historical writing. History is “not a connection of causes,” says Hamacher, “it is a connection of affect and intention” (51). Joaquin’s *Almanac* is a temporal structure of feeling that attends to the flotsam and jetsam of history: telling details, temporal rhymes, miscues in time.

Moreover, the essays, precisely by way of their construction, evoke a sense of openness: gaps between elements are as crucial as the elements themselves. Benjamin writes that dialectics at a standstill produces a figural relation between constellated elements: it is this figural relation of openness that Joaquin proposes by way of the *Almanac*’s innovative structure. By privileging porosity, non-linearity, and simultaneity, the *Almanac* forces its addressees—principally Manileños, but theoretically any reader—to reckon not just with what Joaquin has blasted apart but also with what he has put together: to come to terms with relations between fumigant and myth, architecture and festival, calendar and essay. Joaquin’s aesthetics of historiography doubles back and forth from present to past, referring simultaneously to one of the most ancient of genres, and to an open, indeterminate present shot through with chips of the past.

“HEADIER BITS OF READING”: AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF NON-LINEAR HISTORIOGRAPHY

This concluding section considers the implications of Joaquin’s aesthetic strategies in the calendars and essays in the light of non-linear emplotment in historical writing. By privileging an aesthetics of interruption, Joaquin’s *Almanac* critiques developmentalist notions of linear historical writing, opens up the possibility of recuperation of the almanac form, and offers a bricolage and composite representation of the Filipino nation.

In “Outlines of a Non-Linear Emplotment of Philippine History,” Reynaldo Ileto likens the work of the historian to that of a “cutting operation.” For Ileto, the act of cleaving has ambivalent results. On the one hand, the historian—especially the one “occupy[ing] the site of dominant centers”—has the capacity to “remember ... that which it deems meaningful for [the center’s] development.” By contrast, for Ileto, remembering is inseparable from forgetting: for the historian ensconced in the center, what is “suppress[ed]” are elements which run contrary to narratives of development: elements deemed as “dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive.” Hence, for Ileto, the “developmentalist” historian’s ambivalent yet powerful position rests on his ability to simultaneously inscribe and erase, and his aim is to construct a linear narrative of development. Remembered elements—the “data of the past”—allow the historian to construct a narrative that hews to notions of progress: materials may be “strung together into a trajectory

of emergence, growth, complexity and increasing rationality.” Moreover, the narrative which underscores emergence and growth often assumes a triumphalist mood: such a trajectory, for Ileto, “enables great moments and individuals to be celebrated” (“Outlines” 154); individuals overcome difficulties, a period of adversity nevertheless results in success.

Furthermore, linear emplotment is used by both establishment and opposition. For instance, the opening volumes of *Tadhana*—attributed to former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, but actually written by a team of Filipino historians—begin with an account and analysis of the “pre-Hispanic roots of Filipino heritage.” In Marcos’s version of events, the origin of the “future Filipino nation is to be found in the idealized pre-Spanish barangay.” Another major section of the series considers the 350 years of the Spanish regime and looks at ways in which Filipinos “struggle[d]” with and “participate[d] in the Hispanization process, before moving towards an idea of a national community” during the latter part of Spanish rule. From 1872 to 1898, the Philippines would move from “counter-society” to “the birth of the nation-state.” In its final volumes—from 1898, when Filipinos declared independence from Spain, to 1972, when Marcos proclaimed Martial Law and subsequently inaugurated the New Society—the *Tadhana* narrative arc “consists of realizing this dream, this destiny” of national sovereignty and identity (*Critical Questions* 5). The intro to *Tadhana* claims that the value of history may be located in the orderly and chronological manner in which materials are presented; the various articles offer its readers an “orderly account of events in chronological sequence,” recognizing the “‘periods’ of Philippine history, in the actual sequence that they occurred.” This orderly presentation aims to demonstrate that the “separate events coming together reveal a distinct and steady process” culminating in the “modern [Philippine] state” (read: the New Society) (*Tadhana* ii).

However, as Ileto points out, even Marcos’s antagonists from the radical and militant left “surprisingly participate in the discourse ... they condemn.” For Ileto, in books like Renato Constantino’s *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* and Amado Guerrero’s *Philippine Society and Revolution*, the narrative presented—akin to *Tadhana*—“proceeds from the same construct of Fall-Darkness-Recovery (or Triumph).” *A Past Revisited* and *Philippine Society and Revolution* offer an “image of a pre-Hispanic feudal order bastardized by colonialism”; they also present a “native culture contaminated by Christianity” (*Critical Questions* 6). The conclusion to *A Past Revisited*, for instance, calls for a “systematic and patriotic effort to synthesize the experience of the past in order to obtain a concrete vision of the future.” The work of history consists of “integrating seemingly isolated facts and events into a coherent historical process so that a view of the totality of social reality may be achieved.” This endeavor to integrate what appears to be disparate results in the perception of history as a “unified process” (396). In *Philippine Society and Revolution*, moreover, Guerrero claims that “imperialism is heading for total collapse and socialism is advancing to

worldwide victory,” and that with Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought, the “oppressed peoples of the world now have an invincible ideological weapon to defeat imperialism, revisionism and all reaction.” In the face of “universal truth” embodied in Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tsetung Thought—and its attendant application, by the Communist Party of the Philippines, to the country’s “concrete conditions”—the “big bourgeoisie, the landlord class and the bureaucrat capitalists . . . are coming fast to their doom” (131).

To be sure, Iletto distinguishes between *Tadhana* and the Marxist-inspired *Past Revisited* and *Society and Revolution*. In Marcos’s account, his New Society is apotheosised as the logical product of centuries of struggle for nationhood. By contrast, in Constantino’s and Guerrero’s treatises, even though “class conflicts complicate the people’s advance towards liberation,” what Iletto finds notable is the notion of “the march forward” to attain the “end point”: not simply “a nation-state [which is Marcos’s point of view] but a condition of true independence and social leveling.” Nevertheless, Iletto points out “the precision . . . by which the data . . . is ordered” in the aforementioned texts. Although ideologically discrepant, both kinds of history assign “each personality, each social class, each movement, each event” a “proper place or role in the forward-movement” of the narrative (*Critical Questions* 6).

Such a narrative, positive and edifying as it may be, is nevertheless haunted by a “surplus of data that can be retrieved and restored into play”; excess—which Iletto describes as a “whole range of phenomena which have been discredited or denied a history”—becomes the primary material for “alternative histor[ies].” Rather than exclusively depict a situation of emergence and triumph, Iletto argues that an alternative history “should give equal status to interruptions, repetitions, and reversals.” Moreover, an alternative history strives to both recover and uncover: an alternative history reveals “subjugations, confrontations, power struggles and resistances that linear history tends to conceal” (“Outlines” 154). For Iletto, the historian recognizes materials which are aberrant, archaic, subversive, and dissonant: these elements, which have little chance of being written into linear histories that follow developmentalist models, must be recovered and recast in ways which highlight interruptions and reversals.

Hence, “subversion of linear history”—which, for Iletto, is intimated in the choice of subject matter: neglected materials, the cast-offs and detritus of history—is a critique of “the ‘developmentalism’ that presently dominates the core of the state [or the] center’s ideology” (“Outlines” 154). In the writing of history, the aesthetics of interruption and fragmentation have political implications: they critique, if not resist, the ideology of linearity and development which, for Iletto, is the key dominant force of the state.

Non-linear emplotment makes plain the link between the aesthetics of interruption with the politics of resistance; the intertwining of form and politics is bound up with Benjamin’s montage

method of historical construction. For example, both Ileto and Benjamin propose the rescue of detritus and their restoration in historical texts. Both are aware that privileging materials that are aberrant, discordant, archaic, and obsolete demands new methodological and aesthetic approaches: drawing from Surrealist strategies, the reinstatement of recovered material, for Benjamin, calls for juxtapositions and constellations. For Ileto, materials which are “retrieved and restored into play” interrupt the dominant linear course of official narrative.

I demonstrated earlier how the *Almanac* may be read in the light of Benjamin’s views. Furthermore, there are two ways in which the *Almanac* resonates with Ileto’s points. First, Joaquin’s choice of the almanac form—as opposed, say, to conventional historical narratives—may be viewed as an effort at rehabilitation. In 1968, Joaquin wrote about Don Honorio Lopez, compiler of the *Kalendariong Tagalog* [*Tagalog Calendar*], considered by Joaquin as one of the precursors of his *Almanac*. For Joaquin, the *Kalendario*—along with other then-contemporary almanacs—“were so popular because they were so useful.” For Joaquin—consonant with the research on the genre done by historians such as Capp, Chapman, and Thomas—almanacs were consulted by farmers, fishermen, cockfighters, and other members of the community: these texts indicated weather forecasts, tides and phases of the moon, and schedules of traveling fairs. There were also “headier bits of reading” such as “horoscopes, riddles, prophecies, vatic verses ... puzzles and trick drawings.” For Joaquin, such instances of information and amusement are no longer present in contemporary almanacs. He claims that “the magic has vanished from today’s calendars” and almanacs. Present-day samples, for Joaquin, are “little more than functional lists of dates”; they have been “stripped of overlay” and have been “secularized” (“Honorio” 44).

Joaquin’s choice of the almanac to convey Philippine history is a rehabilitation of that form: a way in which the overlay that has been stripped (reminiscent of Benjamin’s notion of aura) has a chance to be restored. Joaquin’s disposition for restoration relates to Bakhtin’s views of genre renewal. For Bakhtin, elements of the “archaic” and the contemporary are present in every example of any genre. For Bakhtin, “in a genre ... undying elements of the *archaic*” [emphasis in original] are “preserved.” But these preservations are neither static nor calcified reproductions handed down from one generation to another; “archaic elements are preserved ... only thanks to their constant *renewal* [emphasis in original], which is to say their contemporization.” Each “individual work of a given genre” manifests temporal and generic simultaneity: a genre, for Bakhtin, is “always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously.” For him, each contemporary example demonstrates both preservation and renewal: Joaquin’s text enables the almanac, as a genre, to be “reborn and renewed”; the “archaic elements preserved” now have the chance to stay “eternally alive” in the process of “renewing themselves.” Moreover, for Bakhtin, memory is suffused into form: even though a “genre lives in the present,” formal devices incorporated and aesthetic

strategies used are ways in which a genre “always remembers its past.” Hence, for Bakhtin, the “correct understanding of a genre” is inseparable from a “return to its sources” (*Problems* 106).

The second way Joaquin’s work relates to Iletto’s point is in fragmentary and heteroglossic historical writing. The multiplicity of forms in the *Almanac* implies a multiplicity of temporalities: past and future orientations and the inseparability of religion and nation in the calendars share the same textual space with the discrete and discontinuous timeframes of the essays. The conflation of divergent temporal orientations and the fragmentary writing style in the *Almanac* is in keeping with Iletto’s call for the reinstatement of forms of repetition and interruption in Philippine historical writing. For Iletto, formal choices are not simply aesthetic; non-linear historical representation responds to what Iletto describes as ideologies of developmentalism and what Benjamin characterizes as the progress throughout homogeneous, empty time.

As critic Soledad Reyes observes, Joaquin’s work is situated in the interstices of social sciences and literature: Joaquin “combine[s] the creativity of a fictionist/poet and the resourcefulness of a social scientist” (121). Joaquin is as concerned with Philippine history and culture—especially when his views run counter to other influential perspectives—as he is interested in representing them in formally interesting and innovative ways. By occupying the space between two disciplines, Joaquin’s work responds to the historian Teodoro Agoncillo’s call for the reinstatement of the imagination in historical writing. For Agoncillo, the main shortcoming of “dull and uninspired history books” is a propensity for their authors to accumulate facts without considering structure: an accretion of “facts and yet more facts without ... weav[ing] them into an artistic whole” (9). Like Reyes who distinguishes between Joaquin the creative writer and Joaquin the social scientist, Agoncillo distinguishes between history as social science and history as humanities. For Agoncillo, the historian should not just know “how to gather facts, how to verify them, and how to string them together, like beads of a rosary” (9). A historian must also consider foregrounding an “artistic sense”: for Agoncillo, this means a “disciplined imagination and the ability to write with literary freshness.” Hence, aesthetics—the ability to offer “literary freshness”—is vital to historiography: a historian isn’t involved with just data collecting and fitting rosary beads of material into the thread of theory, but should be “conceiv[ing] [of history as] a creative endeavor” (1). However, Agoncillo’s notions of literary imagination and freshness pertain to issues of verisimilitude, not narrativity: the historian “recapture[s], even in capsule form, the color, the atmosphere, the action of past actuality” (2). For Agoncillo, the historian’s imaginative faculty rests on her ability to demonstrate lifelikeness and not necessarily to problematize the limitations of linear narrative.

Nevertheless, Agoncillo’s image of rosary beads strung together—emblematic of a linear emplotment of which he implicitly disapproves—is bound up with Iletto’s and Benjamin’s views. For Iletto, elements in linear historical narrative are “strung together in a trajectory of emergence

[and] growth.” Similarly, for Benjamin, a historian who ceases to be satisfied with “establishing a causal nexus among various moments of history” also “ceases to tell the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary” (“Concept” 397). In all three cases, what is being objected to is the propensity for thoughtless accumulation of material as well as an uncritical manner of writing that results in “dull and uninspired history books” (for Agoncillo) and linear narratives of progress (for Ileto and Benjamin).

Moreover, Joaquin’s propensity to disturb aesthetic categories is inseparable from his alternative approach to representing the nation. The *Almanac* structure typifies postcolonial critic Timothy Brennan’s view that texts like the novel express “the nation’s *composite* nature.” For Brennan, literary forms must be elastic enough to admit diverse material, and at the same time durable enough to withstand the “continual chaotic splintering” implied by the variety and amount of the materials. A form such as the novel “objectif[ies] the ‘one yet many’ of national life” and can be comparable, structurally, to the nation, which he considers as a “clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles” (49). Consistent with Brennan’s view, the *Almanac* typifies the composite and bricolage characteristic of the nation and the simultaneous co-existence of multiple levels of temporality within it. Joaquin’s insertions of numerous materials explode the singular linear progress of history and propose a simultaneous representation of Philippine realities: Joaquin renders multiplicity in the instant of a book.

Joaquin’s imaginative capabilities are located in his propensity to rearrange historical material. His work does not claim to offer reimagined accounts of historical events, but rather, endeavors to recast, through an aesthetic associated with modernism, ways in which history is constructed. This recasting is done using compression, correspondence, heteroglossia and montage. By recouring to an ancient, neglected yet ubiquitous genre, the *Almanac for Manileños* offers new formal strategies—disruptive, non-linear—in Philippine literature and history.

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