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Marie Rose B. Arong

University of the Philippines Cebu / University of New South Wales

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Marie Rose B. Arong

University of the Philippines Cebu /
University of New South Wales

Nick Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*: Re-imagining the Gothic in a Postcolonial Philippines

ABSTRACT

Nick Joaquin, one of the Philippines' pillars of literature in English, is regrettably known locally for his nostalgic take on the Hispanic aspect of Philippine culture. While Joaquin did spend a great deal of time creatively exploring the Philippines' Hispanic past, he certainly did not do so simply because of nostalgia. As recent studies have shown, Joaquin's classic techniques that often echo the Hispanic influence on Philippine culture may also be considered as a form of resistance against both the American neocolonial influence and the nativist brand of nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the emergence of Gothic criticism in postcolonial writing, Joaquin's works have rarely received the attention they deserve in this critical area.

In this context, this paper explores the idea of the Gothic in Joaquin's writing and how it relates to Joaquin being the "most original voice in postcolonial Philippine writing." In 1972, the University of Queensland Press featured Joaquin's works in its Asian and Pacific writing series. This "new" collection, *Tropical Gothic* (1972), contained his significant early works published in *Prose and Poems* (1952) plus his novellas. This collection's title highlights a specific aspect of Joaquin's writing, that of his propensity to use Gothic tropes such as the blending of the real and the fantastic, or the tragic and the comic, as shown in most of the stories in the collection. In particular, I examine how his novella (*Cándido's Apocalypse*) interrogates the neurosis of the nation—a disconnection from the past and its repercussions on the present/future of the Philippines.

Nick Joaquin is perfectly right in consistently resisting all attempts to deny history by extirpating the colonial past. It is not an accident that Joaquin demonstrates in his own work that it is in being rooted in the colonial past that his is *the most original voice in postcolonial Philippine writing*.
(Mojares, *Waiting* 305, emphasis added)

INTRODUCTION

When Nick Joaquin burst onto the Philippine literary scene with exotic stories and bizarre characters such as the story of a pious Catholic woman publicly celebrating pagan traditions to the mortification of her husband or of a woman who believed she had two navels, the critics did not know what to make of it. At the time of his emergence, just a few years after the “formal end” of the American colonial period, Joaquin’s stories were significantly different in terms of execution of the English language, which Furay and Bernad would call “lush,” and the choice of fantastic plots, which the same scholars found exotic.

Joaquin’s writing style in these early short stories published just after the Pacific war would likely bring to mind the label “magical realist” fiction commonly associated with the writers of the Latin American “Boom”¹ of the 1960s such as Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel García Márquez. This resemblance in Joaquin’s writing style to Latin American writing, like his Gothic style, is rarely scrutinized in local criticism. Hidalgo notes, “Nick Joaquin’s early tales were published during the Commonwealth period, before the Latin American writers were published in Barcelona by Seix Barral and became the phenomenon known as the ‘Boom.’ And certainly before they were translated into English” (60). This comment clearly situates Joaquin’s early writing as a precursor of magical realist writing not just in the Philippines but also when compared to the “Boom.”

More than four decades ago, the University of Queensland Press came up with an Asian and Pacific Writing series. According to the series editor, the series wanted to expand the audience of the works of these “contemporary writers and translators in Asia and the Pacific” to a “larger readership in Europe, Africa, and America” (Wilding vii). One of the featured authors was Nick Joaquin. This “new” collection published in 1972, *Tropical Gothic*, contained the majority of his significant early works published

¹ The “Boom” refers to the significant literary movement in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s marked by publication of novels that used innovative narrative strategies. The “Boom” also coincided with Latin American political upheavals (sparked by the Cuban revolution).

in 1952, *Prose and Poems*, such as the perennial Joaquin favorites, “May Day Eve,” and “The Summer Solstice,” plus his more recent work at the time of publication: *Doña Jeronima*, *Cándido’s Apocalypse*, and *The Order of Melchizedek*.

This collection’s title thus highlights Joaquin’s conscious engagement with the past in the form of the Gothic. It specifically draws attention to an aspect of Joaquin’s writing, that of his propensity to use Gothic tropes such as the ones described by Botting: “the disturbing return of pasts upon presents,” the “negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic,” “tales of darkness, desire and power” (qtd. in Kahir 6). But until recently this aspect of Joaquin’s writing has not been explored critically. Both Blanco and Holden point to Joaquin’s peculiar postcolonial strategy of resistance: for Blanco this is through Joaquin’s “baroque mode or mentality” (7) as manifested in his play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* and for Holden this is the “post-colonial Gothic” in his short stories “The Summer Solstice” and “Guardia de Honor” (353). Blanco and Holden also argue in the same line: that the aforementioned “traits” of Joaquin’s works and their supposed obsession with the Hispanic past of the Philippines is a form of resistance to both the modernism of the American neocolonial influence and the nativist inclination of Filipino historians and cultural brokers in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this context, I turn to one of his lesser known stories, the novella—*Cándido’s Apocalypse*—to explore the narrative strategies Joaquin uses to construct his brand of Gothic: his blending of the real and the fantastic or the tragic and the comic; his deployment of spatiotemporal shifts and of variable focalizers. I begin by discussing Nick Joaquin’s background: his personal history and the Philippine socio-cultural situation during the time of his writing. Finally, in my analysis of Joaquin’s novella, I argue that while Joaquin uses the Gothic to probe the nation’s disconnect from its Hispanic past, he does so with his eye firmly on its repercussions on the present and future of the Philippines. This disconnect, I argue further, has created a sort of neurosis, and it is precisely this neurosis of the nation that Joaquin examines in *Cándido’s Apocalypse*. It must be noted that Joaquin’s historical re-vision of a postcolonial Philippines is one of many versions; his contemporaries such as N.V.M. González, Bienvenido Santos, Kerima Polotan, Edith Tiempo, and F. Sionil José all had their own postcolonial projects of historical re-visions.

NICK JOAQUIN’S IMPETUS FOR WRITING

Nick Joaquin was born in 1917 to a deeply religious family in Paco, Manila. His father, Leocadio Joaquin, was a lawyer and also fought with other

Filipinos like his friend General Emilio Aguinaldo (who later became the first President of the Philippines) during the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain. The end of the war with Spain did not mean the end of colonization. Despite the promise of independence from their American “allies,” the supposed defeat of Spain also meant the entry of a new colonial master, the Americans. Leocadio Joaquin married his first wife around the time of the revolution but with her death, he remarried in 1906 to Salome Márquez, Joaquin’s mother. Salome Márquez was a teacher and despite her young age, she was one of the Filipino teachers selected by the American colonial government to be trained in English by the Thomasites (the American school teachers sent to the Philippines in 1901 in a ship called the USAT *Thomas*).

Joaquin’s father had made good money as a lawyer and raised a large family of ten children, with eight boys and two girls. Nick Joaquin was the fifth child in this relatively affluent, religious, Spanish-speaking family. But in the late 1920s, his father “lost the family fortune in an investment in a pioneering oil exploration project somewhere in the Visayas” (Mojares, “Biography”). The death of Nick Joaquin’s father a few years after this failed investment became a turning point not only in the family’s fortune but especially Joaquin’s life.

Joaquin dropped out of high school because he lost interest in learning inside the confined spaces of the classrooms. Even before his father’s death, he was a voracious reader. Encouraged by his parents at an early age, he read Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, George Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Willa Cather to name a few (Joaquin, “The Way We Were” 3). When his father died and he dropped out of school, he used this time to read more books. He also worked several odd jobs such as working in a bakery, then moved on to being an assistant in the Tribune, one of the publishing companies in the city (Mojares, “Biography”). This job would mark his entry into the world of print media; on top of being a highly successful poet, playwright, and fictionist in his lifetime, Joaquin was also a respected journalist, writing under the pen name of Quijano de Manila. At the start of his writing career in the 1930s, an insightful Joaquin noticed how the “new” language brought by the Americans together with the introduction of an American educational system alienated Filipino writers in English from their environment:

When I started writing in the late 1930s I was aware enough of my milieu to know that it was missing from our writing in English. The Manila I had been born into and had grown up in had yet to appear in our English fiction. . . . back in the 1930s it was “modern” and even “nationalistic”

to snub anything that wore the name of tradition. . . . The result was a fiction so strictly contemporary that both the authors and their characters seemed to be, as I put it once, “without grandfathers.” It was a fiction without perspective. . . . I realize now that what impelled me to start writing was a desire to bring in the perspective, to bring in the grandfathers, to manifest roots. (Joaquin, “The Way We Were” 1–2)

It is precisely this desire to “manifest roots” in order to understand the present and connect it to the future that is most resonant in Joaquin’s *oeuvre*.

In his examination of Philippine nationhood, cultural and literary historian Resil Mojares notes that Philippine historiography after Spanish colonization includes an abundance of narratives that strategically mythologize a unified pre-colonial culture, demonize the Spanish colonial times, and exaggerate the role of America in Philippine development and democracy (*Waiting* 286). In the late 1940s, shortly after the “formal end” of the American occupation, Filipino historians were leaning towards a nativist construction of nationhood, one which Joaquin would later call a “dogmatic fixed picture of pre-Hispanic Philippines” (“Nick Joaquin” 65). It was around this time that Joaquin started writing and publishing more stories which often included the Hispanic aspect of Filipino heritage. These works have often led critics of Joaquin to label him as a nostalgic writer, which Joaquin vehemently denied in one of his rare interviews (“Nick Joaquin” 65). Joaquin wrote that his emergence as a writer was “a swimming against the current, a going against the grain” (“The Way We Were” 6). Whereas other writers welcomed the supposed dawn of modernity and followed their American counterparts by writing about “secular” themes, Joaquin chose to write about the now unfashionable Hispanic tradition.

In fact, Joaquin’s earlier works written in the 1940s and the 1950s contained more overt Hispanic elements, most notably, the choice of setting and characters—several stories were set in the Spanish colonial times—which probably fuelled the “nostalgic writer” label. But Joaquin’s alleged nostalgia, I argue, has always been more than just a recuperation of the Hispanic past. In his attempt “to bring in the [Hispanic] perspective” (Joaquin, “The Way We Were” 2), Joaquin not only manages to problematize the notion of an “authentic Filipino,” but he also questions the excessive nostalgia for the very Hispanic past he was trying to recover. In his novella, *Cándido’s Apocalypse*—first published in the December 11, 1965 issue of the Philippine Free Press—Joaquin uses more sophisticated narrative strategies to further explore this concept in a contemporary Manila

(1960s) setting. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of these narrative strategies in Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*.

THE PAST WITHIN US: JOAQUIN'S *CÁNDIDO'S APOCALYPSE*

Gina Wisker makes an interesting case for the Gothic mode in postcolonial writing because

[u]nlike the conventional Gothic, which disturbs but frequently restores order, the postcolonial Gothic shifts what could be seen as order. So, at the end of the text, the reader cannot remain with a worldview free from the haunting of a newly exposed silence and hidden past. (411)

It is exactly through this hidden past laid bare that Joaquin spins his tale. Curiously, as if to dispel the unwanted tag of being a nostalgic writer, Joaquin turns to the comic to aid in his storytelling. In their illuminating work on the comic turn in Gothic fiction, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik “argued that the comic within the Gothic offers a position of detachment and skepticism toward such cultural nostalgia” (323). For Joaquin to use a kind of comic Gothic in *Cándido's Apocalypse*, I suggest, is to put forward a critique of Philippine modernity that simultaneously registers the disconnect from the Hispanic past because of the uncritical acceptance of American influence but cautions against a zealous nostalgia that impedes the present from developing into a future for the nation.

Told by an omniscient narrator, *Cándido's Apocalypse* is the bizarre story of seventeen-year-old Bobby Heredia as he struggles with what he perceives to be society's increasing fakery exacerbated by the appearance of his imaginary double, Cándido, and a seemingly X-ray visual acuity. The name and/or identity of Cándido comes from Bobby's own recovery of a supposed “forgotten” tradition of naming: “He [Bobby] had heard that in the old days you got whatever name was on the calendar the day you were born” (18) and “he had looked up in the calendar what he should have been called Cándido, martir” (19). It is not clear whether this tradition was a direct Spanish import; San Juan attributes it to the “Catholic folk calendar” (77). In Bobby's recuperation of his supposedly “real” name and/or identity Cándido, Joaquin's stance against “unreasonable affection for the past” (“Nick Joaquin” 65) is brought to light. Bobby becomes the embodiment of Joaquin's critique of Philippine modernity.

The story begins, innocuously enough, in the Heredia household. Bobby's mother, Ineng, is on the phone with Mr. Henson who is telling her that Bobby came home to their house the previous night with

his son Pete and that he was willing to bring him home. The narrator describes a comically chaotic scene during this phone conversation: the patriarch, Totong, preparing for work and “pretending” (3) to be unaffected by the news; Sophie, Bobby’s younger sister, getting hysterical because she wails that Bobby “would do anything” (3) to spoil her birthday party; Junior, Bobby’s youngest sibling, having breakfast and getting a rise out of Sophie: “What kinda party you having anyway. . . . You having dog meat?” While the practice of eating dog meat in the Philippines exists, in urban areas like Manila it is rare and typically relegated to the *pulutan* (food eaten while drinking alcohol). It is worth noting that the stigma of eating dog meat may be traced to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis that included a Philippine Reservation and where the featured “wild tribes” of the Igorots “became [one of] the most popular displays on the reservation” (Rydell 172). The popularity of these “wild tribes,” who supposedly had a “normal” appetite for dog meat (Melencio), for the American audience may have also sparked the myth of *all* Filipinos as dogeaters. Even the authenticity of the claim that all Igorots eat dog meat has been rejected by present-day Igorots who point to the killing of dogs in their culture as a form of sacrificial ritual.

The fact that Joaquin includes this in the novella is significant for two reasons: firstly, it brings to mind the stigma that comes with eating dog meat and secondly, it parodies the practice to highlight Bobby’s perceived “overacting” nature of society. When Junior mentions it to Sophie she is incensed because why would anyone, let alone a highly modern lady like her, want to eat dog meat? Sophie’s intense reaction may also suggest her rejection of her “own” culture. Or does it? As Joaquin expands this discourse on “dog meat” to the second time it appears in the story, Bobby and his *barkada* (close group of friends) are preparing a white dog for *pulutan* with their beer. It is a horrible scene; the narrator explicitly describes the brutal killing of the dog, the drinking of its blood, and the roasting of its meat. But it is also made comic by the description of Bobby and his friends thrashing about and vomiting. Bobby even acknowledges this: “he himself was reeling about . . . and talking funny, quite aware that all this was overacting but thinking what the hell, there are no rules any more, life is a discard and so am I” (36). Joaquin’s strategic choice to exoticize the eating of dog meat in this scene inverts the stigma imposed on the practice by the Americans, and here he links it with other “overacting” habits that include several American imported practices. It is a subtle strategy, one that has been sometimes misread as Joaquin’s tendency to glorify folk traditions.

The narrator mirrors the chaos in the opening scene throughout the story via the non-linear presentation of events. As we wait to know when Bobby comes home, the narrator starts to make us ask other questions: why is Bobby not yet home? And where has Bobby been? The narrator achieves this detective-like exposition by the use of a dizzying spatiotemporal transition between events without any use of spatiotemporal markers. After that opening scene in the Heredia house, the story moves to a local cake shop where Ineng meets with her friends; the ladies ask her about the rumor that Bobby had aimed a gun at his schoolmate and adversary Pompo Morel. Ineng tells them that while he did aim the gun at Pompo during a band rehearsal at their house for Sophie's birthday, Bobby did not fire the gun. The narration then cuts to the school's prefect's office where Totong is in a meeting with the prefect, discussing not only the shooting incident between his son and Pompo but also offensive remarks Bobby had made about school officials. The prefect tells Totong: "Your son . . . referred to certain, uh, secrets of the persons he insulted, which can only mean he had been spying on us or prying into our private lives" (7). These opening scenes, which seem like a simple narration of events to move the story along, prove to be otherwise later in the story.

These rapid shifts in spatiotemporal coordinates go through several scenes: at an ice cream parlor with Sophie and her friend Minnie, Bobby's ex-girlfriend, at the school grounds with Junior during recess, in the Heredia's backyard with Inday, the family's house help, and finally we are taken back inside the house. The entire family including Ineng's sister, Menchu, and even Minnie are all waiting for Bobby's arrival. It is worth noting that in these scenes, Joaquin's flare for dialogue is at its finest as he navigates through several characters using not only the now common postcolonial device of the appropriation of the colonial language(s)—we see several untranslated Spanish and Tagalog words mixed with a distinctly American English—but he is also quite adept at handling generation-specific linguistic nuances like the "streetcorner talk" (19).

This narrative strategy of abrupt spatiotemporal shifts also heightens the anticipation of the disclosure, which is now transformed to: what is wrong with Bobby? While Bobby finally does come home, the narrator again postpones our discovery as he takes us for another ride because now we are given access to Bobby's "version" of events. Joaquin deploys two strategies at this juncture: the narrator allows Bobby and his fantastic double Cándido to focalize some of the events as well as "speak" through him (via psychonarration and free indirect discourse).

I suggest, then, that Joaquin uses the comic Gothic in the novella's focus on Bobby's misadventures with his double Cándido. When Bobby "become[s]"

Cándido” (25) it parallels Bobby’s disillusionment with the “overacting” (19) nature of society including his own parents. Using free indirect discourse, the narrator renders Bobby’s thoughts regarding overacting:

Overacting had been the word in his crowd at that time and he had made it his grading mark. . . . Boogie was basic, the twist was standard, but everything else, especially the mau-mau, was overacting. . . . Streetcorner talk like diahe and tepok and ayós na and ‘lis d’yan was natural but Cano slang idiom like get lost or real gone or dig that was overacting. (19)

122

This goes on for an entire page; this technique of piling on the words and sentences is classic Joaquin. According to Paul Sharrad, “Joaquin is not just using flashy technique or recondite form, he is bringing the past of his own country, both historical and literary, back to life” (363). By “overacting” Bobby refers to the superficiality of society that on the surface may be read as Joaquin’s critique of the American influence that was pervasive during those times.

It is worth noting that while Joaquin consistently portrays American influences such as those that Bobby laments are “overacting” in unflattering light, especially in this novella, he does so by focusing on the misappropriation of such influences by some Filipinos. In fact, however, Joaquin was fond of films, which the Americans brought with them. Considering Joaquin had been writing movie reviews for the Philippine Free Press during this period (Casper 89), it is not too far-fetched to think that he would have seen a lot of films and would have been influenced by some of them. Nowhere is this clearer than in Joaquin’s use of what Casper calls “cinematic techniques” such as the “quick cuts, fades, superimposition” (89) that I also described earlier. So it is not surprising to find in Joaquin’s novella similarities with the plot of a relatively successful 1963 American film, *X: The Man With X-Ray Eyes*, directed by Roger Corman. The sci-fi film also uses a protagonist with X-ray vision who initially sees naked bodies but later sees more disturbing images. In this film, a scientist named Dr. Xavier develops a special liquid formula for the eyes to enhance vision; he is unsatisfied with just testing on animals or volunteers so he decides to use it himself. Just like Bobby, the doctor starts to see through clothes and is horrified by the extent of his new abilities. Whereas the film ends tragically for Dr. X who decides to blind himself rather than continue to live with his vision, Bobby not only regains his normal vision after getting a flesh wound from a gunshot fired by Pompy, but this incident also frees him from Cándido.

Before Bobby’s eventual separation from Cándido, in a series of comic events, Bobby/Cándido encounters one naked human being after the

other. He sees his parents, his doctor, everyone at school including his classmates, his teachers, the principal, and even the prefect naked. At this point, Bobby/Cándido also starts seeing physical defects: the principal's hernia, the prefect's disfigured genital organ. These were the "secrets" mentioned earlier by the prefect to Bobby's father; the sight of these defects had so embarrassed Bobby that he could not help but comically blurt out the truth to these school officials. Bobby/Cándido runs to the one safe place he remembers—his grandmother's house—the ancestral home that also represents a connection to the Hispanic past where he and his family spent happy summers devoid of the "overacting" that had now consumed society including his own family. It is clear later in the story that Joaquin paints the grandmother and what she represents—the unfashionable Hispanic past—as the only one untouched by "overacting" since she is the only character Bobby/Cándido never sees naked.

When the narrator finally takes us back to Bobby/Cándido coming home after his futile hunt for Pompoy, the story takes another turn because now Bobby/Cándido sees not only naked bodies but skeletons. His entire family, including the girl he dated, Minnie, and even Inday have all become skeletons: "What he saw was, he supposed, what pictures in medical books showed: the human anatomy with brain, bone, artery, nerve, ligament, joint and internal organs exposed" (40). What is very interesting about the fantastic turn in this scene is that the narrator equates the skeletons with machines:

He could recognize vein and brain, bone and tissues, and the various organs, but only now realized how closely all these together *resembled an engine* and he saw them as coiled springs, wheels, axles, cogs, tubes, cylinders, valves, ball bearings, pistons, nuts and bolts, wires and batteries, even the dark blood veining the mechanism looking for all the world as practical, as unemotional, as gasoline. (41, emphasis added)

At this point, Bobby/Cándido realizes that "the nakedness of the flesh that so sickened him was yet the shape of the person. . . . If you stripped the skin from a person what remained was anonymous machinery" (41). The implication with Bobby/Cándido's epiphany is that while Bobby's identification as Cándido allowed him to see beyond society's layers of superficiality, he was only left with an even more heightened sense of anxiety about his present. So at the sight of these skeletons he realizes that it is even more disturbing to be disconnected from the flesh, from the present and no matter how "overacting," how superficial it has made society, he now yearns for the old Bobby, "wanting to be himself, wanting to be now not Cándido but Bobby" (42).

While Bobby faces this horrific scene of supposedly familiar bodies now only seen as unfamiliar skeletons moving like machines, Joaquin does not dwell on it too long. In fact as Bobby waxes poetic about the soul and flesh, Joaquin comically ends the scene with Bobby running away like mad from the sight of his eager ex-girlfriend Minnie's "lipless grin on that small, white, smooth, hollow skull he could look into through big holes and nose" (43). As Horner and Zlosnik suggest, "if the Gothic demonstrates the horror attaching to such a shifting and unstable world, it also, in its comic and ludic aspects, celebrates the possibilities thereby released" (327). In the case of *Cándido's Apocalypse*, while Bobby's experience of fantastically seeing naked bodies then skeletons dramatizes the horror of some of the aspects of Philippine modernity, the comic *within* Joaquin's Gothic seems to give rise to a laughter directed at a variety of things: initially at the uncritical acceptance of American ways and dismissal of both pre-Hispanic and Hispanic traditions, and then at the overzealous nostalgia for the past resulting in the contempt of the present.

CONCLUSION

Cándido's Apocalypse does not *end* in tragedy or the loss of Bobby's life. The story closes with Bobby leaving the hospital and as he turns around he sees

Cándido on the sidewalk wistfully shrug his shoulders and wave a hand and then buttoning up Bobby's Beatle shirt, digging fists into Bobby's beige trousers, go off in Bobby's boosters in the other direction, up Taft way, where the traffic was and the sunshine. (56)

While Bobby seems to have lived through a nightmarish ordeal, he survives the apocalypse. True to form, the story serves to disrupt order. It is then possible to read into the title another aspect of the novella's doubleness. In Joaquin's choice of Cándido as Bobby's double, he plays at the double implications of the word: Cándido, used not only as Bobby's folk Catholic birth name but also meaning simple or even naive. By suggesting Cándido's apocalypse in the title, Joaquin may not be suggesting Cándido's destruction as he seems to be one going on his merry way, rather the demise of naivety as Bobby himself figures out: "One would have to strike a balance between loving people too much and judging them too hard" (55). The title can also be taken as Cándido's revelation to Bobby for it was he after all who opened Bobby's eyes.

In a way, the nature of Joaquin's critique of Philippine modernity is represented in this novella: while he does sympathize with Bobby/Cándido's despair over the disconnect of the present from the Hispanic past, he is well aware of the pitfalls that come with this excessive attachment to the past. As Philip Holden astutely observes regarding the other stories in *Tropical Gothic*, Joaquin populates his stories with "an appeal to the continuities of an organic, pre-Hispanic past, then it also registers the contradictions of that appeal" (364). In the case of *Cándido's Apocalypse*, Joaquin's engagement of this ambivalence takes the form of the Gothic. It is precisely in the interweaving of the real and fantastic or the tragic and the comic that Joaquin's novella parallels the postcolonial situation of the Philippines. The "schizophrenic visions" (Sharrad 358) of Bobby Heredia are formally portrayed through the rapid and unmarked spatiotemporal shifts and the variable focalization oscillating between Bobby and Cándido. While Joaquin leaves his ending of *Cándido's Apocalypse* ambiguous—Bobby survives but so does Cándido—he is emphatic in his critique of how the nation has handled the disconnection from the past as shown in his favorable portrayal of Bobby's grandmother. But as he portrays in Bobby's encounters with Cándido, the past is not something you can easily manage. It needs to be very carefully understood and only then, to borrow Édouard Glissant's words, can "the prophetic visions of the past" be truly useful in the nation's present and eventual future.

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