

ความจริงของ*เมสติซา* และความฝันของลัทธิชาตินิยมฟิลิปปินส์ ใน โดย นิค จาวควิน ”ผู้หญิงที่มีสองสะดือ“

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้สำรวจการเดินทางของผู้หญิงชาวฟิลิปปินส์ในการพัฒนาอัตลักษณ์ความเป็นชาติของตนเองในเรื่องสั้นแนวเปรียบเทียบ หรือ อุปมาที่ศน์ เรื่อง ผู้หญิงที่มีสองสะดือ เขียนโดย นิค จาวควิน ซึ่งเป็นนักเขียนชาวฟิลิปปินส์ที่มีชื่อเสียงคนหนึ่งของประเทศ”สะดือเมื่อเรื่องสั้นเรื่องนี้เริ่มต้นขึ้นในช่วงปีแรกๆ ของการสร้างชาติ ตัวละครเอกหญิงทั้งสองถูกนำเสนอในลักษณะของการต่อรองอัตลักษณ์เมสติซา หรือ อัตลักษณ์ลูกผสมของตน ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงการต่อสู้กับความขัดแย้งหลายประการของประเทศฟิลิปปินส์ หลังจากที่ประเทศนี้ได้ตกอยู่ภายใต้การปกครองของหลากหลายประเทศเจ้าอาณานิคมเป็นระยะเวลายาวนาน นอกจากนี้ จาวควิน ยังได้นำเสนอภาพแทนของตัวละครชายและปฏิสัมพันธ์ของตัวละครเหล่านี้ที่มีต่อตัวละครเอกหญิงเพื่อสะท้อนให้เห็นความล้มเหลวของลัทธิชาตินิยมฟิลิปปินส์ที่นำโดยผู้ชาย บทความนี้ต้องการจะชี้ให้เห็นว่าการใช้สัญลักษณ์ของจาวควินในเรื่องสั้นเรื่องนี้สามารถนำมาวิเคราะห์ภายในบริบทของทฤษฎีสตรีนิยมหลังอาณานิคม ซึ่งจะช่วยเน้นย้ำแนวคิดที่ว่าผู้หญิงเปรียบเสมือนชาติ แผ่นดินแม่ เรื่องสั้นเรื่องนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่า / เมื่อฝ่ายชายล้มเหลวถึงสองครั้งในการปกป้องประเทศจากการรุกรานของเจ้าอาณานิคม และท้ายที่สุดชายเหล่านั้นต้องหลบหนีออกจากแผ่นดินแม่ จึงถึงเวลาที่ฝ่ายหญิงต้องริเริ่มที่จะทำหน้าที่ปกป้องประเทศแทนชายเหล่านั้น จินตภาพของผู้หญิงที่ถูกบรรยายซ้ำๆ กันตลอดเรื่องไม่ว่าจะเป็นการบรรยายภาพของภูเขาที่มีลักษณะเหมือนผู้หญิง หรือ การเล่าเรื่องผู้หญิงที่มีเสน่ห์เฝ้าชวนใจวิ่งไล่ตามผู้ชายชาวฟิลิปปินส์พลัดถิ่นในเมืองฮองกง ล้วนแล้วแต่เป็นการอุปมาอุปไมยถึงประเทศฟิลิปปินส์ เสมือนว่าประเทศนี้เป็น แม่ผู้เศร้าโศก/แผ่นดินแม่ ซึ่งเฝ้า

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รอคอยการกลับมาของชายหนุ่มฟิลิปปินส์เพื่อกลับมาสร้างชาติ ถึงแม้ว่าการกลับมายังประเทศฟิลิปปินส์ของตัวละครชายจะเป็นไปไม่ได้ในเรื่องสั้นเรื่องนี้ แต่จาวควินชี้แนะว่าลัทธิชาตินิยมของฟิลิปปินส์เป็นกระบวนการที่ต้องดำเนินไปอย่างต่อเนื่อง และจะสามารถประสบความสำเร็จได้ก็เมื่อทั้งผู้ชายและผู้หญิงร่วมมือกันเท่านั้น ทั้งนี้ก็เพื่อที่จะขจัดความแตกแยกและความไม่สมมาตรสามัคคีกันที่พบได้ทั้งในระดับตนเองและระดับชาติ

คำสำคัญ: ลัทธิชาตินิยมฟิลิปปินส์ นิค จาวควิน ผู้หญิง-ชาติ

Mestiza Reality and the Dream of Philippine Nationalism
in Nick Joaquin’s “The Woman Who Had Two Navels”

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Abstract

This paper explores the trajectory of Filipinas in the development of Philippine national identity in the allegorical short story, “The Woman Who Had Two Navels” by Nick Joaquin, a renowned Filipino writer. In this story, set in the early years of Philippine national formation, the female protagonists negotiate their *mestiza* identity which is fraught with the contradictions of the country’s multiple colonialisms. On the other hand, Joaquin’s portrayal of the male characters and their interactions with the female protagonists reflect the failure of masculinist Philippine nationalism. Within a feminist postcolonial theoretical context, my paper argues that Joaquin’s extensive use of symbolism helps reiterate the idea of woman as nation/motherland. When the men fail twice to protect the Philippines from imperialist invasions and eventually leave the country, it is time for women to take initiative. The recurring images of women either in the depiction of a woman-like mountain or in the form of seductive women chasing male Filipino expatriates in Hong Kong is a potent metaphor for the Philippines, a bereaved mother/nation beckoning young Filipinos to come back to the Philippines to restore nationhood. Although returning to the Philippines seems impossible for the male characters, the author Joaquin posits that Philippine nationalism is

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indeed an ongoing process which can be achieved only when both men and women collaborate in their attempts to reconcile the fractures and incongruities found at both personal and national levels.

Key words: Philippine Nationalism, Nick Joaquin, Woman as Nation

Introduction: Joaquin as a transnational / an exiled Writer

Homi K. Bhabha indicates that in postcolonial discourse, transnational writers exist in multiple locations, traversing geographical and national boundaries. Bhabha views that this “position of liminality” offers these writers a “third space”—one that “displaces the histories that constitute it, sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (p. 207, p. 211). Migrations enable these writers to have hybrid viewing positions, which allow them to produce what Bhabha calls, “hybrid realities” (p. 212). In this manner, migration is a “metaphor”—“another kind of language of representation,” which is “open to meanings that are ambivalent, doubling and dissembling” (p. 212).

Oscar Campomanes considers the exile motif to be crucial for Filipino American writers. For him, the literature of Filipinos in the U.S. is a literature of exile. According to Campomanes, the state of exile is “necessary, if inescapable” aspect of Filipino identity, because it “serves as the space for displacement, suspension, and perspective” (p. 51). For many postcolonial exiled writers in search of identities, writing, which is deemed as their “redemptive return to a ‘home’ in the imagination,” involves “mystic reinterpretations of colonial history and reevaluations of the linguistic and cultural losses caused by colonialism” (p. 58).

This paper argues that Nick Joaquin can be considered a transnational writer within Bhabha’s framework and at the same time he can also be seen as an exiled writer in Campomanes’s view even though he is not a Filipino-American writer. As one of Bhabha’s transnational writers, Joaquin was, I would argue, in the “position of liminality” enabling him to have the authority

to imagine a possibility to reconstruct the past history of the Philippines. As an exile, Joaquin was able to, Campomanes would say, make a “redemptive return” to his country within a particular timeframe. After the Philippines gained its independence from the U.S. in 1945, Joaquin began to dream of getting away from the country. The opportunity to leave the country came in 1947 when Joaquin was accepted as a novice at Saint Albert’s College, a Dominican monastery in Hong Kong. Joaquin had a strong desire to leave his home country during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, for he, in Resil B. Mojares’ words, “detested the war” (para. 16). In an interview, Joaquin admitted that the experience of war “drained both [the] body and spirit” and by the time it was over it filled him with “the desire to leave the country and go somewhere far,” as Joaquin put it, “somewhere where you could clean up” (Mojares, 2010, para. 16) Joaquin’s dream of religious pursuit then eventually settled in Hong Kong which, crucially, is where “The Woman Who Had Two Navels” is primarily set.

Despite the criticism that most of Joaquin’s works reflect his “nostalgia for the past”, “The Woman Who Had Two Navels” is Joaquin’s attempt to look “at the past always with the consciousness of the need for engaging the present world in its own terms” (Mojares, 2010, para. 25). By starting the story with one of the main mestiza characters, Connie de Vidal who is desperately looking for a doctor to perform surgery on her to remove one of the two navels she claims she has had since birth, Joaquin is able to deal with two important historical epochs for the Philippines. That is, the story is set during the transition from Spanish to U.S. colonialism, and the transition from U.S. colonialism to independence. By focusing the reader’s attention on the two main conversions-the first, between Connie’s mother and Pepe Monson, the

horse doctor; and the second, between Monson and Paco Teixeira, a Filipino jazz musician-Joaquin brings the reader back in time to bemoan the failure of male-dominated Philippine nationalism. The story suggests not only the demise of Philippine nationhood and the following subjugation to the U.S. but also the possibility for Filipinas, who represent the bereaved motherland, to take the initiative to summon the disheartened Filipinos to return to the country in an attempt to decolonize the Philippines.

Problematizing Nationalism and Nationalist Representations

Postcolonial scholars question whether nationalism and nationalist representations in once colonized countries genuinely represent the national population since the origin of nationalism is such a Western construct.

Benedict Anderson indicates in *Imagined Communities* that the rise of nationalism occurred in the late eighteenth century as a product of the development of print technology, which promoted the circulation of the European discourses of “nation-ness” and nationalism” (p. 49). The spread of nationalism greatly influenced many anti-colonial movements in newly independent nations .This is because many believed that it promised independence. As Partha Chatterjee points out, “In its essential aspects . . . [European] nationalism represents the attempt to actualize in political terms the universal urge for liberty and progress” (p. 2). Nonetheless, the fact that nationalism is a derivation of Western discourses suggests potential danger. As Simon Gikandi observes, “[A]fter several decades of independence in the former colonies, it has become evident that the nationalist desire for a radical rupture from the colonial past has failed, that nationalism cannot seriously be considered to be that alternative to imperialism that it was once thought to

be . . .” (p. 7). Gikandi’s observation confirms the fact that the conception of nationalism was indeed a result of Western capitalism and industrialization, and thus it was an essential component of imperialist expansion. In other words, colonizing missions were deemed part of Western nationalism involving violence against indigenous peoples in colonized countries.

In an attempt to appropriate the liberal aspects of Western nationalism, many anti-colonial nationalist movements unknowingly internalize the colonial ideology embedded in nationalism. As Chatterjee indicates,

[N]ationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. Nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could “modernize” itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of “modernity” on which colonial domination was based. (p. 30)

These colonial aspects of nationalism may be difficult to detect since in many once colonized countries anti-colonial nationalisms work under the guise of the national project of modernization. Chatterjee cites nationalism in India as an example as it illustrates how the elites motivated people to participate in nationalist struggles and at the same time attempted to keep the masses distant from the possession of power (p. 51). In this way, nationalist movements might not benefit the masses. As Etienne Balibar puts

it, “nationalism of liberation” could easily be transformed into “nationalism of domination” (p. 46).

In many once colonized nations, a government-authorized nationalist movement may represent and benefit only certain groups of powerful people while the rest of the population may never experience liberation at all. Frantz Fanon warns in *The Wretched of the Earth* that nationalism often causes a conflict between the middle class elites and the masses. In Fanon’s perspective, when the educational bourgeoisie occupies the positions of ruling power, it tends to abuse its privileged authority to make its own profit at the expense of the masses. In this sense, the middle-class elite imitates the colonial administration of the nation. As Fanon remarks, “[T]he national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement” (p.122). Having allowed foreigners, many of whom are Western investors, to establish themselves in their countries, this intellectual elite “take[s] on the role of manager for Western enterprise” (p. 123), and thereby perpetuates the nation’s subjugation to the West.

Due to the fact that nationalism is a derivation from Western discourses, nationalism, like its counterpart imperialism, is often a gendered discourse, which requires further interrogation for its ideological content. Feminist critiques have recently problematized the way nation is represented in gendered and sexual term-as a passive woman whose honor and survival must be defended and protected by active men. The representation of nation as woman is encoded with imperialist ideology because it invokes colonial aggression in the hegemonic discourse of Orientalism. In addition, postcolonial feminists argue that nationalism is predominantly male-dominated. As Carole Boyce Davies comments, “[N]ationalism thus far seems to exist primarily as a

male activity with women distinctly left out or peripheralized in the various national constructs” (p. 12). In the male-dominated discourses of nationalism, women and men are often represented in such a way that fortifies patriarchal inequalities between them. Within a nationalist discourse, men and women are represented differently. Whereas men are depicted as active agents, women are almost always portrayed as having a passive role in nationalist struggles. As indicated by Ann McClintock,

Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural), embodying nationalism’s conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism’s progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity. Nationalism’s anomalous relation to time is thus managed as natural relation to gender. (p. 359)

McClintock also criticizes postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon for not paying attention to the role women play in nationalist struggle. In her criticism of Fanon’s “Algeria Unveiled”, McClintock points out that Fanon does not consider Algerian women as “self-motivated agents” (p. 365) since in his view, they “learn their militancy only at men’s invitation” (p. 366). For Fanon, “[w]omen’s agency” is “agency by designation.” This is because Fanon believes that women are not capable of “committing themselves to action” (McClintock, 1995, p. 366).

Despite the fact that historically women have contributed to nationalist movements, they are often unrecognized and consigned to oblivion.

Additionally, as a derivation of men's endeavor, nationalism runs the risk of ignoring women's concerns and needs. Therefore, postcolonial feminists propose that feminist awareness must be considered part and parcel of nationalism.

The Female Body and Feminist Nationalism

“What does ‘our country’ mean to me, an outsider?”

“[I]n fact, as a woman, I have no country.” (Woolf, 1938, p.165)

The historical absence of women's participation in the national agenda prompted Virginia Woolf to question, “What does ‘our country’ mean to me, an outsider?” Here, Woolf views herself as an outsider simply because, she reasons, “throughout the greater part of its [the country's] history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share of its possessions . . . [I]n fact, as a woman, I have no country” (p. 166). Woolf speaks for women worldwide who have been deprived of the right to participate in the construction of nationhood. In many countries, men, not women, are often provided with the unlimited rights to resources of the nation. Cynthia Enloe indicates that men in ex-colonized countries in particular have often been offered the legitimacy to become integral to nationalist struggles, which naturally result from the male desire to recuperate their manhood/ nationhood (p. 44). The absence of women from nationalist projects results from the fact that nationalism is implicated from the very beginning in gender imbalances.

In patriarchal societies, the control over women's sexuality and productivity are crucial to the process of national/ethnic construction. As

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval indicate, the assigned gendered role of women requires that they be the “mothers of the nation” (p. 7). That is, women reproduce the members of the nation or the ethnic group, and therefore women demarcate the nation/ethnic boundary. Designated as the “cultural carriers” of the group, women are constrained in the private sphere where the transmission of cultural and ethnic heritage most likely takes place. Additionally, women are often seen as signifiers of ethnic/national differences. However, in a national liberation struggle, men are called to fight for the sake of their women and children. Women’s role is thus reduced to a symbolic one-nation-as-woman. The nation is personified as a beloved woman in danger or a bereaved mother and thereby conveys the need to be protected. Defending the female body-the nation-is thus a symbolic attempt to protect the nation’s boundaries against foreign forces (Anthias and Yuval, 1989, p. 7-10). In this sense, men’s failure to defend their women/nation symbolically means the loss of their proprietary claim to the female body/nation, hence the loss of their manhood/nationhood. Despite their crucial role in national construction, as Anthias and Yuval indicate, women are denied agency. Even if women may be allowed to participate in national liberation, their role is not an active one. They can only become supporters to male nationalists (p. 10).

Jill McCalla Vickers posits that the reason that women are denied the same legitimacy their male counterparts have as nationalists is intricately associated with women’s role in the process of constituting national identity. This is because women’s reproductivity nurtures a close bond between mother and children in such a way that men will never be able to recreate this relationship with their children. Consequently, men are not included in the procession of national identity. In their attempt to assert their power, men

have to invent “male-centered kinschip” to create “unnatural” ties among men who are not at all related by blood. This kind of relation makes the male bonding “more broadly inclusive and abstract units of states and of nation,” That is to say, this invention of bonding enables men to have access to power, which allows them to define national identity. In so doing, they will have to secure their authority by controlling women’s autonomy so that women’s choices about sexuality, child rearing and mothering activities are constrained.

Lois A. West suggests that women can become active participants in national affairs when feminist consciousness is incorporated into the national agenda. West also posits that what is central to feminist nationalism are the struggles against women’s oppression and for rights equal to those men.

Feminist nationalism redefines the private and public spheres as “complementary and unitary” (p. 31). That is, women’s involvement in the struggle for nation can happen while they are still caring for their families. In fact, women’s close connection to their children and their role as cultural transmitters are still essential. Vickers remarks that male bonding is not as strong as that of mothers and children. Women can still maintain their pivotal role in establishing an individual identity: “Our mother tongue and what we learn at our mother’s knee shape to a considerable degree what identity we will adopt, what group we will be loyal to and what authority figures we will accept as legitimate” (p. 484-85).

The Loss of Philippine Nationhood/Manhood and the Failure of Philippine Nationalism

In the story, the conversation between the señora de Vidal (aka Conchita or / Concha de Vidal in the novel version) and Pepe Monson reveals the loss of Philippine nationhood/manhood as well as the failure of the country's nationalism. Pepe Monson's father, known as Dr. Monson, left the Philippines after the country lost its sovereignty to the U.S. A former "revolutionary against Spain . . . and against the Americans" in the Philippines, Dr. Monson fled to Hong Kong to settle down and have a family (Joaquin, 1972, p. 153)³. He "swore not to go home, neither himself nor his sons, until it was a free country again" (p. 153). Dr. Monson first hoped that "the exile he had exposed on himself . . . would last only a couple of years," but after years and years went by he soon discovers that it "might actually last all his lifetime" (p.158). He eventually resolved that he might "go home only as the dead bones and ashes that . . . his sons . . . would carry back with them, to be buried in their own land, when it should at last be the free land, for which, when a young man, he had fought so long and so bitterly" (p. 158).

Dr. Monson's glorious past is told through the señora de Vidal's conversation with Pepe Monson. Joaquin constructs Dr. Monson's past in the real history of the Philippines when the country was at war. From what the señora recalls, Dr. Monson was in the battlefield with Emilio Aguinaldo, a Filipino revolutionary and a military leader who actually led the Philippine

³ The excerpt is taken from the story "The Woman Who Had Two Navels" printed in *Tropical Gothic* (1972) by Joaquin. Subsequent references to this text will be cited in parentheses. All italics appear as such in the original text. Subsequent italicized passages cited are also preserved as they are in the text.

forces to first fight against Spain in the latter part of the Philippine Revolution (1896–1898), and then in the Spanish–American War (1898), and finally against the United States during the Philippine–American War (1899–1901). In the señora de Vidal’s memory, Dr. Monson and other Filipino nationalists under Aguinaldo’s command were courageous revolutionaries:

[Despite the fact that] the Yanqui soldiery [were] hot on their heels, he [Dr. Monson] had resisted to the end—he had so many other splendid young men—resisting with the spirit when, bound and jailed, they could no longer resist with arms. Their general might submit; their general might take the oath of allegiance; their general might call on all the still embattled caudillos to come out and surrender—but these hardheaded young men flung at the Yanquis their gesture of spiritual resistance, preferring exile to submission. (p.159)

The fact that Joaquin has the señora de Vidal repeatedly refer to Dr. Monson and other Filipino revolutionaries as “those hardheaded strong young men” (p. 159) may suggest heroism of these young revolutionaries. Despite their loss in the battle with the U.S., the Filipinos welcomed these young soldiers with pride. As the señora de Vidal recalls, “People began to wear their grief with a smile, their defeat with a fine air. . . . [B]ehind impassive faces, people shared a secret pride, a secret exultation, and a lengthening litany of names.” (p. 159). Dr. Monson himself had been “wounded and gravely ill” after the battle, chose exile rather than submission (p. 159-160). The señora de Vidal remembers Dr. Monson as “the magnificent young man with fierce whiskers who had fed her grapes and ice-cream and had so deeply

sympathized with her difficulties in arithmetic . . .” (p.160). For the señora de Vidal, who “would always see her childhood as a page in an epic, brilliant with tears and splendid with heroes,” Dr. Monson’s “greatness” (p.160) has always been a crucial part of her childhood memory. As she admits to Pepe, “When I was a little girl people like your father were my conscience walking around in elegant clothes. . .” (p. 160).

However, the former nationalist revolutionary is no longer “magnificent.” Joaquin’s portrayal of him is that of an ordinary old Filipino expatriate. When the señora de Vidal tells Pepe, “How I would love to see your father again!” he says, “[H]e’s having a nap just now,” though he knows that it is “more than a nap his father [is] having” (p. 160). Dr. Monson is no longer one of “those hardheaded strong young men” that the señora de Vidal recalls. He is depicted as old and inert. When Pepe checks on him in his room, he finds Dr. Monson “slump[s] forward in his chair, unconscious, although his eyes [are] open and his mouth smile[s]” (p. 160). In fact, Pepe notices the changes in his father’s behavior. Joaquin hints the reader that it is possible that Dr. Monson has been under the influence of drug, which probably is “a left-over from previous medical supplies that he had hidden somewhere” (p. 160). Obviously, Dr. Monson is depicted as though he was a narcotized escapist smiling at his past fleeting glories.

Dr. Monson drastically changes after his trip to the Philippines. Despite the señora de Vidal’s confirmation that the country “is [free] now” (p. 153), independence has obviously disillusioned Dr. Monson, who now is “quietly going to pieces” (p. 165). Going back to the Philippines is, according to Pepe, “the great dream of his life” (p. 160). Joaquin does not tell the reader what actually disheartens Dr. Monson, who planned to “arrange about

having [his] house there rebuilt” and his family would follow there later (166). What is quite certain now after his return is that “there has been no more talk of moving [back to the Philippines]” (p.166).

The conversation between Pepe and the señora de Vidal about the postcolonial Philippines prompts Pepe to recall what his father had earlier instilled in his children, “*The house of our fathers is waiting for us to come home!*” (p.156). Here, it is clear that it is men who are expected to reconstruct the nation. One day the children of the Philippines who are now in exile will come back to their home. That is why the talking about “home” “relaxe[s] [Dr. Monson] who tend[s] to brood” (p. 156). What Dr. Monson loves to talk about most is “the river that [runs] right behind their house in Binondo” (p. 157). Indeed, Joaquin’s text reflects his nostalgia.

After spending his time in Hong Kong for a while, Dr. Monson “make[s] the momentous voyage home” (p. 190) only to find the house that has symbolized so many of his aspirations deteriorating. As Pepe Monson recalls, “My father said it looked very sad: a stairway in a field of ruin, going up to nowhere. . .” (p. 158). Even though “the main stairway which was all of stone . . . was quite intact,” it leads to “nowhere” (p. 158). Here, the image of the dilapidated house metaphorically suggests the Philippines. Like the house, the country is in poor condition as it has endured war for so long. Indeed, the future of the country is very grim. As Pepe Monson thinks, “But, now, a war had come and destroyed the house. It was waiting no longer. They might still go back, they could never go home now . . .” (p. 158). Here, Pepe probably refers to the war between the Philippines and the U.S. Pepe has never seen the house, presumably because he was born in Hong Kong. Though he can go to the country, it is not his “home.” This is how colonialism affects the Filipino

diaspora, including Dr. Monson and his family. As Avtar Brah describes, diaspora is a journey involving “settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’” (p. 182). Thus, home for diasporic people has a special meaning; it is, in Brah’s words, “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origins’” (p.192).

In addition, the señora de Vidal raises an issue concerning “a reference, a dictionary” (p. 160). Due to the failure of masculinized nationalism, there is no dictionary or reference work that might guide young people. Significant words are marred with ambiguity and uncertainty. As a result, the young fail to understand what virtue and morality are, as she says to Pepe, “. . . I could never doubt how a word like ‘virtue’ for instance was spelled., “. . . I could never doubt how a word like ‘virtue’ for instance was spelled. I might spell it with a ‘b’ because I wanted to, or without the ‘e’ because I thought it superfluous-but if I did I knew very well what I was doing and that it was wrong. I had no excuse. But young people now, like my poor Connie-” (pp. 160-61). The señora’s speech implies that the absence of men to protect the nation results in the loss of morality. Harrod J. Suarez (2010) suggests that Connie’s “loose, immoral, and fittingly *conniving*” behavior is an outcome of male abandonment. Hence, Connie’s represents “a culture distorted for lack of male parenting and tutelage” (p. 22). Suarez adds that women like the señora feels anguished not over their inability to be a leader in a nationalist struggle, but “the failure of men to do so” (p. 21). Thus, the Philippines is left in a chaotic state in which women become wild and lost. The nation indeed needs to be restored as its nationhood is in jeopardy.

Joaquin's portrayal of the postcolonial Philippines is a nation not only wrecked by wars but also a nation divided by social classes which are part of the legacy of colonialism. This social division is manifested through the story of the señora de Vidal and Paco Texeira, a Filipino musician expatriate from Hong Kong.

The Señora de Vidal: The *Mestiza* Beauty

Born under Spanish rule, the señora de Vidal is portrayed as possessing vanity as well as beauty. In fact, the señora possesses *mestiza* beauty which is, in Johaina Crisostomo's view, close to the "European ideal" (2011, p. 39). This corresponds to the comment of Paco's wife, Mary Texeira, about the señora's beauty, "[I]t's the mother that's the real beauty-dead white skin and dead-black hair and a glitter of ornaments-like one of those jeweled madonnas in Spanish churches" (p. 164). The fact that the señora is associated with "a glitter of ornaments" and one of those "jeweled madonnas" makes her become pretty much like a "work of art-complete with a price tag attached" (Crisostomo 39). Crisostomo also connects the phrases "dead white skin" and "dead-black hair" to "the power [the señora] acquires from resembling the colonizer" (p.39). Hence, the señora, to use Crisostomo's words, "in a position of privilege-becomes the idolized image that upholds the authority of Spain" (p.39).

In the short story, the Philippines is no longer under the control of Spanish colonial rule, the señora de Vidal can no longer gain authority by identifying with Spanish colonial power. Instead, the story depicts her as identifying herself with the upper class people who have no heart for people who are in the lower class. In addition to her *mestiza* look, the señora is

married to a minister. Therefore, she thinks that her class allows her “the advantages . . . to be envied and reviled by people who were not so fortunate” (p.162). When confronted by Connie who has just run away from a boarding school, refusing “to be educated on [the] stolen money” (p.162) her father had taken from the people, the señora claims that “[m]ost of the girls there [at Connie’s school] are daughters of politicians . . . [who] are used to hearing nasty things said of their fathers and mothers” (p.162). Therefore, the señora concludes, these students “don’t think it’s anything unusual, or to be ashamed of” (p.162).

In the second half of the story, the señora de Vidal’s role changes. Back in the Philippines, when she meets Paco Texeira, who temporarily leaves Hong Kong to play music with his band in Manila, her role is no longer a defender for the upper class people. Paco, who “ha[s] become deeply interested in Manila and [is] ready to be interested in any woman who most piquantly suggest[s] that combination of primitive mysticism and slick modernity,” is quickly drawn to the señora when she first appears at the “Manila-Hong Kong” night club. They are engaged in a rather reciprocal relationship. Since Paco wants to learn more about Manila from her, and the señora wants to learn if “the war [has] greatly changed Hong Kong” (p. 175), they decide they “should meet and trade information” (p. 175).

In Joaquin’s description, the señora at the moment Paco first meets her is associated with natural landscape, i.e., the woman-like range of mountains that Paco’s father told him about when he was young:

That was about the only time Paco could remember that his father had told him something definite about the country he had come from [the Philippines], and he remembered it again when from the railing of the ship that was taking him to Manila for the first time, to play at the two night clubs, he had looked up and suddenly seen, with a shock of recognition, a range of mountains that looked like a woman sleeping. (p.174)

Once Paco meets the señora, “he ha[s] felt the same shock of recognition as when, glancing up from the ship’s railing, he ha[s] suddenly seen the range of mountains that look[s] like a woman sleeping” (p.175). Here, Joaquin probably makes use of the señora as a constant reminder of the bereaved motherland, for her two sons “were killed in the war” (p.177). Like an orphan, Paco has lost his father in the same way the Monson sons have figuratively lost their father, Dr. Monson, who now has become very frail and inert. Joaquin hints that Paco is different from the Monson sons in that he has not been inculcated with the significance of home and homecoming: “But then his musician father . . . had never lulled him to sleep, like the Monson boys’ father, with the stories of the old country . . .” (p.171). The señora then takes the role of a mother guiding Paco to find his way back home. In other words, the señora symbolizes the nation that has been abandoned by men. Throughout the story, the señora is a loner traveling alone without her husband. Paco admits that “he ha[s] never met her husband nor any of her children” (p.177), except later in the story when he eventually meets Connie. The relationship between Paco and the señora is healthy at first as Paco finds her “a refreshing haven of neutrality” which he really means that he “like[s]

feeling at home among her tea-cups and having her fine car to drive around as though it were his own” (p.177).

However, the relationship between Paco and the señora changes when Paco becomes aware of people’s eyes watching them curiously and when “his private life become[s] public jest” (p.177). Paco, thus “break[s] off with the señora” (p.178), and in so doing he is able to explore Manila and see with his own eyes what his home country is like after the war:

He had resumed his solitary explorations of the city but what he now saw increased his discomfort: the heat-dazzling panic-edgy streets darkened in his brains with doom, dirt, danger, disease, and violent death. Some venom was at work here, seeping through all the layers, cankering in all directions. The señora’s world of mansions might sit uneasily on its avenues; the hovels of the poor squatted no less nervously on their gutters. (p.178)

Paco soon finds that the country is gravely ill. Evil, danger, and violence prevail. Besides, the contrasting images of the mansions of the rich people like the señora and the slums of the poor confirm that there is a huge gap dividing the country into two, the rich and the poor.

Nonetheless, Joaquin proposes a solution to the problem through the other *mestiza* character, Connie Escobar, the señora’s daughter, and her relationship with the male characters, Pepe Monson and Paco Texeira.

Connie Escobar: A Potential *Mestiza* Revolutionary

Unlike her mother's name, Connie's name suggests that she was born during a different timeframe, when the Philippines was under American rule and when the country was on its way to gaining independence. While her mother's physical beauty is an emblem of the country landscape that enchants men like Paco Texeira, Connie's "deformed" body is a manifestation of the country in crisis. As Crisostomo posits, Connie's "two-naveled dilemma" is "an individual projection of an underlying national crisis of multiplicity in origin points" (p. 44). Although Joaquin does not allow the reader to know whether Connie actually has two navels, the fact that he lets Connie desperately seek help illustrates that Connie represents the nation in crisis. Pepe Monson, a horse doctor, recalls,

When she told him she had two navels he believed her at once: she seemed so urgently, so desperately serious-and besides, what would be the point in telling a lie like that, he asked himself, while she asked him if he could help her, if he could arrange "something surgical"-an operation . . . (p.149)

Whereas a woman has one mother and one navel, Connie perceives herself as having two navels. In this way, Connie can be considered, as Antonio Conejos puts it, "a confused product of at least two different sources" (para. 4). Representing the colonized Philippines, Connie is a product from two sources, the U.S and Spain. Unlike her mother who enjoys the power and privilege obtained from her *mestiza* position, Connie is precocious and rebellious. She is well-aware of her privileged position, but at the same

time she questions the construction of nation that allows people like her the power to oppress others from different social classes.

Connie's attempt to solve her personal identity crisis suggests a solution to the national crisis as well. Joaquin hints at Connie's subversion to the people of her own class through the conversation between the señora and Pepe in which the señora recalls Connie's reaction to the newspaper headlines that carry "Connie's picture as the girl who was gypping the public of its money so she could study in an expensive exclusive private school" (p. 161)⁴. Unlike her mother, Connie chooses to identify herself with oppressed people. Once she learns about the news that her father who is charged with "bribery, using up the public funds, and having his daughter on the government payroll" (p. 161), Connie stops going to school and confronts her mother, saying that the money is like "blood sucked from the people" (p.162) dismissing her mother's claim that "it wasn't stolen money" (p.162). Connie then ends up working "as [a] dishwasher in a chopsuey joint in the Chinese quarter" (p. 162). The fact that "she ke[e]ps denying her name" and that she "seem[s] to have forgotten who she [is]" (p. 162) suggests Connie's attempt to reject her origins, her upper class position, the very position that echoes the colonizer. It is not until she sees her mother, who comes to fetch her, is she able to recognize her name. Here, Joaquin seems to suggest that the señora indeed is, for Connie, a reminder of her past from which she desperately wants to run away. At a deeper level, Connie's subversion is also

⁴ Crisostomo indicates that the headline implies "the Communist ideologies of the Hukbalahap insurgents" which was a military force organized in 1942 by the Communist Party of the Philippines to fight the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during WWII (p. 44).

the effort of a revolutionary, who is determined to “heal” the nation. As Crisostomo explains,

As Connie sees herself a problematic figure in this collective, she feels the obligation of the citizen to heal the rifts tearing apart the body politic. That is, instead of capitalizing on her resemblance to the colonizer to retain a privileged class standing, Connie likens herself to the oppressed in order to question the validity of this inherited establishment. (p.45)

In this way, Connie is deemed a “postcolonial subject working towards the decolonization of her mind” (Crisostomo, 2011, 46). I would also add that in trying to decolonize her mind, Connie is in the very first few steps towards decolonizing the nation as well.

Indeed, Connie’s pursuit of a self-determined identity is intertwined with her struggle to reconstruct the Philippines. Personal and national liberation can be staked out during nationalist struggle, which entails the process of decolonization at both personal and collective levels. In having Connie go to see Pepe Monson, a horse doctor, instead of other doctors, Joaquin hints that Connie is probably well aware of the urgency of her crisis which reflects the national crisis. The rescue must be immediate, and therefore, any doctor will serve the purpose. To negotiate her *mestiza* subjectivity, Connie needs to reject her past. This negotiation corresponds with the present situation of the nation as it has been twice colonized over two hundred years. Connie’s body needs an operation, and so does the nation. The fact that Connie tells Pepe that she was married that morning and escaped her husband suggests that

she prefers freedom rather than commitment under patriarchal ideology. That portends a future of the Philippines as a free nation.

Besides, Connie is depicted as a gifted mythmaker. She is able to draw Pepe's attention to her and, after learning about her two navels, he "believe[s] her at once" (149). Although many people may consider Connie as having signs of "pathology-this irresistible urge to spread 'lies'," Connie can be deemed as attempting to "foreground the myth-making process inherent in the racial formation of the *mestiza*, allowing her to circumvent the system of oppression that objectifie[s] other colonial subjects, such as Concha [the señora]" (Crisostomo, 2011, p. 42). Moreover, from the outset, Connie is presented with a critical mind. Crisostomo indicates that Connie's role is the "role of critic" which "reveals [her] as an individual who sees herself as a citizen with political leverage, capable of reforming the society in which she lives. In an effort to reimagine the *mestiza* as a decolonized subject of an independent nation, she weaves narratives that reformulate history, culture, and identity in her own terms" (p. 42). This is indeed an essential characteristic of a potential nationalist revolutionary, who can deploy survival instincts and strategies of negotiation. The reader may feel frustrated since it is unclear which version of the story, Connie's or the señora's, is true. Despite the possibility of lies in Connie's narrative, Joaquin probably encourages his readers to see beyond the question of accuracy and authenticity. In fact, the ambiguity of Connie's story corresponds with the volatile, multi-dimensional nature of the Filipino identity that has been subject to cultural changes throughout the long centuries under colonial rule.

Connie's struggle to cope with her navel crisis can be seen when she goes out with Paco Texeira in Manila. She asks him to drop by at the "Chinese

quarter” where she buys a doll for “a thank-offering” (p. 183) to a god in a Chinese temple. Joaquin probably wants to imply that Connie is desperately in search of something to hold on to spiritually. What is interesting is that the god that she worships resembles her in that it has two navels: “. . . [T]he god . . . on the altar . . . [is] an old fat god, with sagging udders, bald and white-breaded and squatting like a Buddha; and the sly look in its eyes was repeated by the two navels that winked from it gross belly” (p. 185). Like Connie, the god has two navels. Close to the end of the story, Connie’s eyes are also described exactly like the god’s in that they are “sly.” In fact, while in Manila, Paco feels that he has been watched.

Moreover, Connie’s physical fight with Paco in his hotel room is symbolic although the fight superficially seems meaningless and pointless as it happens without sufficient explanation. I would argue that this is how Joaquin attempts to allegorize the crisis that postcolonial Filipinos have to deal with, both men and women. As a postcolonial subject struggling to decolonize herself, Connie must courageously act like a revolutionary forcing the male Filipinos, particularly those who are in exile, to face, what Crisostomo would call, “the contradictions and incongruities inherent in their Filipino heritage, and to realize the unfeasibility of absolute ways of thinking about identity” (p. 46). I would argue that the fight between Paco and Connie is inevitable and thereby clearly exemplifies this confrontation. In the fight between Connie and Paco, it is Paco who is defeated, and Connie who “ha[s] won after all” (p.187). The passage depicting the aftermath of the fight reveals that Paco is haunted by Connie’s “sly eyes” that follow him everywhere he goes. At the same time, Paco keeps hearing Connie whispering that she has two navels (p.187). Despite the fact that Paco manages to escape from Connie, he soon

finds out, “I’ve been dragging her all along with me” (p.187). Like a paranoiac, Paco feels that Connie has been with him although in reality he is “alone and ha[s] escaped” (p.187):

But looking up and seeing the mountains, his heart stopped, his eyes started out of his head, his throat screamed soundlessly. He had not escaped, he had not fled at all-for there she still was, stretched out under the sky; the sly look in her eyes and the bloody smile on her lips, and her breasts and shoulders naked. (pp. 187-88)

Here, Connie’s portrayal resembles that of the *señora de Vidal* whom Paco relates to the woman-like range of mountains that “stretch[es] out under the sky.” If Paco is right in thinking that the *señora de Vidal* and Connie are working “as a team” (188), the *señora*’s role is to seduce men like Paco to come back to motherland. All of the images of women, are finally associated with the female body of the bereaved nation, the Philippines. After all, Paco has now realized that he cannot escape from his own motherland. Just like a navel from which the umbilical cord connects him to his mother, Paco and other Filipino expatriates, cannot disavow this strong bonding. How can the mother who gives one’s life be denied? Joaquin probably wants to suggest that like a bereaved mother, the Philippines has been waiting for their children to come back to her. Paco admits to Pepe in the end that both women, the *señora* and Connie have got “some kind of a hold on [him]-oh, a strangle-hold” (p. 190). Yet, he vows that if they come for him, he will “come running” (p. 190).

Even though Paco eventually returns to Hong Kong, none of the Monson sons go back to the Philippines, suggesting that the restoration of the nation is an ongoing process. Joaquin alludes to transformations in Dr. Monson and Paco's thinking. Joaquin has Pepe conclude that Dr. Monson's and Paco's journeys back to the Philippines are like that of Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass* who "step[s] through the mirror" (p. 190). True, Pepe has never been to the Philippines, so he thinks, "But it wasn't I who stepped through the mirror . . . It was father and Paco-and the glass broke. They can't step back anymore; not father anyway . . ." (p. 190). For those who have not been back "home," and have "stepped through no mirrors," they are also affected, since "the safe glass ha[s] cracked and things from the other side ha[ve] begun to seep through" (p.195). Indeed, the bond between the mother/land and her children is so strong that there is a deep implication that the distance is temporary. They cannot disavow national identity. Though Joaquin implies that men are needed to restore the nationhood, his text also suggests that women's role is undeniably essential in the process of reconstructing the nation.

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