



Colonial Posterities: Portraiture and the Face of the Modern

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ABSTRACT. The paper dwells on the practice of portraiture or portrait making in Southeast Asia, reconsidering it as a political gesture of representation. In this reflection, it explores the concept of intimation and intimacy in the broader effort to understand the aesthetic of appearance and appearing, and how this materialization supplements the discourse of self-consciousness, modernity, and post-colonial art history. Examples from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines are foregrounded to sustain the argument.

KEYWORDS. portraiture modernity self painting colonialism

INTRODUCTION

This essay begins with images: a photograph of Thai King Mongkut (reigned 1851-1868) with Queen Debsirin that was sent to the United States as a gift to President Francis Pierce in 1856; Philippine Hispanic icons of the Nuestra Señora de la Correa and San Isidro Labrador, with their supplicants in the foreground; a portrait of a Javanese painter in his studio that hangs at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. These are potent images, evoking the power of presence and circulation, the projection of self, and the burdens that a beckoning world, whether in the west or in the afterlife, foists on its faithful.

In these instances, presence is rendered with a certain sacrifice, of giving something up, so that the self could cast off its native habit and take on the custom of a colonial, civilizing, even salvational dispensation. The godlike king, at the moment of photographic record and by extension of reprography, defied the local wisdom that any mode of likeness would compromise a person's life force and invite perdition. The Catholic converts in the Philippines learned how it was to be depicted as subjects



Fig. 1. Juan Arceo, *San Isidro Labrador*, late 19th century.

within a devotional hierarchy. And Raden Saleh had to pose, to mimic the guise of a European artist, a dandy in Holland and an Oriental prince in Dresden, to belong to the rarefied world of art beyond Batavia. In these events of recognition, the spirit of the self is suspended in the tension between divinity and secularity, between well-being and worldliness, and is conveyed to the modern domain in which representation is a necessary

entitlement, indeed, a vital manifestation: to appear and to demonstrate at the cost of being identified.

Surely, this self-consciousness, or consciousness of the self, was partly transmitted through colonialism. The history of European encroachment on Southeast Asia dates back to the early sixteenth century when the Portuguese reached Malacca (Tarling 1999). Much of the literature dwelling on the colonial project speaks of a vertical diffusion of government from the capital of empire to the province of colony. This paper pursues a lateral course through a transfer that is complicated by a process called intimation, in which the self is fleshed out not exclusively as a modern personage informed by a privatized, autotelic ethic, but as a selfless agency that is at once critical of the importuning of modernity and heartened by its emancipatory guarantees: a self emptied and a self fulfilled, a self deracinated and a self racialized.

I am exploring the formulation of intimation from transdisciplinary scholarship on intimacy, affiliation, and kinship, but it takes an affective turn here to the degree that art is an evocative gesture, a hint of something else beyond its appearance. I converse with work in the register of Cannell (1999) and Raffles (2002) on “intimate knowledge” as I grasp the nuances of the vernacular term *palabas* that subtends both the fantasy of performance and the interiority of disclosure. I also linger on the image as intrinsic to the aesthetic of the self and its multitude of transfigurations in certain singularities such as nation or culture. While there have been oft-cited assessments of the discourse of “Philippine nationalism” or the “Filipino nation” through, for instance, inquiries into novels or newspapers, heroes and revolutions, there has yet to be a thoroughgoing analysis of colonial visibility in plastic methods (prints, maps, catechism, paintings, sculptures) as an ascendant technology that forms the social, something that intertwines with the “exhibitionary complex” beginning in the late nineteenth century through the imperialist epoch of the first half of the twentieth century. In this conjuncture, Belting (1994) alerts us to the pivotal distinction between an “era of art” and an “era of images”: that we have been so taken by the former through art history that what could be more efficiently understood as “image” is placed under the broad continuum of art and its reifications.

INTIMATION

To intimate is to hint at, to leave a residue. It is oblique, indirect, tangential; the word at the same time refers to closeness and familiarity.

Intimacy and the state of being intimate or being an intimate speak of an “inclination outward,” a disposition to impart, disclose, and co-suffer within a passional (as in Christ’s Passion) economy (Cannell 1999); it is a reciprocity of selves, a tendency to share a “structure of feeling” (*saloobin*, or Filipino for sentiment) and to render it present or presentable (*palabas*, or performance). That portraiture in a colonial realm exhibits the face is a testimony to contact, a revelation, a confrontation with the public; it is a risk in the manner of exposure, the exposition of a thing or an object, a substance like personhood, before others who look and gaze. In a postcolonial setting, this process of “making present” implicates registers of the “new” and the “now,” the past and posterity, the mobility, and so the privilege, of the subject who navigates the path of progress, restive about destinations. Most of all, intimation is about image: image that moves, image that bewitches, just like a phantasm that puts national hero Jose Rizal’s Crisostomo Ibarra under a fleeting spell (*namalikhmata*, *naengkanto*, *namatanda*), when he sees Spain dissolving into Manila in *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) in an incident in a botanical garden, hothouse par excellence of the naturalization of species: “The sight of the botanical gardens drove away his gay reminiscences: the devil of comparisons placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe, in the countries where much effort and much gold are needed to make a leaf bloom or a bud open; and even more, to those of the colonies rich and well-tended, and all open to the public. Ibarra removed his gaze, looked right, and there saw old Manila, still surrounded by its walls and moats, like an anemic young woman in a dress from her grandmother’s best times” (Rizal 1996, 67). To intimate is to circulate and to convert, to become intimate with that which colonizes, that which accounts for “‘sensible’ life, for without an understanding of this no dominion can be secure” (Eagleton 1990, 15), and no representation by way of the self as an “aesthetic artifact” may be consummated.

While colonialism is pivotal in the turns in the career of self, it must be argued that the modality of appearance had inherited in Southeast Asian rituals of passage in which human likeness is reckoned. Neolithic ancestral statuary can be found in Vietnam and Indonesia such as the *tau tau* of the Toraja in the Lesser Sunda Islands in Sulawesi; these figures stir up the “hidden soul of the deceased” (Crystal 1994, 29-41) and are said to shepherd it to the funeral ceremony; they are later ensconced on a cliff close to the grottos where the bodies are interred. There are also anthropomorphic burial jars (5 B.C.E.–C.E. 225), the

lids of which are heads with faces as in those excavated in Maitum in Mindanao, Philippines. The latter are esteemed for their uniqueness, being “portraits of distinct individuals” (Dizon and Santiago 1996, 51) of varying states of emotion, from grief to contentment, and with well-defined eyes, ears, nose, mouth, arms, hands, and breasts. In fact, this assemblage of pottery, along with guardians of wood in rice granaries in the Northern Philippines, may be intuited as modes of being:

In their nature and mode of existence, jars are seen to be centers of vital power. They are not mere substance shaped in a certain way, rather they are like persons or subjects capable of action, even of transformation. They are sexed, can beget children, they often speak and are sometimes of quite mercurial disposition.

Among the Melanau of the Sarawak coast, a group that have been notable collectors of Chinese ceramics, there are many stories relating to the mutability of jars. Often jars begin life as an animal or a fruit and then only after some adventure do they become ceramics. (O’Connor 1983, 404)

The spirit, therefore, holds sway in this universe, so that even when novel appearances are inculcated in the seasons of colonialism, the thing that is its channel elicits either piety or iconoclasm, and however way it is miracular. The revolution in the Philippines against Spain yields a curious chronicle:

Taking the image painted on the canvas, they set it up as a target for their lances. One of them blasphemously said: “This, the fathers tell us, is the Mother of God; if this were the truth, our lances would draw blood, and since she sheds none, it is all trickery and deceit.” (Flores 1998, 7)

That the image is feared or treasured as a repository of spirit runs through the history of proselytization in Asia; this was most tangible in the *fumi-e* in Japan, objects of Catholic worship on which converts were asked to trample to prove their renunciation of the religion. Some of these images of Spanish and Netherlandish styles that trace their provenance to the Franciscan order may have been “imported from areas controlled by Spain, since the southern Netherlands were under Spanish domination during this period. Along with the Franciscans, they would have come to Japan from the Spanish-dominated Philippines or from other areas under Spanish control, whence the friars would have arrived” (Kaufmann 2004, 325).

The inquiry into these countenances has led scholars to draw rapport between the “potent dead” and “ancestors, saints, and heroes” in contemporary society: the dead is vivified in images that underwrite present political interactions (Chambert-Loir and Reid 2002). The idea of intimation partially derives from this intimacy between the dead and the living that forms a spiritual economy and a regime of potency. This paper is indebted to Cannell’s thoughtful study that links “power” and intimacy in a peninsula in the Philippines in which she discusses marriages, healing and the spirits, saints and the dead, and beauty contests within this relationship. It prompts her to conclude that “potency” is the “structure of intimate life” and informs the “conundrums of unequal relations for people of equal value” (Cannell 1999, 254). This is why intimacy and intimation are braided because these figurations of human action perform the social and the personal through “persuasion,” “reluctance,” “pity,” and “irresolution” and grapple with the hopes for equivalence and reciprocity among prospective intimates, among fellows who may cease to be others.

Two themes elaborate intimation: circulation and conversion. These are considered within a historiographic framework that favors laterality as a direction or logic of movement. The former pertains to the dispersal of colonialism, its “productive mistranslation” by post-colonies. The latter utters this idiosyncratic colonial speech intimately as constitutive of the postcolonial self. Here tangents may be drawn between this self and art, artist and nation, subject and property through the practice of portraiture, exceptionalities that merit autonomy and a political regime of values.

CIRCULATION

Circulation is cogently exemplified by how early painting in colonial Southeast Asia, which involved portraiture, was cultivated through Chinese artisanship as can be gleaned in examples in Manila and Java.

It is claimed that the earliest dated painting in the region is the religious portrait of the *Nuestra Señora del Pronto Socorro*, said to be an exclusive Chinese cult image, painted around 1580 and is now in the church of Binondo in Manila. Philippine art historian Santiago Pilar credits it to a Chinese artist (1994, 62-70). The Chinese were the first painters in the islands and were known for their skill in crafts and trades. Examples of art of Chinese handiwork can also be cited in Java as documented by Krauss, who identifies a print of a rhinoceros by an

unknown maker around 1650 and a sculpture of Joseph Colett, governor of Bengkulu/Sumatra, by Amoy Chinqua around 1716 (2005, 41-86).

This flow of Chinese artists and artifacts must be seen in the context of the Chinese trade paintings, which were distinguished from literati painting and purveyed principles of realism through the density and luster of oil and the doctrine of linear perspective, a mode of representation in which a flat surface achieves illusory depth through visual suggestions like recession and foreshortening. These works significantly influenced reverse glass painting, in which the image is painted on the reverse so that it is viewed from the unpainted side, that moved around Southeast Asia at the time. It is reported that in 1727, the ship British East Indiaman Prince Augustus had in its cargo four cases of pictures, some of which were copies of European prints in glass. In 1866, Chinese painters arrived in Semarang and Surabaya in Java. One of whom was Ho Qua from Hong Kong who painted the portrait of the Dutch Ecoma Verstege (1856). Another was Lam Qua, colleague of the principal British India artist George Chinnery, who did medical portraits of patients with large tumors (Conner 1999, 47-64). Indeed, the Chinese strain was pervasive; in Thailand, a portrait features King Mongkut in Chinese habiliment, and in the Philippines, there are existing portraits of Chinese families of similar vintage. If Chinese export portraiture were such a defining element in the discipline, its models, such as American portraits of the late eighteenth century and the English miniature portraits of the 1750s and 1760s (Conner 1999), could have been secreted in the local expression, which may not have so much taken after Spanish or Dutch prototypes as contracted in convergences at the port (Clark 1998). The oeuvre of the traveling illustrator Charles Wirgman who settled in Yokohama and did an oil painting of a lady from Manila in 1857 is a clue.

What is of interest to Southeast Asian art history in terms of the indirect movement of talent and technique within the region is that these Chinese trade paintings benefited from the talent of two Philippine portraitists, translators of western-style painting conscripted from the colony. As a result of the Treaty of Whampoa (1844), the French government dispatched Theodore de Lagrené as plenipotentiary minister to explore the textile commerce in China and its environs. In these excursions, the delegation found the need for artists to illustrate what they had observed. They got acquainted with Antonio Malantic of Manila and tasked him to paint the processes in producing abaca and pineapple textile in watercolor; these pieces are at the Bibliotheque

National in Paris (Salmon 2004, 57-76). In the same vein, the Chinese trade painter Tinq Qua copied the work of Justiniano Asuncion as averred by Crossman (1991). Malantic's and Asuncion's canon is descended from the pioneering efforts of Damian Domingo who did delicate miniature portraits in medallions and lockets, founded the first design school in Asia in the early 1820s, and crafted fine albums of Philippine costumes worn by an array of Philippine inhabitants of diverse social backgrounds; the latter were annotated by Spanish and English titles, indicating their overseas market and function as souvenirs or industrial catalogues. Jose Honorato Lozano likewise turned out albums of the Chinese style and developed the *letras y figuras* (letters and figures) genre in which names of donors, who sometimes appear in the work as in the case of Andres Sanchez, are spelled out through vignettes (Cariño 2002).

CONVERSION

The other theme is conversion. It emanates from conquest and animates the civilizing rationale of colonialism. Such conversion, however, presupposes levels of responses that retranscribe modernity as a quest for affinity not solely with an alienating modern system, but with a local moral world as well that recalibrates the values of being modern or, better still, acting modern. Three salient concepts come to the fore: the Thai *siwilai*, the Indonesian *kagunan*, and the Filipino *ilustrado*. These may, in fact, adumbrate a Southeast Asian engagement with the discourse of the aesthetic, which implies eighteenth-century theories of beauty, sensual experience, and art within the enchanting project of urbanization and urbanity, or alternatively, the urbane project of enchantment in which city, cosmopolis, capital, and postcolony converge in the promise of freedom and the state. These gestures of possession sublimated, for instance, in the obsession with the "property" of oil, which the Indian art critic Geeta Kapur, remarking on nineteenth-century Indian painter Ravi Varma, perceives as a "stake ... its exceptional plasticity promises a greater hold on reality ... conducive to simulating substances (flesh, cloth, jewels, gold, masonry, marble) and capturing atmospheric sensations (the glossiness of light, the translucent depth of shadows)" (Kapur 2000, 150).

The terrain of *siwilai* as a cognate of the philosophy of civilization is encompassing, from "etiquette to material progress, including new roads, electricity, new bureaucracy, courts and judicial system, law codes, dress codes, and white teeth" (Thongchai 2000, 529). A related term

is the Khmer *charoen*, which largely means cultivation and amelioration. According to Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul, “siwilai and the new meaning of charoen were part of the emerging temporal consciousness in which history, progress, and nostalgia were conceivable” (2000, 531). In this respect, photography had an indispensable role in the forays of the Thai monarchy in the nineteenth century to subscribe to the criteria of modernity as a means to be accepted in the international world of nation-states and to defend the kingdom as an imperial power in the region. One way of doing this was to represent themselves in portraiture to express self-reflexivity and liberal identity that modernity painstakingly requires. The earliest portrait of King Mongkut was realized with photography as the model. Later, the medium became a preferred mode of making the Chakri monarchy palpable and ubiquitous within the royal sphere and in the company of other sovereigns, to say nothing yet of the everyday public culture of the Thais (Sakda 1992; Peleggi 2002; Clark 1994), then as it is in contemporary time.

The King in Thailand was believed to be “participating in divinity; hence the need for images in state ceremonies and Brahminical rites. Idealized religious images in royal regalia were made to remind worshippers of the late monarchs, and the images became sanctified in response to the belief that the spirits remained in them” (Apinan 1992, 9). King Mongkut severed this tradition by letting himself be photographed, presumably by Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix who had ordered a Daguerre camera from Paris. In 1863, the first sculpture of King Mongkut was made by Emile-Francois Chartrousse from a photograph; the King was dissatisfied with it and asked Luang Theprojana to produce another version, this time from life, which was completed in 1868. This was a marked shift in the royal attitude toward photography and modernity that contrived “a secular image intended to commemorate a living king” (Apinan 1992, 8). This outlook was sustained by the successor King Chulalongkorn (reigned from 1868 to 1910), who commissioned the Italian artist Eduardo Gelli to paint the group portrait titled *Royal Family* (1899) to stress perhaps the importance of the family as a metaphor of nation, thus perpetuating a royalist-nationalist ideology. This was all in cadence with how the Siamese monarchy, partaking of the agency of the human, “demythologized” (Cary 2000, 122-42) itself through the mystification of photography and other devices of collective presentation: it wanted to be seen in the congregation of its subjects. It is, therefore, not unusual for King Chulalongkorn to set up a “museum” in the palace that was called the *Prabas Phiphitaphan*, a term pertaining to a “tour of various



Fig. 2. Manit Sriwanichpoom, pictures of the Thai monarch being sold on the street.

materials” (Cary 2000, 132). With this venture, authenticity is effectively reworked as tradition, which inscribes the motivation of the modernizing subject to be conscious of history and to foreground complicities in its facture and consumption in image.

The lineage of Western-style painting in Thailand may have been signaled by Khrua In Kong, a monk-painter in the courts of Kings Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, who painted an allegoric Dharma guided by linear perspective and peopled by Americans:

Men are dressed in tight white trousers and navy blue or black shirts, with dark blue caps. Soldiers are shown in white trousers and dark blue shirts with whitened crossed webbing across their backs. Women are dressed in hoop, crinoline skirts of different light colors such as blue, pink and light red. (Wiyada 1979, 128)

While never been to the west, Khrua In Kong might have accessed the imagery through a collection of scenic photographs of America (Washington D.C. and New York) that President Pierce had gifted King Mongkut. The printed pictures of other countries might have gone around Thailand at a time when it was opening itself to the larger world.

In Indonesia, the Javanese classical lexicon would offer *kagunan* to converse with the need to identify art and the humanities in the “western” sense and posit distinction from the ethnic imagination that had not demanded it. According to Javanalogist Ronggowarsito, it is an index of the “desire to be acknowledged,” and as such he would inflect it with moral good. When the national language was later fixed around Indonesian, *kagunan* gave way to *seni*, which denotes the aspect of skill, meticulousness, dedication to detail (Supangkat 2005). Raden Saleh may have embodied the imperative of *kagunan*, which like *siwilai* is a translocal trope of colonial intimation, to cross lapses in the hegemonic transcript. Saleh was the first Javanese native to study art in Europe; he received Dutch, Prussian, and Austrian decorations and spoke Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Dutch, German, French, and English. He pursued a reputable career in Holland and Germany, and was accused of being the leader of the nativist Ratu Adil campaign against the Dutch. The artist’s painting *The Arrest of Diponegoro* (1858), a homage to the valor of a Javanese prince who steered the five-year Java War, exemplifies how his persona as an immigrant would be repatriated in portraiture as can be discerned in how he would intimate his face and thus his person in a historical painting, performing the role of a witness in a revisionist depiction of a critical phase in the local struggle against colonialism; furthermore, he is thought to have deliberately exaggerated the heads of the Dutch to allegedly travesty their disfigured designs.

Diponegoro was a prince of Yogyakarta who rebelled against his family, specifically Humongkubowono V and his Dutch benefactors. He waged a war from 1825 to 1830, inventing himself as an Islamic stalwart and a revivalist of authentic Javanese values. His arrest by Gen. Henrik Merkus de Kock was a paean to Dutch colonial hegemony and was correspondingly characterized in the official version with the appropriate title *Subjugation of Diponegoro* by the Dutch artist J. W. Pieneman in 1830:

In the painting, Javanese men followers surround their imam and women kneel. Dutch soldiers issue from the house of Holland’s representative; the Dutch flag flies over it. Lances surrendered by Diponegro’s retainers lie in the foreground. At the top of the steps stands de Kock pointing to the coach that is to drive Diponegoro away into exile. (Taylor 2003, 235)

Saleh takes a different approach:

In Raden Saleh’s version Diponegoro is not pointed out of his country, but somewhat helplessly invited by de Kock to enter the waiting coach. The

Dutchman Pineman introduces a rather sharp wind from the west (common in Holland) that gives the Dutch flag a very dynamic appearance. In Raden Saleh's work the atmosphere is absolutely quiet. The universe holds its breath, no leaf and certainly no flag is moving. Raden Saleh has "forgotten" the Dutch tricolor altogether. (Krauss 2004, 8)

It must be mentioned that some of Saleh's relatives supported Diponegoro's cause, which was a foundational instance of Indonesian nationalism; at the same time, the painter, appointed royal artist, lent his talent in immortalizing Dutch governors-general in portraiture, juxtaposing them with symbols of progress and authority: Herman Willem Daendels with the Great Post Road and Johannes van den Borch with the bust of King William, and Jean Chretien Baud with the palace at Buitenzorg, for instance. His sojourn in Europe began in 1829 when he went to the Netherlands and moved on to Germany (1839) and France (1845). Having said this, his decision to paint Diponegoro may well have been emancipatory, a liberation from the condescension of mentors that he could not accomplish the sophisticated desiderata of historical painting (Krauss 2004). His life and art confounded each other, like his residence in both cultures as he himself has written: "Two sides, opposite to each other ... cast their magic spell over my soul. There the paradise of my childhood in the bright sunlight, washed by the Indian Ocean, where my beloved ones live and there the ashes of my ancestors rest. Here Europe's luckiest countries, where the arts, sciences and educational values shine like diamond jewellery, to where the yearning of my youth finally brought me; where I was lucky enough to find friends within the noblest circles, friends who replaced father, mother, brothers and sisters" (Krauss 2004, 2). The here and there of Europe and Indonesia, the mystical fortune of having left and arrived, of declaring that "I came to Europe as a true Javanese and I returned to Java as a real German" (Krauss 2004, 3), may have thrilled and bedeviled him, an enigma that resonates when Saleh himself later became somewhat cultic, his charisma somehow talismanic in his lifetime and after his death:

When a local Bekasi organized in 1869 a rebellion against the colonial system, he didn't claim that he was the coming Ratu Adil of Madhi. He claimed that he was Raden Saleh in order to rally a large crowd against the Dutch. And even in a much later rebellion, 1924 in Tangerang, one of the leading figures, Ibu Melati, claimed that in her youth she had been a concubine of Raden Saleh and as such was carrying some of his sexual and magic potential in her. (Krauss 2004, 12)

While there was this disruption by way of the will of an already cross-cultural artist like Raden Saleh, there was also the scheme to draft a continuity between the world of Indonesia before the Dutch and the world of Indonesia as the Netherlands Indies. Kassian Cephas, a Javanese painter and photographer, was at the forefront of this endeavor, taking pictures for Sultan Hawengkubuwana VII of Yogyakarta since 1871 and for the Union for Archaeology, Geography, Language and Ethnography of Yogyakarta since 1885. His practice tended to stress the integrity of the indigenous palace culture along with its institutional authority in light of colonial ascendancy, on the one hand, and the mission of a European power, in the mode of the French agenda in Indochina (Wright 1991), to conserve a patrimony it supposedly seeks to cherish as a surviving tradition and not to pillage, on the other. Cephas, who served as a mediator between Indonesians and their colonial masters, took photographs of royalty, Hindu-Javanese dances, the temples of Prambanan and Borobodur, the *wayang beber* (a mode of puppet theater in Indonesia in which a storyteller chants the tale as he unfurls the scroll of bark paper to reveal the sequence of illustrations), and Javanese women as if these were coherent narratives of exotic quotidian life (Knapp 1991). In the Philippines, this type of ethnographic photography came by way of the *Census of the Philippine Islands*, conducted from 1903 to 1905, with groundwork prepared by the Philippine Commissions of 1899 and 1900 and ethnological surveys helmed by anthropologists David Barrows, Dean C. Worcester, and Albert Jenks between 1900 and 1905. Filipinos were collated as portraits and classified as wild or civilized and primed for refinement, so that, according to the document, “the tribal distinctions which now exist will gradually disappear and the Filipino will become a numerous and homogeneous English-speaking race, exceeding in intelligence and capacity all other people of the tropics” (Rafael 2000, 32).

The discourse of enlightenment in the Philippine resistance against Spanish colonization was carried through by the education of an emerging elite in Manila and Europe (Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Rome) and the methods by which they imbibed liberal virtues preconditional to their entreaty for reforms and the integration of the country with Spain in the late nineteenth century; the *ilustrado* were precursors to the Filipino, a rubric previously reserved to the *creoles*, or Spaniards born in the colony. They internalized themselves as the enlightened, thus the term *ilustrado*, from the Spanish verb *ilustrar* that presumes an endowment of reason and light, which is *luz* and *lumiere* in Europe and *liwanag*



Fig. 3. Guillermo Tolentino, *Filipinos Ilustres*, circa 1911.

among the common people in the archipelago: to clarify, explain, elucidate, to illumine and limn as in the adornment of art as an aspect of illustration. It is related as well to terms like *ilustre* or illustrious; *ilustrar* is to make illustrious and the *ilustrado* is learned, erudite, well-traveled, (en)titled, indeed cultured; the *ilustrado* furthermore is male and at home in the cosmopolis like Paris. The gravitas of the *ilustrado* rested on education, one of the markers of being elite that counted wealth, ethnic pedigree, and office. In the late nineteenth century, the *ilustrado* embraced a landed aristocracy and an urban-based middle class working in the colonial bureaucracy and commerce (Cullinane 2003). Incidentally, prominent nineteenth-century portraitists in the Philippines, like Juan Arzeo and Severino Flavier Pablo, were in this coterie, too, being *gobemadorcillos* (native magistrates) of the Paco district in Manila. Interestingly, both Arzeo and Pablo did portraits of the clergy, and the former, rare portraits of Catholic martyrs in Asia in the throes of immolation.

A nuanced nexus in this epiphany of the *ilustrado* finds an emblem in the work of Simon Flores whose *Portrait of the Quiason-Henson Family* (ca 1880) attests to the imaginary of the family as the nation presided over by the contra-clerical, though not necessarily anti-Spanish, educated



Fig. 4. Simon Flores, *Portrait of the Quiason-Henson Family*, circa 1880.

class, with the *indios bravos* or brave natives, as the expatriates styled themselves, posturing as vanguard. This mode of portraiture, which delineates the art world as decidedly secular, condenses two temperaments in the rhetoric of postcolonial dissidence: the folk as represented by Esteban Villanueva's *Basi Revolt* (1821), which documents in homegrown flourish the rebellion of natives against the Spanish monopoly of sugarcane wine, and the elite as borne out by Juan Luna's academic corpus; the latter includes the celebrated *Spoliarium*, on



Fig. 5. Esteban Villanueva, detail from *Basi Revolt*, 1821.

which was conferred the First Gold Medal at the 1884 Madrid Exposition. Like Saleh, Luna as *ilustrado*, a genius seeking equality to the universal patrimony of art, felt kinship with Hispania, the Roman name of colonial Spain, as etched in his self-portraits in poses of painting and fencing. That said, he might have also developed estrangement from *madre España* through allegory. His confreres, in a toast to the victor of 1884, interpreted *Spoliarium* as portraying the condition of the Philippines in the hands of Spain, from which can be heard, according to an ecstatic Jose Rizal, the “tumult of the multitude,

the shouting of the slaves, the metallic creaking of the armor of the corpses, the sobs of the bereaved, the murmurs of prayer ...” It was also Rizal who believed that the ilustrado was the “brains of the nation” and later its “whole nervous system” (Cullinane 2003); still and all, the ilustrado was an outsider, tainted by the blood of an inferior race and humbled by colonial tutelage.

Therefore, the juxtaposition of Eduardo Gelli’s *The Royal Family* with Simon Flores’s *Portrait of the Quaison-Henson Family* is germane; both envisage a nation in the works through the monarchy and the cacique. The Quiason-Henson portrait presents a “family” as patron: a couple and two siblings. The representation of the family as a unit connotes a certain stability and comfort. Such security largely stems from the power relations that uphold traditional roles of “father,” “mother,” and “children” and how these roles come to make a “family.” The family is not only to be apprehended as kinship based on blood, but also as a constellation of social ties. To reflect on this portrayal of the family is to reflect on the social system that allows this kind of family, obviously of the ilustrado kind, to prosper.

The Quiason portrait at first glimpse looks staid and uninteresting. But if we look more attentively, we will realize that Flores carves a pictorial space that demarcates spheres. For instance, it is apparent that the family is enclosed within domestic parameters, framed by the architecture of the house. The latter implicates a window that alludes to an extensity outside, alerting viewers to a sight beyond the boundary, or at least an intimation of this possibility. This inside/outside revelation, as implied by a curtain that acts like a component of a proscenium of this colonial theater, refers to another distinction: the foreground and the background. And if we are to believe research on linear perspective, this plastic visualization of spatial discrimination allegorizes the formation of a subject that is able to name the self in relation to the other (Damish 1994). Such a making of the subject is also largely facilitated by a point of view, as referenced by the stagelike choreography of the stance, which according to Bal, in her study of contemporary art in relation to the baroque, symptomatizes modernity: “During the Baroque, the awareness of point of view led, for the first time in Western history, to something we now call self-reflection, a self-consciousness of the human individual” (1999, 28). These ruminations deserve further investigation, most pertinently because the said painting and Eduardo Gelli’s had been meant for a cavernous stone house in colonial Manila or a salon perhaps in the palace in



Fig. 6. Juan Luna, *Spoliarium*, 1824.

Bangkok, a radiation and concentration of power in a private preserve that interiorizes a public virtually seeking an audience.

REPATRIATION

The theme of conversion relates with circulation if positioned within the colonial traffic across Southeast Asia because of the series of mediations that refunctions coloniality and anticipates a postcolonial subjectivity by virtue of exposure to other, eccentric modernities.

In August 1896, Thai King Chulalongkorn toured Java and Singapore for three months, an expedition that scholar Maurizio Peleggi deems “an occasion for rehearsing on the colonial stage in preparation for the visit to Europe the following year” (2002, 603). This edgewise transit ratifies the thesis of horizontal liaison within Southeast Asia and holds out a telling insight. The King was quoted to have said upon his arrival in Java: “I was surrounded by the crowd, but they retreated as I proceeded. It is an advantage for me to wear Western dress because the locals fear Europeans” (Peleggi 2002, 603).

Another case is a certain L.R. Teas, said to be a Spanish painter residing in Manila, who did a painting of King Mongkut (Apinan 2002). Here we sort out evidence of colonialism not issuing from the metropolis, but mediated by the satellite. This also calls to mind the account that Philippine musicians were invited to Cambodia after King Norodom had been impressed by their musical skills in his visit to Manila in 1872. In the Palace in Phnom Penh, they taught modern music, influenced Cambodian classical dance, and enriched the repertoire of the Royal Ballet with the “coconut dance” (Jeldres and Somkid 1999).

The more prominent paradigm of this type of transfer was the career of Basuki Abdullah, an Indonesian painter who served as a court painter not only of kings, but also of potentates of nation-states in Southeast Asia. Basuki, son of a naturalist painter and reared in the Beautiful Indies idyllic school, received commissions to execute flattering portraits of patrons like Indonesian despots Sukarno and Suharto, the Thai Chakri luminaries, and Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos of the Philippines. His career, which found its peak in the early twentieth century, rounds out the ideology of portraiture as an idiom of representation, veritably the cult of face, in postcolonies that have mutated into free-market economies, Third World dictatorships, and dysfunctional democracies.

It is uncanny that while portraiture affirms a certain measure of mastery of self, it also unveils the frailty of this modern constitution.



Fig. 7. Basuki Abdullah and Imelda Marcos, 1977.

Modern figures Raden Saleh and Juan Luna, heralded as the First Modern Indonesian Man and the First Filipino, respectively, who had become polytropic though inadequate interlocutors of colonialism, were torn and tortured souls in their twilight years. And resonant here is the thesis of intimacy as an alternative theory of self that considers the constraints of colonality in its (per)formation and yet does not

entirely subscribe to the premise of syncretism and hybridity, which tends to diminish it within iterations of particularity. Intimation strives to carve out an idiosyncrasy of self that makes itself known by mediating the techniques that threaten its autonomy, thus instantiating its form as critical precisely because it is, to venture into a neologism, intimative of the struggle.

The practices and art works that have been set out in this discussion intimate, and are mindful of, the embodiments of agents that are vexed by this intimation, so that the self may finally break through either the antinomy of self and other or the plenitude of selfhood. In the lives of portraits and portraitists, the self loses valence in the travail to reclaim, repossess, and return (*pag-angkin*, *pagbabalik-loob*, *pagbalos*), only to redeem the loss through the expectant experience of repatriation, or perhaps, extradition: the self is recalled from a site of estrangement to a site of inalienability that is at once local and universal. There is selflessness to the degree that the constitution of subjectivity is effected by indirection (reception is circuitous, sideways, intractable) and that the constitution itself is revised (form is potentially allegorical and as such is transposed and intersubjective). The subject is incommensurate, lacking in the equivalent stature of humanity but nevertheless assumes human form regardless how errant, and so intimates—portrays and faces—a world; in doing so, it enacts how it is to be in a world. In charting such theoretical path, this paper tries to make a contribution in forging a language of affective critique that reengages postcolonial theory and traverses the distance between art history and aesthetics (Elkins 2006). It does this by disentangling the duality between the concept of representation and the intuition of presence, between icon making and animism, and by abiding by the vast enigma of incarnation. This is where art history is re-marked or made re-markable, its pedagogy and transmission relearned as art travels and inhabits, circulates and converts, and history becomes “real.” The face of the modern becomes less and less frontal but more and more “personal” and intersubjective, farther from the center and stranger, more unfamiliar to those who had condensed it in portraiture that is supposed to immortalize and capture. Still, it is wondrous in its ability to master the lesson of representation even as it is at once eluded by its assurances of equality and quickened by the intimation and intimacy of equivalence.

Raden Saleh, who came back to his homeland in 1850, felt he was lost between Europe and Indonesia and “died an almost petrified and embittered man, who had not found his place, neither within the native

Javanese nor within the Dutch colonial society” (Krauss 1995). He divorced his Eurasian wife to marry a woman related to the sultan of Yogyakarta; he retreated to a European Gothic mansion, founded an art museum and zoological garden, and sifted through paleontological remains (Krauss 2004), as if to prove that he did not merit the prejudice. Luna, who returned to his lamented origin in 1894, for his part killed his wife, whom he had suspected of infidelity, in a fit of rage in Paris (Pilar 1980). He was probably exasperated by the specter of discrimination and alterity: of being denied the Prize of Honor in Spain because he was a mere colonial and of being constantly reminded in his very household of his native stature in relation to his beloved Paz Pardo de Tavera, who was an affluent mestiza (Baluyut 1997). The court acquitted him, taking into account his defense that the deed was a crime of passion inflamed by adultery and attributed his temper to the nature of his volatile, if not “savage” race. Melancholy and *amuk*, the Malay argot for berserk nurtured in the annals of colonial psychiatry, may at last carve into sharper relief the profile of the cherished visage of modernity’s pretenses to discipline and completion. ❀

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