Incongruity, Mathematics, and Humor in Joaquinesquerie

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> The logical pattern of the creative process is the same in all three cases
> [art, science, and humor]: it consists in the discovery of hidden simi-
> larities. But the emotional climate is different.
> —Arthur Koestler (1964)

Seven brothers named a baby girl they found in a dump "Blanca
Nieve" because she was as white as snow. When Blanca turned thir-
teen, a TV show proclaimed her "National Princess of Song." The
seven brothers established a movie company for her and called it
"Seven Dwarfs." Blanca's movies became instant hits, and the kids
on the street started to sing a jingle that goes:

Says the mirror
On every wall
Blanca is
the fairest [one] of all

Naturally, the top movie queen, Eva d'Eden, sought to destroy
Blanca, and the story proceeds and ends in a fashion we have heard
before.

This story, Nick Joaquin's version of "Snow White and the Seven
Dwarfs," is typical of others in *Joaquinesquerie: Myth a la mod* (1983).
In the same story, Joaquin uses motifs from "Sleeping Beauty," thus
the title, "The Mystery Sleeper of Balite Drive." Other stories con-
tain elements from "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast," "Hansel
and Gretel," "The Prince and the Pauper," "The Pied Piper of Hame-
lin," from heavily Spanish-influenced Philippine metrical romances
like "Don Juan Tiñoso," "Bernardo Carpio," "The Adarna Bird," from
Filipino folktales such as "Juan Tamad," "Sarimanok," and many
others. Joaquin's intent is revealed by the title he chose for his book.[1]
Whatever is foreign, Joaquin intends to make native here. What is

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already Filipino, he makes "Joaquinesque" (e.g., "Juan Tiñoso" to "Johnny Tiñoso").

Oloroso (1967, 774) has noted Joaquin's peculiar characteristic of integrating "old myths and legends into new literary creations." Three noteworthy examples she did not mention are the "mirror on the wall" found in "May Day Eve" (*Tropical gothic*, and also in "The Mystery Sleeper of Balite Drive," *Joaquinesquerie*), the Adarna Bird theme in "The Mass of St. Sylvestre"[2] (*Tropical gothic*, and also in "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna," *Joaquinesquerie*), and the *diwata* motif[3] in "Doña Jeronima" (*Tropical gothic*, and also in "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," *Joaquinesquerie*). *Joaquinesquerie*, however, differs from *Tropical gothic* (1972) in degree and frequency. It is Joaquin's remolding of old tales that binds the stories in *Joaquinesquerie* into one organic whole.

Moreover, those who may have been conditioned to Joaquin's so-called "lush" writing style (Furay 1953, 152) are bound to be surprised. Hardly do we see an instance of those notoriously "long, kilometric sentences that pile word upon word and image upon image in almost breathless succession" (Roseburg 1966, 143).

How *Joaquinesquerie* (1983) differs from a previous collection like *Tropical gothic* (1972) can actually be quantified. Drawn from the Joaquinesquerie and the *Tropical gothic* corpora, Figure 1 shows unmistakably that the rate at which Joaquin uses new words in his stories in *Tropical gothic* is much higher than that in *Joaquinesquerie*. Vocabulary richness is sometimes used as an indicator of a writer's maturity. Because the stories in Joaquinesquerie are less vocabulary-rich, however much more recent (the gap in terms of the time of writing is in decades), than those in *Tropical gothic*, we come to understand that Joaquin's change in his manner of writing in *Joaquinesquerie* is deliberate.

What has Joaquin achieved in choosing to be different in *Joaquinesquerie*. Why does he write in a manner so drastically simple? What has he produced in a collection that localizes Western fairy tales and provides his own versions of Filipino folktales? Joaquin may have intended *Joaquinesquerie* to be in large part a collection of humorous stories to be read by a wider public. We hypothesize then that humor may be Joaquin's one-shot reason for being different in *Joaquinesquerie*. To check this hypothesis, we need to look into those passages that evoke a faint smile, a broad grin, if not uninhibited laughter. In other words, we need to examine Joaquin's humor, particularly the devices he uses to generate it.
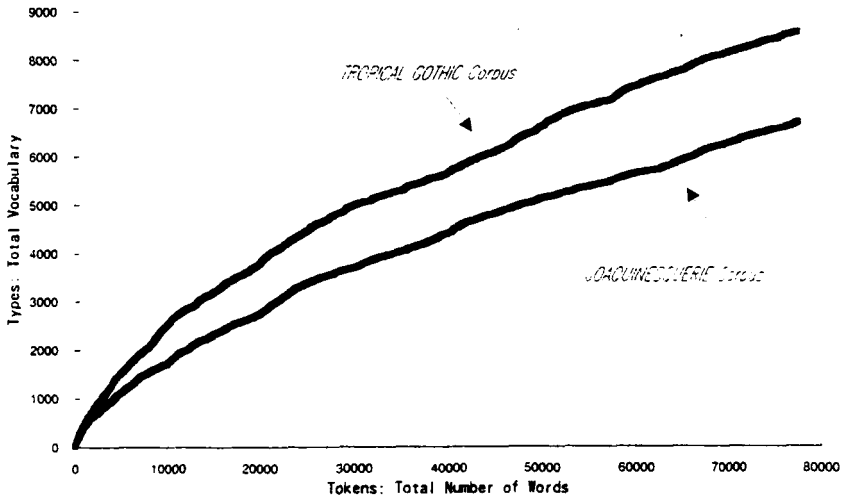
Figure 1. Vocabulary richness in the *Tropical gothic* and the *Joaquinesquerie* corpora.

Because much has been said about him, in this article we will try to look at Joaquin from a fresh, new angle: the angle of mathematics. Though seldom heard of in literary studies, the use of mathematics in viewing his humor can reveal equally interesting and quite original results. Some results, however, cannot but confirm observations of previous critics, a phenomenon that only implies that despite the drastic change in style (which we have expressed in both qualitative and quantitative terms), *Joaquinesquerie* has Joaquin's fingerprints.

Theories of Humor

A bestseller by Umberto Eco (1980), *The name of the rose*[4] illustrates the classic theory of humor. As the novel unfolds, readers come to understand that the cause of the seven deaths which occurred in

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seven days in the 14th-century Benedictine abbey is no diabolic witchery but a mere banned book, a book removed from the library because it made people laugh.

It all started with Plato who in his *Republic* asserted that in the education of the young Guardians of the ideal state, laughter should be avoided. Aristotle in *Poetics* enunciated this classic view well: "Comedy . . . is a representation of inferior people. . . , the laughable is a species of the base or ugly." The same understanding is echoed by Cicero in *On the Orator*: "The seat and province of the laughable . . . lies in a kind of offensiveness and deformity. . . ." Many centuries later, Thomas Hobbes, put into stronger form the *superiority theory of humor* initiated by the classical Greeks. In *Leviathan* (1651, 27), he wrote: "*Sudden glory*, is the passion that maketh those *Grimaces* called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."

A century later, the Scottish poet and philosopher James Beattie (1776, 602), largely in reaction to Hobbes, wrote in clear language what was to be called the *incongruity theory of humor*: "Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them." William Hazlitt (1819, 7) agreed: "The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the disconnecting [of] one idea from another, or the jostling of one feeling against another." In Immanuel Kant's (1790, 199) famous formulation, laughter "is an affectation arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing."

The incongruity theory has had a good following. From the perspective of their own disciplines, a number of writers and philosophers, not to exclude psychologists like Sigmund Freud, have contributed significantly to this theory. The superiority theory explains only one species of humor. No doubt, humor goes beyond the domain of the base and ignoble. In fact, *Reader's Digest* weekly insists that it is "the best medicine."

Another convert of the incongruity theory, John Allen Paulos, author of *Mathematics and Humor* (1980), endeavored to investigate the mathematical properties of humor. "Incongruity, [however,]" he qualifies, "is not . . . a sufficient condition for humor. . . ."; echoing

Koestler, he adds "an appropriate emotional climate" (pp. 9–10) as the other necessary condition. A mathematician's attempt at exploring the mathematical structure of humor may, at first glance, strike some people as odd and incongruous (and, given the appropriate emotional climate, may be humorous). If we recall, however, it was a mathematician who wrote *Alice in Wonderland*, a classic example of English humor. There can be no coincidence here, as, in Paulos's (1980, 11) words, mathematics and humor do converge in their use of "logic, pattern, rules, structure . . . although of course the emphasis is different in the two." In particular, good jokes and good mathematical proofs both have these qualities: "cleverness and economy, playfulness, combinatorial ingenuity, and logic. . . ." (1980, 14)

A Predominant Structure of Joaquin's Humor

Any student of mathematics has used the so-called axiomatic method, its fundamental method. Starting with primitive (i.e., undefined) terms and axioms (i.e., statements accepted without proof), he goes on deductively to prove certain statements called theorems. Some students, however, may not realize that there are different interpretations for a given set of axioms. A statement S that is true in one model of the axioms can be false in another. In such a case, S is called an *independent statement* which can be neither proved nor disproved from the axioms. A favorite example is the parallel postulate which is true in Euclidean geometry but false in such non-Euclidean geometries as hyperbolic and elliptic geometries.[5] It took several hundreds of years to break the tradition of Euclidean geometry. Euclid developed his geometry as early as 300 B.C.; non-Euclidean geometries did not emerge until the 19th Century.

What does this discussion have to do with humor? Paulos (1980, 24) writes that

> . . . [a]xiom systems and their interpretations or models provide a formal analogue for a certain sort of incongruity, namely that resulting from a statement or story having two different and incongruous interpretations.
>
> The formal structure of such stories or jokes is as follows. Joke-teller: "In what model are axioms 1, 2, and 3 true?" Listener: "In model M." Joke-teller: "No, in model N."

Joaquin's humor can be said to follow a similar structure:

> Joke-teller: "In what story do you see a girl who was treated like a slave by her stepmother and stepsisters, and who, with the help of her fairy godmother, danced with the richest and handsomest person in the land, but had to leave the dance floor before the last stroke of midnight?"
> Listener: "Cinderella."
> Joke-teller: "The Amazing History of Elang Uling."

One of Joaquin's achievements (some people call it a deficiency in originality) in *Joaquinesquerie* is that by reshaping Western folktales, he accommodates the inclusion of Filipino cultural practices, norms, and cliches, making his stories, in spite of their foreign origins, exude a distinct Filipino flavor. Filipino folktales are not spared, either, from the same conscious intent to refashion traditional tales. In *Joaquinesquerie*, readers witness a Joaquin-conceived teamwork between two Filipino folktale characters, the Adarna Bird and the Sarimanok. They encounter a Juan Tamad who is at once the "ugliest, stupidest, laziest, most worthless boy in the land." They read of a split woman who is to become the country's first astronaut. Speaking of the story, "Doña Jeronima," in *Tropical gothic*, Oloroso (1967, 776) expresses what Joaquin achieves in retelling traditional tales: "[he] has invested his version of it with a significance and a glowing kind of truth that make it an utterly different story and one relevant to our times." One achievement, which is less clearly demonstrated in previous collections than in this one, remains to be mentioned: in retouching popular tales, Joaquin achieves humor. And as mentioned, his humor has a structure dominant enough to be noticed. By using "independent statements" true to the original but not to his version, he is able to reduce, in Kantian terms, "strained expectation" to frustration, thereby producing his desired effect. In more concrete language, what he does is recount an entire story from beginning to end with slight variations (e.g., "The Amazing History of Elang Uling"), provide a sequel to a story (e.g., "The Hamiling Mystery"), combine two or more stories into one (e.g., "Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty"), and so on. Readers, particularly of popular literature, who prefer stories with which they can easily identify themselves—of course not without little twists here and there—will no doubt find entertainment here, especially because the stories not only illustrate familiar motifs acted out by familiar characters but also employ familiar plots situated in familiar settings.

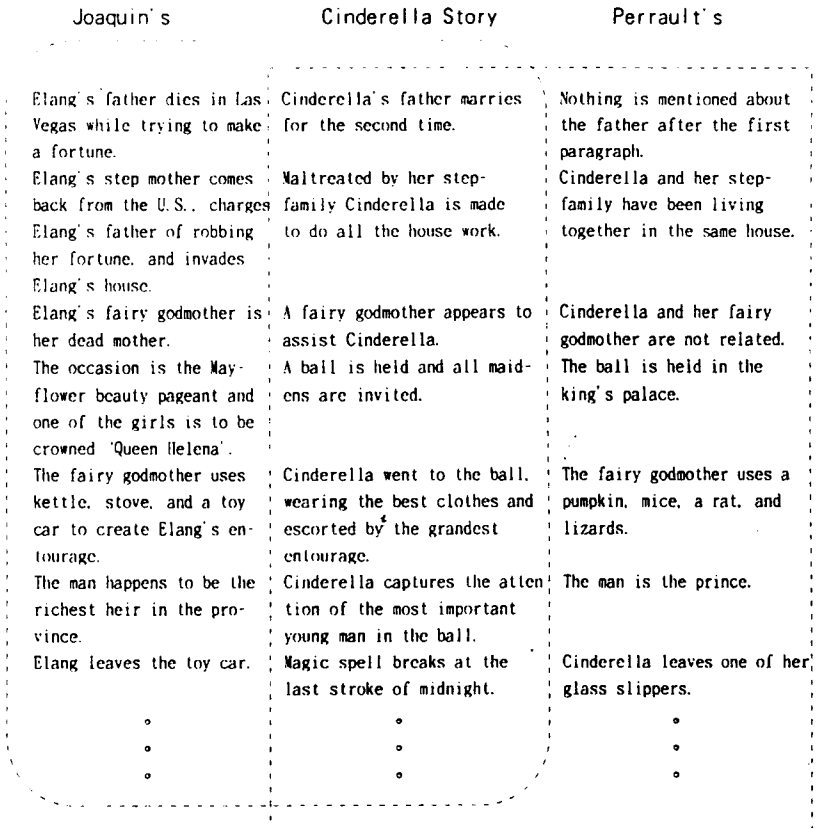| Joaquin's	Cinderella Story	Perrault's
Elang's father dies in Las Vegas while trying to make a fortune.	Cinderella's father marries for the second time.	Nothing is mentioned about the father after the first paragraph.
Elang's step mother comes back from the U.S., charges Elang's father of robbing her fortune. and invades Elang's house.	Maltreated by her step-family Cinderella is made to do all the house work.	Cinderella and her step-family have been living together in the same house.
Elang's fairy godmother is her dead mother.	A fairy godmother appears to assist Cinderella.	Cinderella and her fairy godmother are not related.
The occasion is the Mayflower beauty pageant and one of the girls is to be crowned 'Queen Helena'.	A ball is held and all maidens are invited.	The ball is held in the king's palace.
The fairy godmother uses kettle. stove. and a toy car to create Elang's entourage.	Cinderella went to the ball. wearing the best clothes and escorted by the grandest entourage.	The fairy godmother uses a pumpkin, mice, a rat, and lizards.
The man happens to be the richest heir in the province.	Cinderella captures the attention of the most important young man in the ball.	The man is the prince.
Elang leaves the toy car.	Magic spell breaks at the last stroke of midnight.	Cinderella leaves one of her glass slippers.
o	o	o
o	o	o
o	o	o

Figure 2. A Venn diagram of Perrault and Joaquin's Cinderella stories.

Just as non-Euclidean geometries try to reinterpret geometry to come up with something different from the traditional geometry of Euclid,[6] Joaquin in *Joaquinesquerie* attempts a retelling of traditional folktales in a manner that can be called his. Only "the emotional climate is different," as Koestler (1964) puts it. To Joaquin's advantage, the climate for humor is in his favor.

Now that we have established a predominant structure of Joaquin's humor, our next task is to pick up the other humor devices that add walls and furnishings to the erected skeleton. In doing this, we will continue using a mathematical perspective.

Switching Levels as a Humor Device

A statement within the axiom system being studied is *object-level;* a statement about the axiom system or about the object-level statements within it is *metalevel.*[7] Switching between object-level and metalevel can also be used to generate humor. It is a common practice among comedians, for example, to make "a comment (a meta-statement) on jokes that fail, thereby sometimes salvaging a joke" (Paulos 1980, 48). "The chorus in classical Greek theater (along with its various descendants and offshoots through the Middle Ages, Shakespeare, etc.) was a kind of institutionalized commentator (metalevel) that also played an essential part on the object level of the play" (p. 49). Joaquin does not hesitate to use this technique. A chorus is found in ten out of fifteen of his stories.

"There are, of course, other senses of level, important to the meaning of a statement, that have nothing to do with [the] distinction" between object-level and metalevel, Paulos (1980, 49) continues. As far as Joaquin's stories are concerned, this remark can refer to switching between the literal and the figurative levels.

In the story, "Gotita de Dragon," a used-to-be renowned fashion designer named Mondrian de Manila bragged, ". . . crowded is my head like a vast wardrobe where hang clothes of fabulous beauty." Later in the story, Gotita the lizard is seen creeping into Mondrian's ear, going inside his head. "Within was indeed a vast wardrobe, but in miniature, hung with frocks and gowns and ternos of unearthly loveliness."

Another story also worth mentioning, "Going to Jerusalem," moves as a result of the characters' deep wish to literally realize what was originally meant to be only figurative. Following a former altar boy's unsophisticated advice that they could go to Jerusalem if they were good children, Menchu, Pedring, and Pablito, journeyed to where their parents were, i.e., Jerusalem, using the boat that had sailed into their swimming pool. Joaquin makes them actually reach their destination. The Jerusalem they found was, as Menchu had expected, "a green hill aglint with lilies and sunrise." Much of the humor here is, however, killed by Joaquin's religious didacticism, a preoccupation with teaching the Biblical lesson that one necessarily has to give up everything one owns in order to enter the Kingdom. Nevertheless, some readers may still be amused in seeing what Joaquin does with his story in order to make both literal and figu-

rative meanings of "Jerusalem" possible, such as making a life-size boat stray into a children's pool.

Though Paulos (1980) does not single out switching between literal and nonliteral levels as a humor device, in a later book he implies it. Speaking of a peculiar characteristic of mathematicians, he writes (Paulos 1988, 103):

> Mathematicians, it may be noted, have a characteristic sense of humor which may be a result of their training. They have a tendency to take expressions literally, and this literal interpretation is often incongruous with the standard one and therefore comical.

Joaquin could have written a story about mathematicians as well.

The Humorous as a Mathematical Complement

The operation of complementation in mathematics is the process of obtaining elements that do not belong to a given collection. What is obtained is called the *complement* of the given collection. Though not explicitly mentioned by Paulos (1988), this concept is also helpful in understanding the nature of Joaquin's humor. For another way of expressing what has been previously discussed is to say that Joaquin's humor uses the complementation operation: the humorous in his stories are those that are out of place, i.e., incompatible with what is natural, true, or conventional (e.g., the use of native customs in foreign fairy tales, the literal realization of the figurative, the presence of a pig in a Christmas crib). Actually, deliberate insertion of what-does-not-belong or what-is-not-compatible occurs in many places. Among its several forms are the following:

Interspersion of non-English words in English text. Non-English words are used even in Joaquin's least humorous story in this collection, "The Happiest Boy in the World": " . . . he lost his money and just went *loco*." In other stories, the use of words foreign to the language he writes in is more deliberate. In "Gotita de Dragon," for example, the insertion of non-English words further enhances the humor in the complementary relationship between Mondrian de Manila and Anito de la Moda. While Mondrian uses Spanish interjections, "*Dios mio, Dios mio,* a mouse! *Aie que horror. . . . Socorro, Socorro!,*" the less sophisticated Anito uses the corresponding Tagalog, "*Naku, nanay ko,*

a cockroach. . . . *Saklolo, saklolo!"*[8] In "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna," Joaquin creates a new word by using hyphens in places where they are not needed: *"dis-in-te-grated."* Needless to say, his new word looks like what it means.

Reality in supernatural fiction. Joaquin's readers may also be amused to realize that although they are reading fiction, particularly supernatural fiction, they come across actual facts and sometimes even hard realities of Filipino life: Doy buying a talking jeepney that is secondhand and is later carnapped ("The Traveling Salesman and the Split Woman"), Billy's father working in Iran as an engineer ("Balikbayan"), a mysterious old woman using a child to get more alms ("Going to Jerusalem"), Elsie boasting that the Manila Symphony Orchestra wants to record the singing of the Adarna Bird in her backyard ("Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna").

Unhappiness amidst affluence. Apparently, the story, "The Happiest Boy in the World," contains elements taken from "The Prince and the Pauper." However, unlike Mark Twain's historical romance, Joaquin's story is a travesty of affluence. The theme being that happiness (symbolized by the nougat cake) escapes the hands of those people who want selfishly to keep it, Joaquin's ludicrous characters in this story are the rich who are unknowing of all the unhappiness that is to come. In a travesty of the rich,[9] the satire in the recurring phrase "the happiest boy in the world" (pp. 203, 204, 206, 217), or in the statements, "Oh, then, how bright his shining eyes, and how bright his confident smile" (pp. 204, 206), "Only happy boys eat nougat cake" (pp. 207, 217), "Happiness is knowing how happy you are," induces a comic effect.

Technology intermingled with folklore. Joaquin employs technological gadgets in his stories: Elsie winding a key on the breast of Adarna Bird to cause the enchanted bird to sing, Nanette pressing a button on the neck of the feared Sarimanok to make it crow ("Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna"), Elang's toy car running to her house when asked to find its owner ("The Amazing History of Elang Uling"), Gotita and his friends borrowing the fox's detector to find virgins in Manila's red-light district ("Gotita de Dragon").

Modernization in a supernatural setting. Joaquin's sequel to "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," for example, takes place in a modern setting: the wizard who agrees to return all the children that were taken away by the Pied Piper is reported not to accept a check but pure cash for his services. In another story, "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," the mountain god Monte Banahaw files a case in court

against the goddess Mariang Makiling, but the judge rules the complaint has no legal basis. Monte then uses his political pull and sends the police and the army to Makiling. Is this not very contemporary?

Clash between science fiction and superstition. This is one of the conflicts in the story, "Balikbayan." The setting creates a sci-fi mood which is deceiving, and readers cannot avoid it (e.g., the Sci-Fi Week, Billy's sci-fi birthday party, Billy and his mother's sci-fi conversations). Joaquin then gradually reveals that the setting only masks the real problem of the story. It is the spirits of his ancestors, not "Martians with antennae," that want Billy in their world. Despite this resolution, however, Joaquin ends this story with Mrs. Buna rushing to report another UFO experience. Obviously he wants to make his characters who are preoccupied with science fiction look ridiculous. At the same time, he is giving the *balikbayan* family a lesson: science fiction may be the fad in the U.S., but it hardly has a place in a country like the Philippines where superstition can account for most of the incomprehensible.

Supernatural versus natural. Does Joaquin espouse superstition? The answer is not clearly affirmative. The magician in "The Hamiling Mystery" who was hired to exorcise the town of Hamiling explained in the end that all those events that were superstitiously believed to be the work of a devil were nothing but natural occurrences. With this explanation of the exorcist-turned-detective, Joaquin's superstitious characters appear funny.[10] If the magician should exorcise, Joaquin requires that he remain "scientific"; hence, the wizard's exorcism was assisted by an obstetrician and a midwife, thereby making the supernatural delivery of the lost children somewhat natural.

Joaquin's inconsistent attitude towards superstition reinforces the idea that he uses superstition only as a "mathematical complement" to generate laughter. Neither does he support nor condemn it. Even mixing it up with religion is the least of his worries, as the next discussion shows.

Pagan Christianity. The story, "The Traveling Salesman and the Split Woman," shows what some critics have pointed out to be Joaquin's tendency to intermingle the religious and the pagan (see, for example, Casper 1966, 137–39). Until the time when Doy realizes the woman he married is actually a *manananggal* that splits in two at her waist during a full moon, readers are made to understand that this story is from folk tradition (as most stories in *Joaquinesquerie* are). Joaquin then reveals that Angge, the split woman, is actually an

angel who guards "the helpless and the innocent, especially babies." What is comic here is not only the transformation of the split woman in Filipino folklore from a wicked blood-sucker type to a guardian angel, but also the forced marriage of religion with superstition, not to mention the use of science and technology which is to occur a little later with Angge, now without the lower-half of her body, becoming the first "astronaut" of a developing country. That religion constitutes an integral part of this pagan story becomes more evident when the snake Jezebel confesses that she is a descendant of the serpent in Eden that tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Some readers may not sense any humor here, as they see no incongruity, reasoning that religion in the Philippines, after a period of initial resistance, has been a rather peaceful mixture of orthodoxy and superstition. These same readers, however, realize the incongruity when they find themselves amused in "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna," not by the opposition between the devil and the religious but that between the pagan and the sacred, discussed in what follows.

Introduction of imperfect oppositions. Refraining from using such perfect black-and-white oppositions is also a humor device which Joaquin uses, particularly in "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna." The title reveals a never-heard opposition between two characters in Filipino folklore. The story contains other, quite original, oppositions:

> The Ibong Adarna is pagan[,] and when it's wetted with holy water it loses its magic for twenty-four hours.

> The Sarimanok can't stand pork. The lard will make it lose its magic for twenty-four hours.[11]

The holy water's effect on the devil is well-known, but not on pagans. The opposition between chicken and pork is no less amusing.

Puns and their double meaning. Also worth noting is the use of a *pun* in the word "pagan," which heightens the humor here. In one sense, the Adarna Bird is pagan because it is a character taken from Filipino folk tradition. But presumably Joaquin does not want to dismiss entirely the other, more common, meaning: the Adarna Bird is pagan because it is not a believer.

The story, "Lechonito the Holy Innocent," which is an account of what a pig goes through before he gets roasted on Christmas Day, is built on this device. On a more explicit level, when Lechonito's mother said that his brothers and sisters had already left for the

market, the reader understands that they had gone to the market, not to shop but to be butchered. Innocent of this other meaning of "market," Lechonito asked why they did not take him along. His mother replied, "You're too small for market, dear."

On a less explicit level, while a pig's death is an offering (described in the story as "the proudest glory on their tables") to people on Christmas, Joaquin interestingly provides another meaning of Lechonito's "martyrdom": it is also a sacrifice for Christ. Lechonito, having been put back to the time when Herod's soldiers killed the Holy Innocents in their search of the Infant, strongly felt he also "had a part to play in the Feast." Immediately he decided to go back to the farmyard to be slaughtered by Gorio the cook, thus the title, "Lechonito the Holy Innocent." Because of this added meaning of Lechonito's death, at the end of the story the reader feels both sorry for and proud of Lechonito. He has a mixture of sad, happy, and funny feeling, which he expresses in a confused smile.[12]

Normal as handicap. Achievement is not a monopoly of the well-built. The handicapped can sometimes accomplish even more than the most skilled.[13] A story with a rather serious theme which Joaquin develops lightly and humorously, "The Four Little Monkeys Who Went to Eden," is an account of how four handicapped monkeys outperformed their normal counterparts. Juxtaposed with the handicapped, the normal monkeys whose own normalcy turns out to be their biggest handicap become the funnier characters of the story. In a sense, Joaquin can be said to be teasing the superiority theory of humor here with his counterexample. Sometimes the normal can be funnier than the deformed and ugly.

Impractical moral lesson. As mentioned earlier, Joaquin's writing style in *Joaquinesquerie* is simple and easy to understand, fitting for a light subject and a young audience. In one interview (Bresnahan 1990, 64), Joaquin makes his audience in *Joaquinesquerie* explicit:

> I was writing for this magazine, *Mr. and Ms.*, and they said, "Would you write a children's story for us? Just one." So I wrote a children's story and I enjoyed writing it so much that I thought to myself, Well, it's like eating peanuts. You can't stop. Before I knew it I had written two, four, eight, twelve. Just like that! In the course of one year.[14]

That Joaquin is talking to children is made unequivocal by the text itself. From "Lulit Bulilit and the Babe-in-the-Womb":

> Nobody can live on pop drinks. Especially not little children. Their daddies shouldn't have to bribe them with a peso to make them drink milk, or eat cornflakes, or come to lunch.

And yet the same story introduces the idea of abortion:

> What [Lilit] loved to eat was babies not born yet, babies still in their mommy's womb. Old Lilit didn't think it wrong to eat such babies. Didn't a lot of people say that babies still in the womb were not really people yet. . . .

The story ends, however, with a statement that shows Joaquin's stand on abortion:

> Good children should always remember that it's not nice to eat babies, even the unborn ones.

The question asked here is whether a story with a character sucking babies from their mothers' navels is fitting for children. The inappropriateness becomes clearer when we look at the kind of moral lesson the story teaches. It is not a practical one and a needless reminder. Children never think it nice to eat babies, especially the unborn ones.

Sexual images in children's stories. Joaquin's use of explicit sexual images is even more astonishing. Nudity, for example, occurs in two instances in "Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty," (p. 223 and pp. 225–226) in which Joaquin tries to combine the French folktale, "Beauty and the Beast" with an anonymous (Eugenio 1987, xxi) Philippine metrical romance, "Don Juan Tiñoso." In the latter, Joaquin does not seem to care about writing in detail. Moreover, because Johnny Tiñoso's nudity is the only thing that stays fixed in a changing background, in which his ugliness transforms into a "pure" and "perfect" body, Joaquin wittingly or unwittingly heightens his character's nakedness. He does not seem to be bothered about detailing Bellita's voyeurism, either.

In the story, "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," readers find another instance of male nudity:

> But alas for the boy who caught [Mariang Makiling's] fancy! He would find himself being drawn up to her mountain. He would find himself lured into her cave. . . . There he would dwell for the space of a moon, feasting off gold plate and sleeping on roses.

> But when the moon waned he would find himself back on the cold mountain, alone, the cave nowhere in sight. . . . Up and down he would wander, looking in vain for the cave. His folks would find him at last, stark naked and raving mad. They would take him home and tie him to his bed.

This passage is suggestive. While a few readers may hold that the young man's nakedness occurred as a result of his madness, the rest may smile at the thought of the other chronology.

From "Gotita de Dragon":

> "Well, Goti," [the poet answered], "the old books say only a virgin can tame a monster. So I suppose only a virgin can make you small again."
> [So off went Goti to Malate and Ermita looking for virgins.]

Not to mention interpretations other than the literal of the poet's statement, Joaquin, undoubtedly, is trying to be funny.

In "The Hamiling Mystery":

> Upon arriving at the rock shaped like a giant boot, . . . [the wizard] climbed up to the rock with the obstetrician and the midwife. "Push!" said he to them. . . . After a puzzled look at each other, the pair pushed at the rock . . . "Push!" cried the wizard. . . . Doctor and midwife bent down to push harder—and were startled to feel the mountain heaving, as if in labor. "Push!" screamed the wizard again. . . . And the pushing doctor and midwife now felt the rock softening and swelling.
> "Jump off! Jump off!" suddenly shouted the wizard. . . . Doctor and midwife slid down the rock as the leg of the boot burst open, releasing a brief flow of water.

This is clearly an image of a woman giving birth. Joaquin does not forget to mention the central part of the delivery. He describes it as "softening and swelling," "releasing a brief flow of water" when it burst open.

Readers may not understand Joaquin's ulterior intent in larding this image in a story which forms his sequel to a popular German legend. Furay (1953, 148), reviewing Joaquin's stories in an earlier collection, *Prose and Poems* (1952), spoke against the writer's indulging "in detailed treatment of [filth] beyond the dictates of artistic necessity and the bounds of good taste." Can the same criticism be made of *Joaquinesquerie?*

Indeed we see the need to study more deeply the problem of Joaquin's audience in *Joaquinesquerie* (more specifically, the problem of whether the stories in this collection can be classified as children's literature), but, at this point, one thing we can say for certain is that his use of sexual images does not run counter against his intention to be funny.

The enumeration above of complementation devices is not meant to be complete. We can find many more examples of the humorous as a kind of mathematical complement. For instance, Joaquin employs hyperboles, exaggerations of what is actual and real. In "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna":

> "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" cried the Sarimanok in a crowing loud enough
> to wake the dead.

Human supremacy over the supernatural in "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," "Lilit Bulilit and the Babe-in-the-Womb," and "Balikbayan" is another example. The reordering of past, present, and future[15] in "The Happiest Boy in the World," "The Adventures of Culas-Culasito," and "Lechonito, the Holy Innocent" is another one. A look into Joaquin's witch doctors (who come from different walks of life: a poet, a famed wizard-exorcist, a babysitter, a cook, and so on) may also reveal his humor. The use of a pig in "Lechonito the Holy Innocent" that understood only pig language may also be amusing:

> The noise was a mix of cows bellowing, horses neighing, poultry
> panicking, pigs squealing, and people bustling about in the farmyard.
> Lechonito only understood the squealing of the pigs and they all
> seemed to be crying *alas* and *alack* and *naku po* and *aie aie*.

Joaquin's consistency in this story cannot be left unnoticed. Lechonito conversed only with humans and animals of his species; the messenger from heaven was himself a pig with small wings "that spilled tiny lightnings when he moved."

Another Operation in Joaquin's Humor

The operation of *iteration*, which is the process of doing something repeatedly, is a common operation in mathematics and computer science. It is so widely used that it appears from the most elemen-

tary textbooks to the most advanced ones. Grade-schoolers, for example, learn that multiplication is addition iterated a particular number of times. The newly-developed field of fractal geometry could not have existed without the concept of iteration—the so-called quadratic Julia sets and the Mandelbrot set (their highly intricate computer graphics have fascinated even the nonmathematically inclined) arise simply from sequences of complex numbers defined by the iterative relation: $z_{n+1} = z_n^2 + c$, where c is a complex constant.

Iteration is also a common operation in humor. Paulos (1980, 36) notes that "it is well known that repeated display of character traits or mannerisms often is the key to a comedic personality." For, if we recall, was it not a subconscious realization of iteration that made the unsmiling princess in the Grimm's fairy tale, upon seeing more and more people were stuck to the golden goose, give out her first laugh?

Joaquin is actually extravagant in *Joaquinesquerie* in his use of iteration to produce humor.

Rhyme and onomatopoeia. Sound repetition in names like Ninang Nina, Tita Tess, Culas-Culasito, King Kong, Porky and Hoagy has a comic quality. Other names have an onomatopoeic effect; that is, their sound (to a Filipino ear) "repeats" the meaning the writer intends them to have: the small Lilit Bulilit, the wizard Dr. Salamanca, the evil Eva d'Eden, the jeepney Jeeprox, the scheduled-to-be-roasted baby pig Lechonito, and so on. Literary sound devices that critics say are typical of Joaquin's earlier works (see, for example, Oloroso 1967, 766–67) also abound. In "How Love Came to Juan Tamad" alone, readers can see examples of internal rhyme:

"Just right for flight is tonight," said [Juan Tamad] to himself.

end rhyme:

The Makiling lawyer was always scoring. The Banahaw lawyer was always being caught snoring.

imperfect rhyme:

. . . this time, it was her turn to mourn on the dark of the moon.

assonance:

. . . they wrangled and jangled, dickered and bickered, and brawled and broiled.

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alliteration:

> . . . from the newly rustled clouds they picked the fattest, fleeciest, fluffiest, finest one of all.

On one particular page (p. 57), Juan Tamad performs the actions of griping, growling, grumbling, groaning, and grouching. In many of these cases, Joaquin renders his readers a double treat: the music produced by sound repetition, sometimes onomatopoeic, intensifies the funny images of his prose.

Phrase repetition. Joaquin likes to repeat phrases; in a number of cases, his purpose is to provide a funny twist. From "Gotita de Dragon": "I sit down for a wee drop of beer and I get a wee drop of dragon." The phrase "mad torch" is recurrent in "How Love Came to Juan Tamad" (pp. 55, 56, 64, 66). At the first instance, the torch symbolizes one of those "farm boys" who had fallen in love with Mariang Makiling and was desperately searching for her in the dark night. At the last part of the story, the mad torch symbolizes Makiling herself, looking for the man she loved but lost, Juan Tamad.[16]

Concept repetition. Like Umberto Eco (1980), Joaquin in "The Mystery Sleeper of Balite Drive" likes to use the number seven: seven sons were born in seven years, and each one was named after the seven days of the week.

Taken from "Lechonito the Holy Innocent": "Dirty pig! Vile pig! Ugly pig! Unholy pig!"

It is also interesting to note that Filipino expatriates constitute a recurrent subject. A computer-assisted concordance of the word "abroad" confirms this observation.[17] Hardly can Joaquin detach himself from the concept that even Domeng who is to give his Sleeping Beauty the kiss that will wake her up from her deep sleep is a *balikbayan.* The stepmother and stepsisters of Joaquin's Cinderella are balikbayan as well. The unredeemable addiction to the word "abroad" only certifies that the writer comes from the Philippines.

There is also a recurring attachment to the word "naked." As noted in the preceding section, nothing is special about this word except when it is found in places to which it is not supposed to belong. Female nudity occurs in the story, "The Mystery Sleeper of Balite Drive"; Blanca was found by the seven brothers "wrapped naked [sic] in newspapers." However, as in *Tropical gothic,* in *Joaquinesquerie,* one finds more instances of male than female nudity.[18] Here is another example taken from "Going to Jerusalem":

"Don't come nearer," said Pedring to his sister. "This man's completely naked. Maybe he got held up and they stripped him of everything."

Because these examples do not have the sexual overtones of the examples cited in the previous section, readers, understandably, do not think them very funny.

Parallelism. Sometimes, Joaquin uses parallelism in structure and content to emphasize his intended humor. An example from Joaquin's Cinderella story:

From boom and brush came the dirt, and from kettle and stove came the soot, that blackened [Elang] and that she never had time to scrub off.

Taken from "The Adventures of Culas-Culasito", here is one of Joaquin's amusing lines, written in crescendo:

"You'll get it for calling me dad," said dad, swishing his belt.

"And you'll get it for calling me mom," said mom, shaking her ladle.

"And you'll get it for calling me hag," said Mrs. Arrogante, swinging her handbag.

Here is another from "The Four Little Monkeys Who Went to Eden":

The name of the eldest son was Ciego. He could see no evil because he was blind.

The second boy was called Sordo. He could hear no evil because he was deaf.

The third boy was known as Mudo. He could speak no evil because he was dumb.

The youngest of all was Nulo. He could see, hear, and speak no evil because he was deaf, dumb, and blind.

Another instance of a typical Joaquin-crafted parallelism from the same story:

. . . he could smell danger, he could feel peril—but on he swung and up he flew, nearer and nearer to the danger, closer and closer to the peril.

Parallelism is actually a major device used in this story, as the parallel lines of Figure 3 show. Only the deaf, dumb, and blind Nulo does not become a stone because unlike Ciego who denies Eden's beauty, or Sordo who denies its sweet music, or Mudo who denies

its eloquence, Nulo to whom Eden reveals itself as a place of love does not deny love for his brothers. We see that in the youngest brother's case, the parallelism is not disturbed; thus, a fourth parallel line can easily be constructed and added to the diagram.

Event repetition. Event repetition in the aforementioned Grimm's story, "The Golden Goose," that causes the princess to laugh may not create the same effect on the reader of the story. Joaquin,

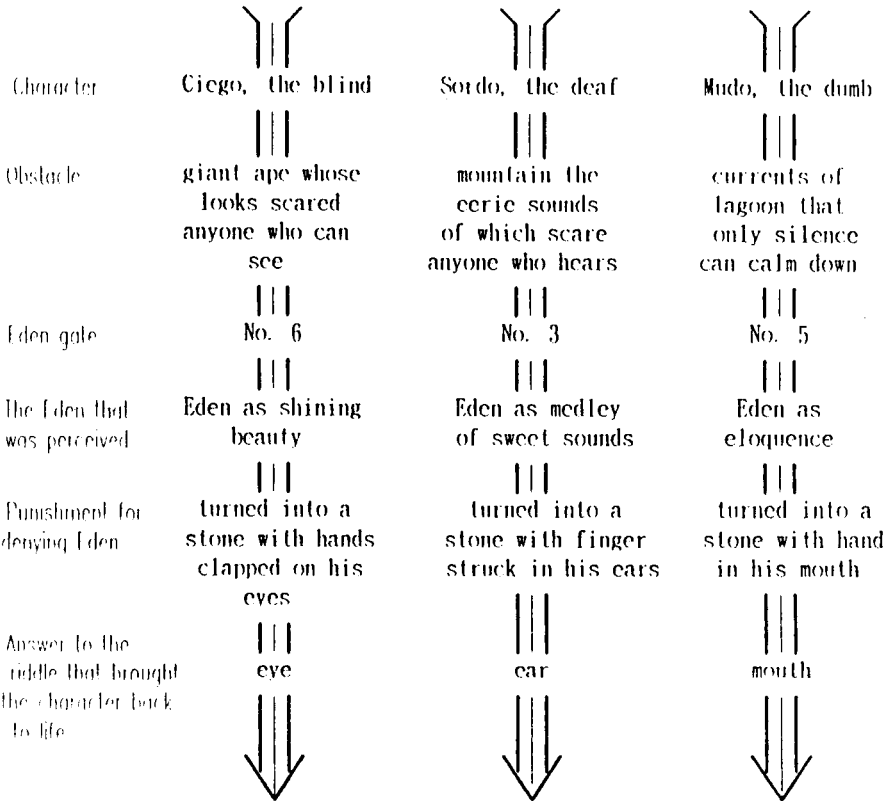| Character	Ciego, the blind	Sordo, the deaf	Mudo, the dumb
Obstacle	giant ape whose looks scared anyone who can see	mountain the eerie sounds of which scare anyone who hears	currents of lagoon that only silence can calm down
Eden gate	No. 6	No. 3	No. 5
The Eden that was perceived	Eden as shining beauty	Eden as medley of sweet sounds	Eden as eloquence
Punishment for denying Eden	turned into a stone with hands clapped on his eyes	turned into a stone with finger struck in his ears	turned into a stone with hand in his mouth
Answer to the riddle that brought the character back to life	eye	ear	mouth

Figure 3. Parallelism in "The Four Little Monkeys Who Went to Eden."

however, in his use of event repetition in the story "Sarimanok
Versus Ibong Adarna," is more successful:

> . . . Marita's papa . . . had brought her home a . . . real live [teddy
> bear], cute and cuddly, a brown little clown.
>
> The first day the school learned of it, Marita brought home so many
> sightseers . . .
>
> Marita became the most popular girl in the world. . . .
>
> Across the street Nora would be watching from her own doorway.
> . . . .
>
> "Oh Mommy. I'm no longer the most popular girl in school . . .
> Marita is. Just because she has that silly bear. . . ."
> . . . .
>
> A month later what should arrive for Nora but a baby reindeer!
> . . . The school ran wild. . . .
>
> So, now, Nora, too was followed home by an adoring crowd.
>
> Next door to Nora lived Marilu, who kept saying she wished she
> were dead.
>
> "Marita has her baby bear and Nora has her baby reindeer—but
> what I have got?"
> . . . .
>
> And the very next day [Marilu's father] came home with a baby
> python. What a sensation! The small fry were in a tizzy trying to
> decide which was the super super attraction. . . .
>
> And choosing the super super attraction became even harder.
>
> For in the back yards of other houses on that street soon appeared,
> one after another: a baby elephant, a baby camel, a baby rhinoceros,
> a baby giraffe, and a baby kangaroo.

Event repetition is a major humor device in this story. Because their
parents do not see any value in joining the race, the three girls, El-
sie, Nanette, and Nora, are left out in school. Elsie, unwilling to
concede defeat, invents a story that she has the Adarna Bird in her
backyard. Not to be outwitted either, Nanette announces that she has
the Sarimanok. Joaquin makes these girls literally realize their fabri-
cations (a switching device discussed earlier) and further makes them
understand, rather bitterly, that they would have been better off
without the Adarna Bird or the Sarimanok. After learning a painful
lesson (and just when the story is about to end), however, the two
girls meet Nora who, joyfully, makes it known she has just gotten
a baby dragon![19]

What makes Joaquin funny here? Paulos (1980, 35–36), quoting
Henri Bergson, says that "the mechanical and repetitive carrying out

of some formula or algorithm . . . [is] the essence of humor, since they violate the characteristic flexibility and spirituality of human beings." Quite obviously, to be mechanically repetitive is one thing; to be humanly flexible is another.

In what follows, we will examine two stories to further appreciate Joaquin's internal consistency in using a particular humor device to develop his stories. Again we will see how reading his stories from a mathematical perspective can help us identify the humor devices he uses.

Fuzzy Logic in "Juan Tamad"

The musician Bach, the artist Escher, and the mathematician Godel were the subject of a book by another mathematician and computer scientist, Douglas R. Hofstadter. Praised for his originality, Hofstadter in *Godel, Escher, Bach: An eternal golden braid* (1979) attempted to unite many ideas of contemporary intellectual history. What do Bach, Escher, and Godel share in common? One is their use of self-reference, or in Hofstadter's terminology, "Strange Loops," in their works. A year later, Paulos (1980, 41), in a separate development, wrote that the "notion of self-reference is at the root of a wide class of jokes and some famous paradoxes and theorems in mathematical logic, and it is crucial to an understanding of humor in general."

Self-reference is indeed a favorite concept in mathematics and computer science.[20] But as Hofstadter points out by mentioning Bach and Escher, the notion of self-reference is not monopolized by the mathematical. For example, the nontechnical "nationalist" (as the word is currently understood) may use Taal Volcano to exemplify self-reference: it is a volcano within a lake within a volcano within a lake. Teachers of moral theology who bombard their students with the inescapable nature of "commitment" (i.e., to be uncommitted is to be committed to noncommitment) illustrate another case. Paulos in his latest book, *Beyond numeracy* (1991, 4), writes an even clearer example. After ruminating over the grammar of the construction, "It don't matter," he concludes:

> Maybe it didn't matter anyway, and if so, I wondered if it mattered that it didn't matter. If nothing mattered and that nothing mattered didn't matter either, they.why couldn't we iterate? It didn't matter that it didn't matter that nothing mattered. And so on recursively.

For their special use of self-reference, the ancient Epimenides paradox[21] and Grelling's paradox[22] (actually a variant of the Russell paradox in set theory, a branch of mathematics) are worth mentioning. In effect, they say that a statement is true if and only if it is false. The "only barber in Seville" provides a classic case of these paradoxes. He is known to have been ordered by law to shave all those men and only those men who do not shave themselves. Thus, if he shaves himself, by law, he should not. But if he does not shave himself, by law, he should. A more contemporary example[23] comes from logician Raymund Smullyan: when asked why he does not believe in astrology, he replied, "I'm a Gemini, and Geminis do not believe in astrology."

Self-reference is a device that writers can exploit to generate humor. The story, "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," proves its writer is not a stranger to this device.

On the more obvious level, the story contains a character named Juan Tamad who is described to be the "ugliest, stupidest, laziest, most worthless boy in the land."[24] He is "so lazy that even enjoying himself [is] too much effort." Living an easy and luxurious life at Mariang Makiling's palace, he then reaches a point where he gets bored with being bored and tired of being tired:[25]

> "It was fun being lazy in my barrio," he told himself, "because everybody else there was working so hard. But it's no fun being idle here where everybody is idle too."

Juan Tamad is a funny character and his case is not very different from that of the barber of Seville. If he does something, he gets tired. So he chooses to do nothing. But doing nothing, he finds out, is equally tiring. Whatever he does—doing something or doing nothing—tires him. He may argue that doing nothing is, after all, a form of doing something, but will he not have been totally exhausted before this argument can even take shape in his mind? In the first place, in view of his second trait, can he think in this manner? Joaquin, however, insists that Juan Tamad, as the stupidest person, is not devoid of a philosophy (that is unquestionably his own):

> The good life was one with nothing to lead or to follow, to reach or to seek. If you were meant to get anywhere, you'd get there without moving. And if you were meant to find anything, you'd find it without seeking.

And as far as Juan Tamad being the ugliest, Joaquin makes sure his paradoxical nature stays intact. In Juan Tamad's own words:

If I don't go and look for love, love will come to me.

The coexistence here of extreme stupidity, extreme laziness and extreme ugliness eludes logic,[26] but Joaquin does not seem to care, if by introducing fuzzy logic he can inject humor.

The palace not to his liking, Juan Tamad finally escaped with the help of his "bed of cloud." The legs and the headboard of the cloud were made of gold, and Juan Tamad sold these to become an instant millionaire. The story proceeds:

[T]he barrio's industrious boys would be scolded by their mothers in this manner:

"There you go, working hard again. Toil, toil—and still we starve! If you were only as lazy as Juan Tamad, we might now be millionaires too!" [italics mine]

This is indisputably Joaquin's best self-referential joke. No amount of sarcasm, the statement means exactly what it says.

Another instance of self-reference and paradox can be seen in the character of Mariang Makiling. The brothers, the God of Mount Banahaw and the God of Laguna Lake, were madly in love with her, but it is to a human—to top it all, the worst of all humans—to whom her heart fell. Stated simply, Mariang Makiling's paradox goes: "If I do not love, I am loved; if I love, I am not loved." Another paradox we bump into—and this time the paradox is stronger: the person speaking is a goddess, in fact, the goddess of love herself! In Joaquin's own words: "the goddess of love is herself lovelorn."[27]

Joaquin's consistency in employing self-referential paradox in this story is noteworthy. Monte, as Mount Banahaw was nicknamed, was described to be the "Faery King of Mount Banahaw," the "Lord of Might," and the "God of War." And yet, how powerless he was before Mariang Makiling in their verbal and physical fights on the rustled clouds! Acting on the request of his brother, Monte Banahaw, Ba'i, the magician in the story who "knew a thing or two about magic," planned to put Mariang Makiling under his magic spell. In the end, it was Ba'i who fell under Makiling's love spell.

Literary scholars have a term for these examples, "irony," which they further break up into "verbal irony," "structural irony," "So-

cratic irony," "dramatic irony," "tragic irony," and so on. Bringing in the mathematical term "self-reference", however, provides us with at least two advantages: one internal, the other external to Joaquin's story. First, we see that Joaquin's humor in "How Love Came to Juan Tamad" dates back to Stoic logicians of the 4–5 B.C. (Juan Tamad may have been a descendant of Epimenides the Cretan.) Second, we come to understand that the "irony" of the literary critics is not without distant relatives. To say the humor is based on self-reference, however, would be more operational and thus more vividly telling.

Combinatorial Humor in "Gotita de Dragon"

By *combinatorial humor*, Paulos (1980, 57) refers to the "reversal or permutation of the grammar of a sentence [which] often results in humor." "Reversals . . . are often humorous because they force us to perceive in quick succession the familiar relation and an unfamiliar (and therefore incongruous) one" (p. 58).

The simplest combinatorial transformation is called the *spoonerism*, which "occurs when two or more words in a phrase or sentence are interchanged" (p. 58). Examples are "Time wounds all heels" or "Matter does age." A better example comes from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1946, 68–69):

> "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
> "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."
> "Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!"

The story, "Gotita de Dragon," contains a number of examples of this type of humor. The title itself is an example: here the positions of the noun and the adjective are reversed in the Spanish translation of "gothic dragon." That Joaquin does not use "Gotita, the Dragon" but "Gotita de Dragon" implies that his permutation is intentional.

Joaquin also employs *nonlinguistic* spoonerisms. Goti, for example, complained when the poet christened him "Gotita": "Gotita de Dragon! But I'm a he, not a she. . . ."

The poet was not spared, either, from the same type of humor. Using the fox's virgin-detector, the cockroach, the mouse, and Goti went to Manila's red-light districts, Malate and Ermita, hoping they would find virgins there. To their disappointment, the virgin-detector did not beep. However, when the three musketeers returned to the poet, the detector started beeping. Joaquin then reveals that the only virgin on earth at that time was the poet who

> shrugged, ". . . it's me that can change him back, right? Now . . . what was the procedure? The virgin tied her girdle round the monster's neck and then led it away, tamed. But since I don't wear girdles, let's try my belt. . . ."

There are two other main characters in the story: the old fashion designer Mondrian de Manila and the young tailor Anito de la Moda. As mentioned earlier, each is an exact complement of the other: what one badly lacks, the other possesses in excess. It is natural for Joaquin then to apply a physical reversal. When Mondrian was sleeping, Goti snaked into his ear, there selected an exquisite gown in midnight blue, crossed the street, crept into Anito's ear, and left the stolen gown inside the tailor's head. Before dawn, Anito awoke and started sewing the blue gown that Goti had left in his head. Realizing his design had been stolen, the elderly Mondrian confronted the young tailor: "Pirate!" Anito retorted, "Fossil!"

That the humor of this story is primarily built on reversal becomes evident when we see that the theme stresses the value of self-contentment. It is hilarious seeing, in one scene, Goti the lizard sweating it out to do three good deeds to become a dragon and, in another scene, the lizard-just-turned-dragon searching in vain in Manila's tourist turf for a virgin who can change him back into the baby lizard that he was.

Conclusion

By subjecting *Joaquinesquerie* to a theory of humor and by further saying that its humor tends to exemplify this theory, some readers may object that in this paper we have only undervalued Joaquin's humor, that we have done injustice to what is special in his humor. The objection, however, is not altogether correct. One result of look-

ing at Joaquin's humor from a mathematical perspective[28] is the revelation of a skillfully crafted internal consistency in employing a particular humor device to develop the *Joaquinesquerie* stories. Examples are parallelism in "The Four Little Monkeys Who Went to Eden," reversal in "Gotita de Dragon," the self-referential paradox in "How Love Came to Juan Tamad," event repetition in "Sarimanok Versus Ibong Adarna," among others.

Our application of the incongruity theory—particularly our examination of the humor devices that Joaquin uses—has also demonstrated that what appears to be Joaquin's major shortcomings in *Joaquinesquerie* (lacking originality, being overly repetitious, convoluting logic, writing children's stories with impractical moral lessons— not to mention the sexual images some of them contain, tarnishing traditional folktales with modern technology, disconcertingly mixing pagan and Christian, among others) have been purposely done in the name of humor. Charging Joaquin with a blatant deficiency in originality, for example, can only result from a misreading of the *Joaquinesquerie* stories.

Humor is at once Joaquin's conscious intent and desired achievement in this collection. And indeed it constitutes his biggest accomplishment. For though it may be said to obey some general theory, the humor in *Joaquinesquerie* is indisputably Joaquin's, situated in an unmistakably Filipino context.

Of course, it is not necessary to resort to mathematics to perform an analysis similar to what we have done. Neither are we saying, lest it be misunderstood, that our method should replace traditional study. The foregoing interdisciplinary adventurousness merely aims to demonstrate how a mathematical perspective can assist the literary critic in identifying and understanding the nature and form of a writer's humor as well as in categorizing those patterns, devices, and techniques the writer commonly uses to bring forth his desired effect. In addition to unraveling Joaquin's proclivity to stick to a humor device to compose his story, a mathematical perspective also helps put together what to an ordinary observer may seem separate if not unrelated concepts. Most important of all, by looking at literary humor with the eye of a mathematician, the critic not only realizes Koestler's (1964) idea, that an entirely different structure can be built on foundations that are similar to those of another, but also sees that understanding the design of a Gothic cathedral enables him to better understand the design of a cathedral designed by Gaudi.

Epilogue: Humor and Innumeracy

Mathematics is anything but an esoteric discipline useful only to people who isolate themselves in ivory towers. More than being merely a mathematician's toy or a scientist's tool, mathematics is first and foremost a liberal art for everyone. The consequences of mathematical illiterary can be very crippling, tragic, and disastrous.

One major symptom of mathematical illiteracy or "innumeracy," as Paulos in a more recent book, *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences* (1988) calls it, is the tendency to drastically underestimate the frequency of coincidences. "In an increasingly complex world full of senseless coincidences" (p. 178), innumerates "generally accord great significance to correspondences of all sorts while attributing too little significance to quite conclusive but less flashy statistical evidence" (p. 34). He elaborates: "People in general prattle ceaselessly about . . . coincidences, synchronicities, or ironies" (p. 34). Enchanted by them, some (not to exclude First Ladies) would go as far as allowing their lives to be ruled by an interpretation of these coincidences.

To demonstrate that coincidences are much more common than most people realize, Paulos recalls the classical "birthday problem" of probability theory. The solution to this problem asserts that with only 23 people, one can be 50% sure that at least 2 people in a gathering will have the same birthday. Significant? No. Here are three other examples[29] which may strike some people as mystifying:

1. If we assume that the probability of having a particular dream come true is 1 out of 10,000 (an unlikely occurrence), then 3.6% of the people who dream every night have a predictive dream. This translates into millions of apparently precognitive dreams every year. (pp. 73–76)
2. Given Philadelphia's population of 2.2 million people [this is only 18% of Metro Manila's], we can be sure that at least 5 people have the same number of hairs on their heads. (pp. 41–42)
3. The probability that you just inhaled a molecule which Julius Caesar exhaled in his dying breath is better than 99%. (pp. 31–32)

What would need explaining then is not the occurrence of rare events but their nonoccurrence. Put in a different way, it is very

unlikely that no unlikely event will occur. Juan Tamad's version would probably go: "It is not extraordinary to be extraordinary. On the contrary, it would be extraordinary to be ordinary."

Mathematics writer Martin Gardner once wrote: "The months— JFMAMJJASOND—give us JASON; the planets—MVEMJSUNP—spell SUN" (cited in Paulos 1988, 37; 1985, 82). Should we be awed? Not necessarily. Paulos (1988, 67) recaps:

> Innumeracy and pseudoscience are often associated, in part because of the ease with which mathematical certainty can be invoked to bludgeon the innumerate into a dumb acquiescence.

In what constitutes his sequel to Robert Browning's narrative poem about a German legend, Joaquin's treatment of innumerates is not dissimilar to Paulos's. Joaquin's innumerates in this story are the Hamiling townsfolk who believed that a curse had come upon their town. This belief was shaped by the following events:

1. Thirty years ago, a stranger, using the music of his pipe, got rid of all the rats that infested Hamiling. When the rats were gone, the townsfolk decided not to honor what they had initially promised: the Pied Piper was to be paid only a thousand pesos, not a million.
2. Since that incident, the villagers noticed that when a year was about to end, music would be heard. People who heard this music died. An apparition of the devil would then be seen hovering over the mountain. In the past 30 years, these events happened a dozen times. On those years when the music was not heard, no one died.
3. Once in 1955 a tidal wave almost wiped out the town.
4. The year before last, an epidemic of the common cold killed over a hundred people.
5. Last year, a great fire destroyed half the town.

A wizard-detective named Dr. Salamanca was summoned to solve the mystery of the town. Having done his homework, he announced his findings: the north wind was largely to be blamed. The north wind produced the music, the north wind flattened the forest to reveal a clothed treetop that had a human shape, the north wind caused the tidal wave, and so on. Salamanca continued: "Evil occurs only after you have seen [what you claimed to be an apparition] or

heard [what you claimed to be music]. There must have been years when no evil occurred though the 'pipe' sounded and the 'apparition' flew overhead."

Typical of innumerates, as Paulos would say, the townspeople have "personalized the events excessively" (Paulos 1988, 108), considering them as "proof of some . . . mysterious harmony that somehow holds in their personal universe" (p. 35). The occurrence in 30 years (even more, considering the townsfolk began counting only after they felt guilty of what they had done to the Pied Piper) of a tidal wave, what was believed to be a cold epidemic, and a great fire is less unlikely than the occurrence of two world wars in less than 30 years. Yet most people are not mystified by the latter. The Hamiling folk, having become accustomed and grown attached to the mystery of Hamiling, interpreted everything that happened as though all the events were connected in a single chain. Had the townspeople been less innumerate, they could have at least considered that that these events were more likely to be unconnected than connected. (The mathematically literate know that in most cases, it is more difficult to demonstrate a presence than an absence of a relationship.) Those events that would not fit into the established chain (i.e., those years when no music was heard) were "conveniently forgotten and deemphasized," a phenomenon called the "Jeanne Dixon effect" (Paulos 1988, 71). The more events the Hamiling folk added to their chain, the more thrilled they became, eventually trapping themselves in a vicious circle. Salamanca, fortunately lacking in innumerate intuition, released everyone from the trap.

Joaquin makes no secret his intention to ridicule his characters:

> [The] three hosts deeply sighed in chorus.
> "This is a hapless town," said Mr. Santos.
> "It's a haunted town," said Mr. Roque.
> "A town under a curse," said Mr. Galang.

At the peak of all this excitement, the dialogue goes:

> "Not only what we hear," cried all three townsmen together, "but also what we see!"
> "And what have you seen?" [asked Salamanca.]
> "The devil," said Mr. Galang, "riding on the wind!"
> "The devil?"
> "Well, we call him the devil," said Mr. Roque, "though actually he seems to be dressed in green, not red, and wears a cap, not a pair of horns."

"And he's blowing," said Mr. Santos, "on some kind of instrument he's holding to his mouth."

Though a bit sadistic in treatment, Joaquin seems to be delighted by innumerates. Paulos (1988, 35), on the other hand, finds himself tortured by them:[30]

Few experiences are more dispiriting to me than meeting someone who seems intelligent and open to the world but who immediately inquires about my zodiac sign and then begins to note characteristics of my personality consistent with that sign (whatever sign I give them).

However they differ in approach, both of them amuse their readers.

The rather condescending attitude that looks at the innumerate as humorous takes us, however, back to the Hobbessian superiority theory of humor. Does this then constitute a departure from the incongruity theory? No, because innumeracy becomes humorous only when put against a background incongruous to itself. So what happens to the superiority theory? It now becomes apparent—at least as far as the writer of this article is concerned—that the superiority theory is only an instance (in mathematical parlance, "a sufficient but not a necessary condition") of the incongruity theory.

The humorous Hamiling townsfolk can hardly be deemed superior but simply incongruous. The moral is rather plain: one does not become superior in an incongruously innumerate way.

Notes

I wish to thank Prof. Mitsuo Morimoto, D.Sc. of Sophia University, a mathematician whose dedication towards research has always served as my model, giving me both inspiration and courage to conduct a study that goes beyond the bounds of what is called "mathematical." My thanks also to my company for understanding that academic research constitutes an integral part of my personal growth.

1. *Joaquinesquerie*. The "-esque" suffix means "in the style of" (as in "grotesque"); "-rie" transforms the adjective into a noun (as in "grotesquery" or "grotesquerie").

Myth a la mod. The phrase "a la" is in vogue with many Filipinos to sound a bit European. Joaquin deviates from the original French in his use of "mod" in lieu of "mode." The original French, "a la mode," meaning "according to the fashion," is used in English to mean "fashionable" or "stylish." "Mod" in English is an abbreviated way of saying "modern," especially one that is bold and free in style or behavior.

2. Here the Adarna Bird is St. Sylvestre himself whose fatally somnolent sermon forced Mateo the Maestro to cut his arm and squeeze lime on the resulting wound so as not to fall asleep. Mateo however failed to stay awake and thus turned into a stone.

3. The *diwata* is said to be generous to young lovers, putting a jewel in their hands which turns into a stone if they quarrel over it, giving wedding gifts to a couple after she makes a loud laugh, etc. She is also said to be harsh: "[if] she fancied a young man she lured him into her cave and fed him off her golden dishes; he would . . . wander out of his wits."

4. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud and produced by Bernd Eichinger, the movie version was released in 1986.

5. That is, no model can explain all truths. In this sense, contrary to what most people think, no formalization of mathematics is complete. This result is Godel's famous "incompleteness (meta)theorem." To go back to our example, while Euclidean geometry provides a valuable model for dealing with problems in engineering, building construction, surveying, etc., it was non-Euclidean geometry that led to Einstein's relativity theory.

6. Paulos (1980, 29), however, believes that "[t]hough admittedly straining the meaning of the word joke, the discovery of another interpretation for Euclid's axioms (without the parallel postulate included) is a sort of mathematical joke."

7. The introduction of the concept of object-level and metalevel can help explain why people of a certain type lack a sense of humor. "[T]o get (i.e. understand) a joke. . . ," Paulos (1980, 27–28) notes, "one must ascend, so to speak, to the metalevel at which both interpretations, the familiar and the incongruous, can be imagined and compared." Because dogmatists and idealogues cannot but think in only one set of rules and, consequently, are stuck in the object-level, they notoriously lack a sense of humor. On the other hand, people who do not have a structured mind do not have a sense of humor, either; "with no feeling for what is correct, congruous, or natural, there can no perception of what is incorrect, incongruous, or unnatural."

8. What makes it funnier is Joaquin's use of relational reversal in this complementary relationship. This device is elaborated in a later section, "Combinatorial Humor in 'Gotita de Dragon'."

9. Joaquin's attitude towards the rich in this story can be seen in at least two instances (par. 5, p. 204; par. 8, p. 213). Such an attitude becomes even more explicit when at the end of the story he makes the Little Prince, little that he is, burst into tears when asked the everyday question: "Who is the happiest boy in the world?" This ending makes the story incongruous in a collection of stories that are supposed to have a fairy-tale ending.

10. See the epilogue for a detailed discussion.

11. The repetition here also adds to Joaquin's humor. A later section will explain that this is actually a major humor device in the story.

12. To best appreciate the humor of this story (as well as the other stories), it has to be read. In Paulos's (1980, 61) words, "explaining a pun, or humor in general, often kills it"; "[t]he suddenness is important."

13. An earlier paper (Binongo 1989) stresses the same point but Joaquin's approach may far be more successful. He replaces the soporific seriousness, typical of expositions of this subject, with humor.

14. The *Joaquinesquerie* stories were originally published in the weekly magazine, *Mr. and Ms.*

15. Previous critics have spoken lengthily about Joaquin's fixation with time in his earlier works. (See, for example, Galdon 1976, 460.)

16. There is another operation involved in Joaquin's humor here: reversal, which

in this article is termed as "combinatorial humor" and, as noted earlier, will be expounded in a later section.

17. Quite understandably, "Balikbayan" is the best example. Other instances can be found in "The Amazing History of Elang Uling," "Going to Jerusalem," "Johnny Tiñoso and the Proud Beauty," "The Mystery Sleeper of Balite Drive," "The Traveling Salesman and the Split Woman," etc.

18. Seldom pointed out in previous criticisms of Joaquin, stripping and nakedness are recurrent in the writer's earlier collections. Making the computer scan for the word *naked* in *Tropical gothic*, we get the following examples: "Amada *naked* and screaming in bed" ("Summer Solstice"); "he imagined her in the posture of the idol and he *stripped* her"; "there she still was . . . her breasts and shoulders *naked*" ("The Woman Who Had Two Navels"); "upon the bowed, mute, shriveled old man squatting motionless and cross-legged there, *stark naked* and half-blind and burned black as coal"; "*Naked* on the *naked* isle, he had . . . pondered upon himself" ("Doña Jeronima"); "Here at the ends of the earth, alone under the skies, he had been *stripped naked* to the bone. . . ." ("The Legend of the Dying Wanton"); "He . . . was *stripped* of jacket and shoes, tie and socks, shirt and trousers, undershirt and shorts. He was *naked*. . . ." ("The Order of Melkizedek") The best—better yet, worst—example is the story, "Candido's Apocalypse," which contains a total of 36 occurrences of the word "naked." To cite but a few: "he had glanced around and seen her standing there *stark naked*"; "That was as far as he even got because he had seen the father inside *stark naked*, and the *nakedness* in a state of excitement"; "he was looking at a *naked* man playing with himself"; "but suddenly the clothes were not there anymore and he was looking at the *naked* man and he saw that everything in this man. . . ." The naked in Joaquin's fiction is recurrent enough to be considered one of his minor, if not major, preoccupations.

19. This story ends in a fashion similar to "Balikbayan." Joaquin seems to like disappointing readers who tend to believe that all of the story's conflicts are resolved at its denouement. We see that expecting nothing and getting something, the converse of the Kantian "strained expectation" "reduced to nothing," can also produce humor. It is not the "Kantian order" that matters then, but simply the *incongruous* juxtaposition of "something" and "nothing."

20. The earlier noted Godel's incompleteness (meta)theorem is, in fact, proved by using the notion of self-reference. As for computer programmers, the following C program may prove to be interesting:

```
main(){ char *s = "main(){ char *s = %c%s%c;printf(s, 34, s, 34); }";printf(s, 34, s, 34); }
```

The reason is that it is a program that produces itself. As a hint for those who want to know what is going on, 34 is the ASCII code for the double quote.

21. Epimenides, the Cretan, made an immortal statement, "All Cretans are liars." If he is telling the truth, Epimenides, being a Cretan, must be lying. If he is lying, then he must be telling the truth.

22. Grelling's paradox simply stated: "Divide the adjectives in English into two non-overlapping categories: those which are self-descriptive adjectives (e.g. "pentasyllabic"), and those which are not (e.g. "hilarious"). To which category does the adjective "non-self-descriptive" belong? If "non-self-descriptive" is self-descriptive, then it must not be self-descriptive. If "non-self-descriptive" is non-self-descriptive, it must be self-descriptive."

23. Readers may want to look into *I think, therefore I laugh,* another book by Paulos (1985), for more contemporary examples of self-reference.

24. Juan Tamad in Tagalog folktale (Juan Pusong in Cebuano) is not the worthless man Joaquin describes him to be. See, for example, an Ilocano version of the tale, "Juan and the Bangar Tree," in Ramos (1956, 75–85). Apparently, by giving Juan Tamad more undesirable traits than he usually has, Joaquin is able to stress his paradoxical nature. As in most versions of the tale, however, Joaquin maintains a happy ending for his main character: Juan Tamad is rewarded for whatever form of weakness, intended or not, he suffers from.

25. With the Russell paradox in mind, Paulos (1980, 44) calls "Russell jokes" such phrases as "bored with boredom," "tired of being tired," "anxious about anxiety."

26. Just as stupidity can be a derivative of extreme laziness, ugliness can result from extreme laziness and extreme stupidity. What Joaquin, however, wants to do by talking about stupidity, laziness, and ugliness in the same level, i.e., no trait causes or effects another, may be to provide more humor, in addition to the paradoxes. Apparently, he is saying here that Juan Tamad's three traits—stupidity, laziness, ugliness—have been with him right from the day he was born.

27. It becomes even funnier when Joaquin discloses at the end of story that the goddess of love had no need for Bai's magic formula to fall in love with the worst guy in the world. Makiling's falling in love with Juan Tamad, Joaquin reveals finally, was natural and real. Some readers may find this revelation most amusing.

28. Of course, one would not expect to find in *Joaquinesquerie* remarkable examples of humor that use such mathematical operations or transformations as iteration, permutation, self-reference, etc. As we presumed in the introduction, Joaquin intended *Joaquinesquerie* to have a larger audience, not a specific one. What we have done was to show that even humor that had been intended for a general audience would not be unreceptive to a mathematical treatment.

29. The entire book, *Innumeracy,* is replete with entertaining examples: aerosol cans and the ozone layer, Mozart's waltzes, acquiring AIDS heterosexually, chance encounters, a stock market scam, choosing a spouse, UFOs, and so on.

30. Paulos' anger is understandable, however. A lot of people would rather believe "the rampant silliness of astrology, parapsychology, and other pseudosciences" than mathematics which they think is just "an esoteric discipline with little relation or connection to the 'real' world" (Paulos 1988, 179). Innumeracy is, in the words of Douglas Hofstadter, "a disease that has ravaged our technological society" and is bound to worsen, considering the tendency of innumerates to listen only to fellow innumerates.

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