

THE CITY AS NATION

Nick Joaquin's *Manila, My Manila* as Nationalist History

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Abstract

This article discusses Nick Joaquin's *Manila, My Manila* (1989/1999) as an example of how his historiographical work tends to be more conventional in terms of the nationalism that dominates Philippine historiography, and has a more complex relationship to this discourse than existing analyses tend to suggest. While his veneration of the Spanish colonial period is indeed unconventional, his book leaves the main problem of nationalist discourse untouched as it maintains the essentialist notion of an identifiable national community projected backwards into time. The book fails to capitalize on the potential for disrupting national paradigms that city narratives offer. Rather than breaking up narratives of nationalism, it creates a new one, homogenizing Philippine history around a linear history of the city. It imagines Manila as the continuously endangered seed of the nation, which miraculously overcomes the multitude of threats thrown its way. While the narrative glosses over the inherent diversity of the nation, it also exposes an essentialist, teleological, and metaphysical historical vision. The ambiguity of Joaquin's vision, and of his relationship with the tradition of Philippine historiography, then, lies in his outward rejection of the essentialism inherent to nationalist notions on the one hand, and the determinism governing his homogenizing narratives on the other.

Keywords

colonialism; historiography; History of Manila; nationalism; Philippine literature; postcolonial memory

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[T]his dear city of our affections will rise again—if only in my song! To remember and to sing: that is my vocation.

Bitoy in Nick Joaquin, *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, 116.

The vocation which these closing words of Nick Joaquin's famous 1952 theater text proclaim, to remember and celebrate the old Manila lost in the firestorms of the Second World War, runs throughout the author's life work. His mission to memorialize the old Manila culminates in his 1989 history of the city: *Manila, My Manila*. It was published for a general audience in 1999—ten years after originally appearing as a gift of the mayor to Manila's school children, with the explicit intent of promoting knowledge of and love for the city. It was to promote historical consciousness in a city that seemed lacking in historicity and in a context where history was called upon to "save [the present] from its violent banalities and everyday injustices" (Rafael, *White Love* 202-203).

In line with this conception, the book presents a narrative that puts the city at the center of an idealized national history. This article analyzes that narrative in its complex relationship to the tradition of Philippine nationalist historiography. While the continuities of *Manila, My Manila* to Joaquin's previous works on Philippine history are strong, especially in his rather unconventional veneration of the Spanish colonial period, the work's conventional narrative structure contrasts with some of Joaquin's fiction and nonfiction about the city. The homogenizing thrust of this narrative makes *Manila, My Manila* symptomatic for the problematic custom of nationalist historiography, to construct the heterogeneous postcolonial nation (see Chatterjee) as unitary and continuous (see Claudio).

JOAQUIN AS HISTORIAN

Having parallels particularly to *A Question of Heroes* (1977) and *Culture and History* (1988), *Manila, My Manila* forms part of Joaquin's extensive historical writings. This important portion of his oeuvre has received little attention in scholarship (Deville and Martin 414). Resil Mojares pleads for a renewed appreciation of Joaquin's historical works. He honors this non-academic historian as a "devil's advocate," who upset conventional historiography with his appraisal of Spanish colonialism and the role of the *Ilustrados* in the Philippine Revolution. Already Joaquin's first historical essay, "La Naval de Manila," published in 1943 during the Japanese occupation, allegedly challenged an officially endorsed emphasis on the precolonial, non-Western roots of the nation. But Mojares ignores the metaphysical

approach of Joaquin's text, which attributes the Spanish victory over Dutch intruders to the divine intervention of the Virgin Mary, and in so doing follows the official Catholic doctrine at the time (see Joaquin, "La Naval de Manila")—making the essay hardly eligible as a work of historiography. Moreover, its homogenizing tendency, E. San Juan, Jr. argues, "distorts the more fluid . . . reality of the historical past" (6). Similarly, *Discourses of the Devil's Advocate* (published under the pen name Quijano de Manila), neglects the complexities of historical change, as Ivan Emil Labayne states while arguing for a historical-materialist rereading of Joaquin (425). While such a rereading is rendered difficult by Joaquin's metaphysical teleology, such simplifications and homogenizations are equally typical for the Manila book.

According to Mojares, Joaquin kept challenging nationalist historiographical dogmas throughout his career with his veneration of the Spanish past. Vicente Rafael also notes Joaquin's tendency to go against "nationalist views," pointing at a "recurring theme in Joaquin's writing," namely that "the colonial is inextricably wed to the national as the nation's condition of possibility" (*Motherless Tongues* 61-62). But Reynaldo Ileto thinks it unfair to see Joaquin merely in opposition to the canon of nationalist history. He points out how much Joaquin's histories were appreciated by nationalist authors (331). John Blanco states that scholars and critics "still puzzle over the question whether it is possible to legitimately associate [Joaquin] with the literature and historiography of Philippine nationalism" (5). These views suggest a more complex relationship to the nationalist tradition than suggested by Mojares.

Joaquin's evaluation of the Spanish colonial era, as the defining period in the development of Philippine national identity, is seen in opposition to nationalist visions of colonialism as detrimental to an original, pre-existing Philippine culture and society. But both assessments share the essentialist notion that true national identity can be clearly defined. Telling in this regard is Joaquin's claim that: "Before 1521 we could have been anything *not* Filipino; after 1521 we can be nothing *but* Filipino" (*Culture* 21). As he dismisses the precolonial as not Filipino, an identity that supposedly came into existence after the first contact with Spain, Joaquin claims knowledge of a clearly defined national identity. His historical vision pivots between materialism, process, and becoming on the one hand, and metaphysics, homogeneity, and essentialism on the other. In *Culture and History*, the book in which he made the claim cited above, he emphasizes Spain's introduction of new "tools," from the wheel to corn to Catholicism, which created the substance of the nation. This book attests to the ambiguity of his historical vision: on the one hand, his insistence on process and change, which is accompanied by a materialist perspective, and his rejection of essentialism in favor of becoming. On the other hand, the outcome of such processes seems essential, unitary, and determined—his professed materialism dissolves in a metaphysical religiosity and his emphasis

on the particular is overruled by nationalist homogenization. San Juan notes this tension between Joaquin's materialism and metaphysical concept of history (5). It is also apparent in the *Almanac for Manileños* (1979), which through the calendrical coincidence of historical occurrences, myths, religious happenings, among others, links seemingly unassociated events from different eras past and from the present. As Vincenz Serrano writes: "Elements which . . . appear historically disconnected are calendrically yoked and compressed in a few lines. [A]n assortment of materials, historically discrepant and formally heterogeneous, are nevertheless "wedded" together" (69). This modernist technique allows the reader to see surprising connections and discover nonlinear histories, opening new ways of seeing the nation. But Serrano also notes that "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" (69-70). As we will see, this "double sided characteristic" is a parallel to the ambiguity of *Manila, My Manila*, where it gives the nation a metaphysical sense of destiny.

The *Almanac* is still an example of how Joaquin's other nonfiction about his city tends to follow less linear and unitary narrative structures than *Manila, My Manila*. The numerous reportages on aspects of its past and present, published under the pseudonym Quijano de Manila, also allow for a more open-ended interpretation than Joaquin's historiography in *Manila, My Manila*. Among them, the essay "Manila, Sin City?" recounts the history of Manila from the perspective of its supposed role as a hotbed for the sex and gambling industries—a notion that Quijano seeks to expose as a myth by amassing anecdotes. *Manila, My Manila*, instead, tells rounded narratives that present the postcolonial nation as the seemingly inevitable result of the colonial past, resonating with Joaquin's notion that history and modernity, (colonial) past and (national) present, are inexorably linked and not, as some might see it, opposed (see Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 61).

ORIGINS AND CONQUEST

The opening chapter searches for precolonial origins. In retelling the migration waves theory in a romanticized way, Joaquin's search for origins follows the patterns set by nineteenth-century colonial sciences and adopted by Ilustrado nationalism (see Aguilar): he writes that the original city was founded by barangay people who migrated to Luzon from the Malay world and found a "virgin" land in the delta of the Pasig River, while "aboriginal tribes" wandered in the surrounding higher areas (*Manila* 4-5). The city these Malays—"our ancestors" (*Manila* 6)—founded would become the "metropolis of the Philippines" (*Manila* 8), as the chapter concludes:

When the pilgrims from the south stumbled upon that entrance to Manila Bay, what came about was the history not just of a city, but of a nation.

Manila happenings have a national effect. (*Manila* 8)

Worshipping an ancestry that excludes “aboriginal tribes” and later arrivals, Joaquin ascribes to the settlers a sacred quality as pilgrims—their mission being nothing less than laying the foundation of a nation, with which he identifies the city. Joaquin employs racial terms to define that nation: “Malay is our breed” (*Manila* 9)—a “breed” he defines as a subcategory of a “Mongolian” race. These narrow terms indicate the essentialism and exclusivity of Joaquin’s vision.

This first Manileño-Filipino society appears as small-scale, strictly hierarchical, and technologically backward. The narrative points out the inability of precolonial barangays to put themselves together and form a larger unity—the small mindset Joaquin had previously proposed as typical in his essay “A Heritage of Smallness” (*Culture* 358). Inconsistent with his emphasis on precolonial impotency to achieve greatness, Joaquin calls the largest barangay, Namayan, the “first Metro Manila” and highlights its foreign ties with the powerful Majapahit in present-day Indonesia: a Tagalog princess married the Majapahit ruler and became its “empress.” In this foreign relationship, Joaquin refers to the Namayan as “Filipinos” (*Manila* 15). These remarks imply the existence of at least a precursor to the nation. But such an occurrence would run counter to the narrative of precolonial incompetence and colonial becoming of the nation, and are hence downplayed, as the narrative’s comments on two local rulers who supposedly tried to unite the different barangays into a larger whole show. The supposed failure of the fourteenth-century Namayan prince Balagtas to unite Tagalog and Pampanga tribes is followed by the statement: “Not he but the Spanish would know how to turn the two tribes into a single effective coalition” (*Manila* 15).

The next attempt to unite the tribes supposedly came in the sixteenth century with Rajah Soliman of Maynila. Joaquin characterizes him as a warrior who held his neighbors in mortal terror—which he justifies by suggesting that it served a higher cause as a nation-building effort:

What Soliman may have been doing was . . . organize the barangay colonies into a nation. With the raids on the petty kingdoms of river and lake, Soliman may have thought to reduce them into a single commonwealth: a unit, a nation, a unity welded under his government.

If unification was indeed his dream, he would see it fulfilled—but not under his government. (*Manila* 17)

While it is anachronistic to ascribe national aspirations to the raids of Soliman, the notion of a unification presupposes the existence of a proto-nation that can be unified. Like the ones on Namayan, this statement reveals an ambivalence towards precolonial society: while Joaquin suggests a common identity across barangay societies, he also reaffirms the claim that the locals themselves were unable to establish unity. The final sentence of the quotation implies that it needed the intervention of the Spanish invaders to achieve this. Joaquin adopted the *Ilustrado* “focus on racial origins on the one hand, and civilizational progress, on the other” (Thomas 51). As the search for racial origins leads him to show the precolonial in a positive light, the focus on national becoming makes him look favorably upon the Spanish, but he also describes the invaders as “palefaces” and “white devils.” Joaquin’s narrative continues to present colonial Manila as a dynamic center, and the birthplace of Philippine culture in a symbiosis of the foreign and the local—aptly symbolized in his account of the tragic love story between Juan de Salcedo, the conquistador, and Candarapa, the princess of Tondo (*Manila* 31-32).

HEROES

Joaquin devises and celebrates several heroes of this emergent nation. The terms he uses to ascribe heroic status are indicative of the cultural values underlying the identities he constructs. First there is the image of the national hero as freedom fighter, introduced in the narrative of Manila’s colonization through the king of Macabebe. After Soliman succumbed to the Spanish conquistador Legazpi and allowed him to establish a new city on the site of Maynila, the chiefs of Pampanga refused to follow suit and recognize Spanish sovereignty. Led by Macabebe, they assembled a force which was crushed by the Spanish in a naval battle on June 3, 1571. Joaquin concludes:

For Filipinos, that June 3 is a great day, too. On that day fell in battle the nameless king of Macabebe who defied the invader. Among the first of us was he to die for freedom. He should be listed among our heroes as Lakan Macabebe. (*Manila* 28)

Macabebe first seems a small ruler who resisted subjugation by a foreign power, but he is magnified into a national hero defending Filipino freedom. Heroizing the Macabebe—a symbol of national betrayal due to their role in supporting colonialism in later centuries—indicates Joaquin’s ambivalence to nationalist historiography. It also reveals the ambivalence of Joaquin’s narrative: is the nation the product of colonialism or did the colonizer merely bring political unity to an already existing, free collective? Between these options, the subsequent narrative of colonial Manila moves towards the former.

Later on, Joaquin heroizes the seventeenth-century governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera for the exact opposite reasons as Macabebe. Joaquin now calls this “last conquistador,” who added Mindanao to the colony, a hero (*Manila* 101). This contrast again indicates his ambiguity regarding the status of colonialism and the nation. The first national hero resists colonization, the second furthers it, as the colony supposedly birthed the nation.

With colonial power established, a new kind of hero enters the scene: the “culture hero.” In this figure, Joaquin venerates values that are directly opposed to the anti-colonial resistance hero. Rehashing the pseudo-materialism of *Culture and History*, Joaquin explains: “A culture hero is someone who brings to a community a new seed, a new tool, a new art, a new craft or a new revelation” (*Manila* 40). Joaquin’s culture hero of early-colonial Manila, then, is the Spanish Jesuit Antonio Sedeño, who rebuilt the city in stone after the fire of 1583. He not only introduced “the craft of masonry and the art of architecture,” he also “taught us how to make cement, brick and tile.” Moreover, “[h]e was an artist and taught us painting. He was an educator and he opened a school And he was an industrialist who started a local silk culture” (*Manila* 41). Joaquin deems Sedeño exemplary for the friars, and enumerates innovations allegedly brought to the colony by the different orders, ranging from the book to the plow. In other words, the friars brought technologies Joaquin finds lacking in precolonial society, that serve as indicators of civilization and nationhood in the narrative. Note how in the word, “us,” the narrative presupposes a community that is already there, and which stands in a tutorial relationship with the orders.

The Galleon becomes another culture hero. As Manila became an entrepot, it also became an Asian city, Joaquin argues, positing that it was only with the Galleon Trade that products from China, India, Japan, and Malaya entered in high numbers. With them came Asian culture (supposedly lacking in precolonial times) and the technologies of those countries:

An acquaintance with Indian or Japanese or Malay culture is hardly indicated by the fact that Manila was still without the wheel or plow (India was already a wheel and plow culture); and had not heard of paper and painting (Japan was already a paper and print culture); and knew nothing of masonry (the Sailendra kings had already built Borobudur). (*Manila* 52)

The use of “still” presumes a backwardness on the side of precolonial Manila regarding inevitable cultural developments “already” happening elsewhere—indicative of Joaquin’s determinism. Thus, in line with his claims in *Culture and History*, he emphasizes that precolonial society was lacking technology and culture,

and that Philippine identity was established in colonial Manila, partly through the galleons:

Only in the days of the Galleon Trade does Chinese culture really enter our life—in such guises as the sari-sari, the candle factory, the panciteria, etc. Only with the Galleon Trade do we truly become a part of Asia. (*Manila* 53)

Joaquin concludes his defense of the galleons by pointing at the agricultural products they supposedly introduced, some of which he regards as typically Filipino: “the squash, the bean, the achuete, the tomato, . . . corn, cabbage, tobacco, avocado, pineapple, leeks, sincamas How can anybody bad-mouth a medium that brought us such bounty” (*Manila* 54)? Instead of taking a nuanced stance, Joaquin rushes to the Galleon’s defense. He concludes:

What Philippine culture owes to the Manila Galleon is incalculable. Even that badge of nationalism, the barong Tagalog, may have come over on those boats. Think of anything supremely Pinoy—guava or camote or sili or sibuyas verde—and you find they were given us by the galleons.

It was on the Manila Galleon that we began to become the Philippines. (*Manila* 54)

Joaquin thus reduces Philippine identity to a random selection of things he considers typical, only to point out the foreign origin these things and argue that the (Spanish) galleons are to thank for it. The conclusion that Philippine culture was thus born in Manila through its Galleon—that the nation emanates from the colonial capital—exposes the book’s deterministic, essentialist, and homogenizing thrust.

A DYNAMIC BUT THREATENED COLONY

Another problem is the narrative’s teleological clinging to the notion that in Manila a new harmony between colonizer and colonized was established, out of which symbiosis the nation was born—even though this harmony and dynamism that enables the nation’s becoming is presented as being under continuous threat. Colonial Manila appears as a Spanish city, complete with its own dramatic Don Juan story (*Manila* 88-89), and a dynamic place, the new center of the Orient, that is bound to expand further: “Circumstances seemed to be decreeing that Manila was inevitably to absorb the territories of Macao, Formosa, the Moluccas and Borneo” (*Manila* 59). This is a surprising claim, supporting the idea of the city’s colonial prosperity.

Reinforcing the narrative of becoming is the recurrence of outside threats to this embryonic nation. At several points, the process could have been broken off, Joaquin warns his readers. The first such threat came from the invasion by the Chinese pirate Limahong. Ignoring the fact—of which Joaquin was aware as he calls him an outlaw—that Limahong was at odds with the Chinese empire, which even helped Spain against the invasion (Kenji 80), he speculates that if the invasion had succeeded, “[w]e might have become . . . a part of China”: “Limahong could have cut short the rule of Spain in the Philippines. But he might also have ended the possibility of our becoming a nation” (*Manila* 33). The implication here is that the nation was not yet viable when Limahong attacked, and that removing Spain from power therefore “could have been fatal for Philippine history” (*Manila* 33). This mourning of a nation that would not have been seemingly runs counter to Joaquin’s determinism, but actually feeds off it as the mourner is the nation that was destined to become. Considering the effects of Limahong’s invasion, the narrative once more presents a rift between colonizer and colonized: “The Indigenes had simply stood watching on the sidelines as Kastila and Intsik fought each other on Philippine soil” (*Manila* 38). This native indifference changes in the narrative of the next foreign threat, where Joaquin claims that natives and Spaniards fought together against the Dutch invader and a unity between colonizer and colonized seemingly had apparently been established.

The book devotes a chapter to the clashes with the Dutch, who around 1600 established a trading empire focused on Java and the Moluccas, and who, in the context of their Eighty Years’ War against Spain, undertook a number of incursions into the Philippines during the first half of the seventeenth century. Consistent with Joaquin’s lifelong fascination for La Naval, the narrative magnifies these intrusions to the level of a veritable “Great War” against the Philippines:

The Great War in our history was the 50-year combat with the Dutch. This was, for us, the decisive battle, more crucial even than the revolution or the war with the Americans. . . . [W]e were fighting for existence itself. We were fighting to stay an entity. We were fighting to keep an independent identity. . . . If Holland had won that war, we would have become part of the Dutch East Indies, and we might today be an Indonesian province. (*Manila* 91-92)

Unlike in the narrative of the Limahong invasion just a few decades earlier, Joaquin now has Filipinos fighting, building ships, and making arms to fend off the invader. He thus turns a number of clashes between colonial powers into a national effort to repel the Dutch invader who sought to annex the islands to its own empire, the Dutch East Indies (a colony officially founded 200 years later, in 1816). But, for all the fantastic speculation about what would be the Philippines now if the Dutch had won, it is highly unlikely that the Dutch incursions posed any threat to

Spanish rule in the Philippines. The narrative itself only mentions 6 instances in which Dutch ships invaded the waters near Manila (in the years 1600, 1610, 1617, 1620, 1625, and 1646 respectively)—hardly the stuff of a war for conquest. Instead, as part of a larger war between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish king, Dutch corsairs harassed the Spanish wherever they could—the Philippines being but one of the areas. The aim was to blockade Manila and attack ships going to and from the colony to weaken the Spanish empire, and strengthen the Dutch trade position, prompting Chinese merchants to divert to Dutch trading posts instead. Plans for conquest were never made and only one Dutch Governor-General (Pieter Both in 1612) seems to have shown interest (see Roessingh 63-66). The Dutch imperialist aspirations lay further south, in Java and the Moluccas, where they replaced the Portuguese as monopolists over the spice trade. Manila mattered to them mainly since the Spanish presence there might threaten their access to the spices, and because they saw the opportunity there to hurt their enemy economically by threatening its trade routes with China and Mexico.

Joaquin's imaginary of Manila under threat, though, makes him paint the Dutch as a fearsome conqueror ready to eliminate the nation, budding in the colonial center. The commander whom Joaquin accuses of having started this war, Olivier van Noort was undertaking the first Dutch circumnavigation the world. His fleet had been damaged in previous confrontations with the Portuguese and Spanish throughout its two-year journey across Atlantic and Pacific, while storms had halved its size from four to two ships, so that he could hardly have thought of taking control of Manila (see Gerhard 103-104). Moreover, he noted that "[t]hese islands in themselves possess no great riches" but for the trade with China (van Noort 45; my translation).

Taking the Dutch objectives in mind would have tempered the surprise Joaquin expresses at the 1610 incursion's supposed failure to take the city, which lay virtually defenseless: "Dutch greed saved Manila. Instead of attacking the helpless city at once, the Hollanders dawdled some six months on the bay, waiting for the arrival of the Chinese silk fleets" (*Manila* 93). And about the 1620 expedition, he writes that it "got no farther than Samar, where the Hollanders tried to hold up three galleons from Mexico," which managed to escape (93). Joaquin considers these failures, but the galleons and Chinese vessels were the targets of the Dutch. This point is further supported by the report of the official Pieter van Dam to the board of the Dutch East India Company, which stated that the 1620 attack happened "so that the enemy's trade from Manila to NovaHispania [*sic*] could be cut off" (*Beschryvinge* 676; my translation). The expedition arriving in 1624 likewise had instructions to capture the Galleon off Acapulco and continue to the Philippines to capture Chinese merchant junks trading with Manila (Brederode 97).

The attack that Joaquin presents as most threatening was still to come: the 1646 triple blockade that forms the occasion of “La Naval” came after the Dutch abandoned any idea of wresting Manila from the Spanish when a 1642 report presented the Philippines as “a burden . . . to the Castilian king” (qtd. in Roessingh 67). Spanish sources tended to overstate the Dutch threat in a propaganda effort, claiming an immanent Protestant annexation had been averted thanks to the intervention of the Virgin—which is exactly the implication of Joaquin’s earlier writings on the Naval: the 1943 essay and his *Ballad of the Five Battles* (1981). In his history of Manila, he leaves out such divine explanations, but the Spanish (and, according to his narrative, Filipino) victory looks no less miraculous, as he fails to look for an explanation for the retreat of the Dutch ships (understandable if their mission was blockade and piracy), which betrays the metaphysical determinism of his narrative. His history of Manila clings to the myths spun in the colonial commemorations of the Naval, which in Joaquin’s account blurs the distinction between a religious and a national occasion. Joaquin thus applies the metaphysics and determinism of religion, whose victories are commanded by the divine, to the history of the nation.

Apart from turning the Dutch blockades and Spanish resistance against them to a separate war between them and the Philippines, the narrative elevates the colonial subjects, recruited to fight a competing colonial power, to the status of national heroes who—unwittingly—preserved Philippine unity. The chapter on the “Dutch wars” thus imposes modern ideas onto the subjects of this grand narrative, even admitting that contemporaries had no knowledge of the achievements, ideals, and struggles of their time. It is speculative and projects the nation back in time, which is at odds with Joaquin’s own emphasis on the process of becoming, and imposes his determinism and teleology onto this process.

The image of Filipinos and Spaniards together resisting foreign invasion, reinforces the notion of an emergent Filipino identity that is caught up with Spain. This nascent national identity rested, as Joaquin states, on a Tagalog-Pampango elite that was “vital to Spanish rule”:

The beleaguered Spaniard had need of some native support while battling a powerful enemy from without. This support was given by the Pampango and Tagalog, who got in exchange a share in privilege and authority. Thus the rise of the principalia, or elite class, chiefly responsible for such Pinoy epiphanies as the *Ilustrado* and the Propaganda. (*Manila* 97)

Joaquin spans a long arch from this presumed seventeenth-century coalition to the *Ilustrado* and Propaganda as pillars of nineteenth-century Filipino identity.

He thus presents national identity as the ultimate result of the coalition between Spanish and natives.

The idea of a Tagalog-Pampango-Spanish coalition against invaders who are (unlike the Spanish) foreign, recurs in Joaquin's narrative of the British occupation, a century after the Naval. Now it does not only repel foreign invaders but also divisive forces from within the colony:

The British Occupation was a proud hour for the Tagalog and Pampango, who, by staying steadfast, saved the country from being dismembered—as it might have been, for instance by the rebellion of Diego Silang. (*Manila* 123)

If the coalition defended the emergent nation, was Silang a national traitor? The comparison with the sixteenth-century king of Macabebe shows how Joaquin's sympathies shift from rebel to colonial power, as he presents the nation as being created by colonialism, emanating from Manila and not the provinces. Joaquin pits the Manila-based Tagalog-Pampango-Spanish against the Ilocanos as he speculates: "Had the Silang revolt succeeded, there might have been a British North Luzon as there was a British North Borneo" (*Manila* 123). The heroes in Joaquin's story are those resisting British rule and avoiding this (unlikely) doom: Simon de Anda who set up government in Bacolor, and "a host of anonymous friars who left their convents, took up arms, and led the resistance" (*Manila* 123). Spanish friars appear now not only as culture heroes, but as political ones as well, while a local leader like Silang (who has been presented as a reformist taking the opportunity to resist colonialism, see Francia 86-87) is made into a collaborator of the enemy. This disparagement of Silang and heroization of the Spanish are, like the previous heroization of Macabebe, ironic stabs at nationalist orthodoxies.

NATIONALISM AND THE REVOLUTION

Joaquin traces the roots of nationalism and the movement for independence to the colonial classes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first nationalist movement was centered on Manila and exclusively Creole, but their pronouncement of the idea of a Filipino identity enabled later movements like the Propaganda to do the same, Joaquin contends (*Manila* 144). Thus, not only the nation, but also nationalist political consciousness purportedly emanates from colonial Manila.

The book also traces the origins of the Revolution to Manila, engaging the historiographical debate whether the fight for independence was essentially an

Ilustrado or a proletarian revolt, and consequently whether the middle-class intellectual Jose Rizal or the supposedly lower-class Andres Bonifacio would be the most appropriate national hero. Joaquin does so by painting a double portrait of “Rizal’s Manila” and “Bonifacio’s Manila,” before narrating his view on the Revolution. As the narrative suggests, these two apparently contrasting Manilas do not differ much from one another, both appearing as middle-class and colonial. This serves to oppose the Rizal-Bonifacio dichotomy and consequently that of a bourgeois and a proletarian Revolution. Important as this intervention in the historiographical debate is, Joaquin disconnects these two dichotomies to argue for an essentially bourgeois revolution. The chapter on Rizal ends with the latter’s observations of his fellow students, Joaquin notes:

The gravity informs a whole generation, for these serious young men are the upcoming Ilustrados who will carry on the Propaganda Movement started by Rizal. And it is they who will man the Revolution that the Propaganda begot. (*Manila* 177)

Invoking generation, the homogenizing concept par excellence, Joaquin equated the late-nineteenth-century nation with a limited group of Manila-educated young men. The Revolution, hence, is not a revolt of the masses, as becomes clear from the description of Bonifacio’s Manila, a city of conspiring middle-class revolutionaries. Defying the image of an essentially proletarian Katipunan, Joaquin emphasizes its connections to the Propaganda, “the bourgeois reformist movement,” and claims that of the Katipunan’s founding members “perhaps only Bonifacio can be called lowborn—but only by ignoring his Spanish blood” (*Manila* 183). The last remark, reiterating his claim that “the Bonifacios were Spanish mestizos” (*Manila* 179), is another stab at the nationalist historiographical orthodoxies of the left wing as it denies that even the proletarian hero of the Revolution was actually proletarian.

Joaquin’s narrative of the Revolution draws much on his essay collection *A Question of Heroes*—the main difference being that the latter talks of two revolutions (one based in Manila, the other in the province of Cavite, headed by Emilio Aguinaldo), while *Manila, My Manila* shows the Revolution as emanating from Manila, even if the city remained in Spanish hands. Glossing over this ambiguity, *Manila, My Manila* discusses this situation in admiring terms: “Manila stayed the ‘Ever Loyal’ and offered in defense of the government native volunteer troops from Cagayan, the Ilocos, Bicolandia, the Visayas and Pampanga (the Macabebes)” (*Manila* 189). Celebrating the Macabebe, previously heroized for resisting colonization in the sixteenth century, as defendants of the colonial government in the nineteenth, illustrates Joaquin’s ambiguity towards colonialism. Note also how the Revolution now appears as a bourgeois and Tagalog affair, with ordinary people from all over the islands on the side of Spain. Furthermore, Joaquin’s idealized Manila remains “ever Loyal”—terms Joaquin applied to his city throughout his works—to the

colonial government that remains, in this view, legitimate. As the true center of a nation, Manila “offered” sons from all over the islands in its defense, but it remains unclear whether Joaquin sees the defenders or the revolutionaries as legitimate representatives of the nation he constructs.

His narrative of the events that led to the American takeover suggests his nation entailed both Spanish and native. He emphasizes how the treaty of Biak-na-Bato was celebrated widely but calls these celebrations “premature” in view of the outbreak of the Spanish-American War the following year. The Americans brought back Aguinaldo and his forces (*Manila* 190). If it weren’t for the Americans, Joaquin implies, the Philippines would have remained peaceful under Spain. For the narrative depicts the new governor-general, Basilio Augusti y Davila, positively as he succeeded in “reuniting the country” (*Manila* 191). As if the Revolution had broken a country that entailed both colonizer and colonized, Filipinos allegedly volunteered to defend the colony against the Americans, among them some former revolutionaries, such as Pio del Pilar and Artemio Ricarte. But the supposed new sense of unity could not prevent Spanish defeat:

Augusti assured the colony that the God of Victories was on the side of Spain and that the struggle against the United States would be “short and decisive.” Only the latter statement proved correct. (*Manila* 191)

What emerges from Augusti’s former statement, though, is that a fear of the foreign or of Protestantism (demonized for centuries by Spain), rather than the newfound colonial unity suggested by the narrative, may have been the reason for Filipinos to side with their colonizer. If such an optimism did indeed exist, it could not prevent a mass flight from the city at the news of an imminent US attack, which Joaquin himself notes (*Manila* 191). Moreover, he also notes that, as Aguinaldo landed, many of the native troops that had supported Spain again changed sides and rejoined the revolutionaries (*Manila* 194). Little is left of coalition between colonizer and colonized that Joaquin conjured up just a few pages earlier.

AMERICAN MANILA

Joaquin presents the American takeover as act of betrayal, and a break in the apparently natural flow of national history, exposing his identification of Philippine with Spanish colonial history, as well as his nostalgia for the Spanish period. But he also shows appreciation for American introductions like the public-school system and public health. Still, the supposed treachery of the Americans, and the naivety of the Filipino insurgents during the takeover, sets the tone for the entire

narrative of the American colonial period. This treachery consisted of a secret deal between the Americans and the Spanish: after a mock battle Spain would surrender to the Americans rather than to Aguinaldo. The latter had advanced on the city and, as Joaquin claims, would have easily taken it if he had not listened to the American admiral Dewey who begged him to wait until US troops arrived—the reinforcements that made Aguinaldo's army obsolete in the American war against Spain. Joaquin shows Aguinaldo relying on the alliance that the Americans betrayed to take Manila themselves: "All is fair in love and war—but we were not supposed to be at war with the gringo" (198). It seems to go without saying that Joaquin's Filipinos were not in love with the Americans either.

He speculates on the alternative possibility of an anti-American alliance between the Spanish and Aguinaldo. Such an alliance was pursued by the Spanish before they decided to concede to the Americans—and it was retrospectively desired by Joaquin, as becomes apparent from his narrative, which recycles the words from *A Question of Heroes*. As Joaquin recounts the numbers a combined Filipino-Spanish force would have, he claims: "An alliance between [Aguinaldo] and the government before the Americans could land an army would have bottled up Dewey in Manila Bay and made his victorious armada impotent" (*Manila* 198). In *A Question of Heroes*, an even more speculative statement follows, that once more indicates Joaquin's admiration for Spain and its supposedly essential contribution to Philippine national development:

With neither Manila or any part of the country in American hands, the Philippines would not have entered at all in the negotiations at the end of the war. We would have been spared the transfer to American hands, the shock of a new colonization, the break in our culture. (139)

While this statement did not appear in *Manila, My Manila*, both books disapprove of Aguinaldo's decision to stick to his treacherous American ally. Joaquin presents the American takeover as a disruption in the development of national culture, and as an accident of history, resulting from Aguinaldo's misjudgment of American intentions. In *Manila*, Joaquin continues:

Aguinaldo's troops were kept out of the fallen city. Alone the Gringo entered Manila in triumph, but this was a fake victory—"one of the most disgraceful farces in history," as Manila Archbishop Nozaleda called it. Did the shame of sham ever haunt the Gringo? The Filipino he duped had done all the fighting for him. (201)

Thus, using the words of a Spanish clergyman, Joaquin characterizes the Americans as treacherous and shameless and Joaquin refers to them with derogatory terms, Yank and Gringo. He goes on to question the legality of the American takeover, as

it was only achieved one day after the armistice between Spain and America. The “fall” of the city (another indication that the Spanish colonial city is supposed to be the true Manila) meant a blow for the nation’s development: “When Manila fell . . . the Revolution, too, had fallen. Aguinaldo had failed. Everything that follows, even the Malolos Congress, is anticlimax” (*Manila* 201). This exposes Joaquin’s Manila-centric and teleological method: Manila drives national history forward, the struggles and aspirations outside the capital become mere sideshows—no matter the possible outcomes of these struggles, let alone the brutality of the American colonial war against the Philippine Republic.

Despite this break, Joaquin also shows positive developments: the building of a new port area, the improvement of roads, and the introduction of reinforced concrete (*Manila* 214-215). He calls the public-school system America’s “greatest gift to Philippine culture” (*Manila* 229), one that fostered warm feelings for the colonizer. To Joaquin, its founders were “culture heroes” (225), like the priests in previous chapters. Another American who becomes a “Philippine culture hero” is Victor Heiser, who introduced public health (*Manila* 232). Manila became “the cleanest” city in Asia, and Joaquin laments the post-war loss of that cleanliness (*Manila* 234). His view on Heiser is more positive than recent scholarship that argues how health policy—for all its positive effects—was driven by white masculine aspirations, served colonial interests, and developed a “racialist understanding of health” (Pante 96; Anderson 70).

Due to more American manipulation, the adoration that these innovations supposedly brought the Americans turns out to be misguided at the Japanese invasion of 1941, when they supposedly abandoned Manila and the Philippines. The Americanized Manileños were caught unaware by the impending war. As “Keep ‘em flying!” (*Manila* 270) and “Business as usual!” (*Manila* 271) became the buzzwords, the confident banter of the youthful city—like the atmosphere in pre-war Manila as described by Bitoy in *Portrait*—makes its population again look naïve, too trusting of the Americans and their ability or willingness to defend the country. For Joaquin’s narrative of the Japanese capture of Manila shows the Americans once more as a treacherous and untrustworthy bunch:

While we waited for mile-long convoys and a skyful of airplanes, while the American authorities in Manila assured us that help was on the way, no help was being contemplated in Washington. On the contrary, what help was already on the way when the war broke out was snatched back: a convoy and three troopships already bound for Manila were ordered to turn back. . . . It was all kept secret. (*Manila* 283)

This narrative of betrayal repeats the claims of Quijano de Manila’s 1963 essay “What Really Happened in Bataan” (*Discourses* 11). After the betrayal and abandonment

by the Americans, Joaquin narrates how Manila was raped and destroyed by the Japanese. Instead of common prosperity (*Manila* 285), Joaquin sees the occupation as “ungodly years” (*Manila* 290). It brought hunger and denigration, and finally “the burning, the looting, the rapes, the massacres” (*Manila* 298) and the destruction of the old city during the battle in 1945. But this seems a destruction of what was already gone, for Manila had already been lost to American modernity. Manila’s betrayal and subsequent victimization fit in with Joaquin’s imaginary of the city as vulnerable and a victim.

POSTWAR

Joaquin’s portrait of postwar Manila shows a city that did not quite overcome its destruction. The improvised “makeshift devices” needed to survive amid the ruins had become permanent five years later: “There was no return to ‘normalcy’ because abnormality had become the pattern of our lives. And the abnormality showed most in the three freaks that the Liberation spawned in Manila: the jeepney, the *barongbarong*, and the squatter” (*Manila* 314).

Abnormality as the new normal—Joaquin makes this state of permanent improvisation the basis of some of Manila’s postwar problems: inefficient transportation and widespread shanties. He suggests that not socioeconomic inequality and political injustice, but the loss of a great culture and a return to smallness are to blame for these problems. Despite describing the Marcos years as a “sojourn in limbo” (*Manila* 335), he contends that Imelda’s building projects “glamourized” the city, praising her restoration of the Intramuros walls, as well as the “veritable acropolis” (the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex) she had built on reclaimed land (*Manila* 337). While the former refers to a major symbol of the old Spanish Manila venerated in the book, the latter likens Imelda to ancient Athenian leaders like Pericles, locating Manila in the cultural traditions supposedly set by the classics. The narrative ends with the successful overthrow of Marcos in 1986, in which Manila rather than Quezon City, the location of the EDSA rallies, takes center stage as the place where the nation’s crucial events take place, again showing his bias towards Manila.

In his postscript, Joaquin returns to his image of the persistent city in face of the multiple crises in its history: “Manila was written off by Quezon in the 1930s; the Japs thought to kill it off in 1945; and Mother Nature is still trying to sink it with temblor, tide and typhoon. No go: it’s still on the go. The Noble & Loyal insists on being a survivor—by the skin of its teeth” (*Manila* 353).

He goes on to compare Manila once more to Troy: it “has been many cities and will be many more” (*Manila* 354). This Phoenix-like Manila is central to his metaphysical imaginary of Manila as threatened by enemies and natural disasters, but ultimately prevailing and surviving. In his imaginary, destiny seems to have its way with Manila.

CONCLUSION

Like Bitoy’s song, the book seeks to help keep old Manila alive, in a context where the historical city seemed lost and history itself discredited by the Marcoses. Faced with the troubles of his postcolonial and post-authoritarian present, Joaquin’s history of Manila remains apolitical. Still, its insistence on history and remembrance indicate that, like what Caroline S. Hau notes about *Portrait*, it conveys an “alternative, idealized ‘Filipino’ community as part of a political vision that criticizes the present” (133). But Joaquin’s exaltation of Manila’s colonial legacy creates a mix of fixation on the nation’s origins, appreciation of the colonial period and its importance to that nation, and nostalgic longing for an idealized past. The idealized colonial Manila supposedly birthed the nation he constructs, and which becomes identical with the former and emanates from there. He homogenizes the heterogeneous nation around the city that he nostalgically remembers and imagines as continuously beleaguered while metaphysical forces keeping the city alive and on its destined path of forming the Philippine nation. This imaginary shows how his ostensibly materialist concept of history is only knee-deep and superseded by a metaphysical, teleological, and essentialist one.

While Joaquin’s praise for the colonial period challenges Philippine nationalist historiography in some important respects, and his book contains some clear ironic provocations, like the heroization of colonizers, these differences are less fundamental than the shared postulation of an essential, homogenous, and knowable nation. Joaquin’s teleology, essentialism, and homogenizing thrust mean that he is not as out-of-step with contemporary Philippine historiography as Mojares claims. In line with Joaquin’s aim to convince young Manileños (and later a more general audience) of the importance of their city’s history, the book becomes a nationalist history centered on the city.

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