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The Source of Nick Joaquin's "The Legend of the Dying Wanton"

FLORENTINO H. HORNEDO

Critics have often discussed Nick Joaquin's use of history in his works. He has been especially involved with the Spanish Catholic past from which he takes characters who have been described as "pawns to angel or devil," and treated in the distinctive style variedly called "tropical gothic," "lush," and "baroque." Such involvement, characters, and style are well exemplified in his "The Legend of the Dying Wanton." Joaquin's "wanton" is Currito Lopez, a young and wild Spaniard who gets shipwrecked on the coast of Mindoro with other Spaniards and several Indios. The Indios have been recruited for forced labor, and to avenge themselves, they stoned the Spaniards to death or near death, and retreated into the safety of Mindoro's wilderness. Currito is wounded mortally and lies agonizing alone, without food and water, on the coast. Having been a devotee of the Rosary, in spite of his scandalous life, he obtains the favor from the Lady of the Rosary of not dying without having been

3. Wilding, Tropical Gothic, pp. 84-97.
shriven. And it happened that after 13 days, another group of Spaniards is forced by unfavorable winds to land just where Currito lay dying. A priest shrives him and he dies with “his eyes fixed in wild rapture at the noon sun.”

This story is a reworking of a pious legend originally written in Spanish and whose origin can be traced to the year 1613 as correctly indicated by the author himself in the opening sentence of his version. This article will trace the legend to its textual source, and present to the Joaquin scholar or reader the Spanish original which he obviously used in writing his story, and an English translation of the text.

ORIGIN OF THE LEGEND

Sometime in 1621, in the Walled City of Manila, an alleged miracle was up for judgment before Archbishop D. Fr. Miguel Serrano. He had assigned the Dean of the Cathedral Chapter of Manila, Don Francisco Gomez de Arellano, to conduct the investigation. Ten persons had been summoned to make sworn testimony concerning events alleged to have happened to a certain peninsular, Don Francisco Lopez, who had died on the coast of Mindoro in October 1613. The ten witnesses were unanimous, and the findings of Gomez de Arellano led to the conclusion that a miracle had indeed happened: a wild and sinful soul had been saved from perdition at the hour of his death through the intervention of the Lady of the Rosary. And she had done this as a special grace, it was claimed, because Francisco Lopez, though he lived a publicly scandalous life, had kept a private devotion to the Lady of the Rosary, and he had called upon her for aid in his last moments. Part of the wonder was that Lopez had lived for 13 days without food and water, while covered with rotting worm-infested wounds.

The pronouncement that a miracle had happened resurrected memories among some devotees of the Rosary. The Dominicans at the Convento de Santo Domingo in the Walled City remembered the relics of a puzzling phenomenon which happened eight years earlier. They recalled that day in October 1613 when Fray Bernardo de Santa Catalina, O.P., at the command of the Prior of Sto. Domingo at that time, had reverently put aside for safe-keeping a dirtied basquiña of the image of the Lady of the Rosary and a partly worn-out pair of sandals removed from the feet of the
image of the Holy Child. These relics had their own story to tell.

The Dominican historian, Sr. D. Fr. Diego de Aduarte, who was contemporaneous with the said events (he died in 1636), tells posterity the origin of these relics:

A lady named Doña Ana de Vera, among other devotionary activities she had, usually came to dress the holy image, changing its vestments according to what time and festival demanded. Coming, therefore, one time to do this pious activity, accompanied by other devout ladies, they saw that the sandals which the Child Jesus were wearing had mud and sand on them and appeared to be somewhat wornout, as if they had been used on rough and muddy places, and of this they were frightened. Their wonder grew even more when they saw that the outer skirt of the Most Holy Mother, at its lower end, and for the width of a span from the hem, was moist, muddy, and frayed, for which reason, since the skirt was new and the niche being dry and well elevated (they suspected they might be in the presence of the evidence of some sacred event). So they notified the Prior of the convent who, with wonder over the facts, ordered that the skirt be kept, and Fray Bernardo de Sta. Catalina, who had also come, kept the sandals also as precious relics; and because they could not understand what it was all about, they left it to the Lord to reveal its meaning in due time, and because it was His work, He manifested [its significance] after a few years.4

Of Father Aduarte, another Dominican historian, Pablo Fernandez, O.P., says, “Fr. Aduarte himself was a protagonist in some of the incidents he related, or at least, an eye-witness.” It is probable that he had seen the relics, for as late as the publication of another Dominican history by Fathers Juan Ferrando, O.P., and Joaquin Fonseca, O.P., in 1870, one reads, “What is positively certain is that this saya and sandals have been preserved up to now as precious relics.”5

4. Juan Ferrando, O.P., and Joaquin Fonseca, O.P., quoting Diego de Aduarte, O.P., in Historia de los PP. Dominicos en las Islas Filipinas, tomo I (Madrid, 1870), p. 247. The work of Aduarte was first published in 1640, and then in 1693. The most recent edition is Diego de Aduarte, O.P., Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japon y China (Madrid: Misionologia Española, 1962). The quotation is on pp. 72–73. (Quotations from Aduarte, unless otherwise indicated, will be from the 1962 edition. Translation is mine.)


6. Ferrando and Fonseca, Historia de los PP. Dominicos, p. 248. It is not sure at the moment who wrote the “now” because Fonseca (he died in 1890) is said to have “thoroughly revised (Ferrando’s) manuscript giving full rein to his imagination.” See Fernandez, “History,” p. 116. Ferrando died in 1854.
We are dealing here, therefore, with two separate stories: (1) the Francisco Lopez story, and (2) the "saya and sandals" story. From Aduarte's time, the two have always been published together as two aspects of a single story. The Fernando-Fonseca version also did just that. But the version that is presumably the most widely circulated was the edition by Bishop Fr. Francisco Gainza who was one time Prior of the Convento de Sto. Domingo in Manila. The Gainza edition is among a collection of seven chapters of alleged miracles, and is entitled *Milagros de la Santisima Virgen del Rosario.* This is invariably appended to the Spanish novena to the Lady of the Rosary in all three editions that have been available to this writer. A "Dedicatoria" written by Gainza assumed to be more or less coeval with the writing of the *Milagros,* says that the sons of Dominic had been propagating the Rosary for "six hundred forty-seven years." Reckoning from 1215 or 1216 which are usually taken to be the foundation years of the Dominican Order, the writing must have been circa 1862 or 1863. The eighth edition of this devotional work was published in 1902, the ninth, in 1946. (Gainza died in 1879.) The versions which have been available to this writer are those of 1640 (1962), 1870, 1902, 1946, and another whose date cannot be determined because the page which probably contained the date of publication is missing, but it appears to be older than the 1902 edition. The only sources prior to 1640 from which Aduarte might have drawn materials were the records of the investigation and pronouncement of the Manila Cathedral Chapter under Gomez de Arellano and Archbishop Miguel Serrano. That makes the tracing of the origin of the legend a full circle.

**IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF THE JOAQUIN VERSION**

There are some interesting features of the records. Aduarte writes that the first man to discover Lopez's miserable condition on the shore of Mindoro was Gonzalo Salgado, a Spanish soldier. The Ferrando-Fonseca version calls him Gonzalo Salcedo. Gainza

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7. The seventh chapter in the collection narrates the Spanish victory over the Dutch in 1646 — the basis of Joaquin's other work "La Naval de Manila" (1943).
calls him Gonzalo Salgado. The Ferrando-Fonseca version is possibly a typographical error, for the text itself mentions the source of the basquiña-sandal story as "Lib. I, cap. xii de la primera parte de su (Aduarte's) historia." The variant name becomes even more significant when seen alongside another variant information: Lopez waits three days (tres dias) for the arrival of Salgado (or Salcedo). The Aduarte and Gainza versions have 13 (trece) days.

Some care is being taken concerning these small matters because of the need to establish the immediate source from which Joaquin got his material.

Aduarte's version, unlike the later versions, contained four miraculous elements: (1) that Lopez, mortally wounded as he was, and going without food or water for thirteen days, is sustained alive by the power of Mary's intercession for the purpose of giving the dying man the opportunity to confess his sins and die in the grace of God; (2) the galera Nuestra Señora de Guia, although it arrived at that part of the Mindoro sea not far from where Lopez was under favorable winds, was suddenly stopped there by adverse winds, thus forcing Almazan to send some of his men ashore on their fourth day; and that this going ashore of the men was providential; (3) Lopez, wicked though he had been, because of his lifetime devotion to the Rosary, was able to receive the grace of final repentance; and (4) when the body of Lopez was being carried for the funeral, a candle placed on his hands remained aflame for four hours in spite of the blowing of the wind; and the moment when the candle was taken from the hands of the dead man by a man named Andres Lopez, an alguacil del agua, "apago el aire la candela, que en las del difunto no habia podido apagar en cuatro horas que la habia tenido." And in addition, in those four hours that it burned, the candle's wax did not diminish.

10. Francisco Gainza, O.P. Milagros de la Santisima Virgen del Rosario, 8th ed. (1902), probably printed at the Sto. Tomas Press and appended to the Novena a la mas fragante Rosa del Paraiso de Dios Maria Santisima del Rosario, and paged continuously with the novena itself. The Gainza version is obviously from Aduarte. A long quote of Gainza (op. cit., pp. 44-45) is found in Aduarte, op. cit., pp. 73-74. It is not surprising, therefore, that Gainza has "Salgado" rather than "Salcedo." Furthermore, if Gainza wrote his version circa 1862 or 1863, as already noted, he could not have used Ferrando and Fonseca (1870), although he could have used Ferrando's MSS.

12. Ibid., p. 246.
13. Aduarte, Historia de la Provincia, p. 74; Gainza, Milagros, p. 45.
Only the first and the third are retained in Ferrando and Fonseca, and also in Gainza. What Ferrando and Fonseca, and Gainza omit, Nick Joaquin also omits. That fact alone does not necessarily mean that Joaquin read only either or both Ferrando-Fonseca, and Gainza. He could have read Aduarte and, like the other editors, simply dropped the “adverse winds” and the “candle” parts of the story.\(^\text{15}\)

Joaquin uses the name “Salgado” suggesting that he did not use Ferrando and Fonseca. He also uses thirteen days. That leaves Joaquin to the other sources, probably Aduarte and Gainza. But since he never even alludes to the other details of the Aduarte version, this writer suspects that the direct source was Gainza.\(^\text{16}\)

**Joaquin’s Version of the Legend**

In 1952, Nick Joaquin’s “The Legend of the Dying Wanton” was published among others in *Prose and Poems*, and again in 1972 in *Tropical Gothic*.\(^\text{17}\) A close look at the English translation of the Gainza text shows that Joaquin has used Gainza extensively. He made a few changes in his borrowed material: he used the Spanish nickname for Francisco which is “Currito,” so he has Currito Lopez; Don Francisco Gomez de Arellano and Sr. D. Fr. Miguel Garcia Serrano and a few other names are dropped; he does not mention that there was a surgeon who came along with the Almazan group; and he does not explicitly say that Lopez went to heaven after he died, as Gainza does. But if he drops some elements of the original story, he adds much new material — stylistic, psychological, theological, imaginative — which becomes the main interest for the student of literature. For if the historical records are not literature understood as *belles lettres*, Joaquin’s version is. So we say that what remains after history is subtracted from the Joaquin version is Joaquin’s essential contribution, and it is also that which can be used as key to the understanding of that which makes literature literature, and not mere historical or legendary account.

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16. Joaquin’s “La Naval de Manila” (October 1943) also contains much of the material in chapter 7 of Gainza’s *Milagros* suggesting that Joaquin’s direct source is earlier than the ninth edition (1946).
CONCLUDING NOTE

Nick Joaquin's "The Legend of the Dying Wanton" is a reworking of a Spanish pious historical legend about an event in 1613 which was declared miraculous by the authority of the Archbishop of Manila in 1621. Joaquin most likely based his version on Fr. Francisco Gainza's abbreviated account derived from Fr. Diego de Aduarte who was contemporaneous with the events.

Joaquin has borrowed extensively from his source, and he has intact the essentials of the spiritual romance between the wild Francisco (Currito) Lopez and the Lady of the Rosary. Although the article has not shown the extent and quality of Joaquin's contribution to the story, it is hoped that the reader will see for himself both the quantity and quality of Joaquin's artistic contribution.

For the benefit of those interested in the textual relations between the original and Joaquin's text, the Gainza text (1902) and an English translation follow. Italics in the English translation indicate which material in the original has been carried over by Joaquin into his version.

The Conversion of Francisco Lopez Through the Rosary

One of the most widely known wonders worked by Our Lady of the Rosary was that which happened in the year 1613, attested to some years later by ten witnesses who testified before Sr. Dean Don Francisco Gomez de Arellano, by special commission of Sr. D. Fr. Miguel Garcia Serrano, Archbishop at that time. (continued on p. 304)

CAPITULO 1o

Una de las mas ruidosas maravillas obradas por Nuestra Señora del Rosario, fue la que sucedio el año de 1613, justificado algunos años despues por diez testigos contestes y presenciales ante el Sr. Dean don Francisco Gomez de Arellano, por especial comision del Sr. D. Fr. Miguel Garcia Serrano, Arzobispo a la sazon. (continued on p. 305)
Doña Ana de Vera, keeper of the Virgin's wardrobe, and one of the prominent ladies of Manila, wanting during a festival to change the vestments of the Virgin, discovered, with no little surprise, that the sandals of the Holy Child were dirty with some sand and mud, and they even looked worn out, as if they had been used for walking on stony places. Her surprise grew even more when she saw that the Virgin's vestment, although new (and notwithstanding the fact that the Lady is on a throne as dry as it is elevated), was also muddy and wet up to a fourth of its height. She reported the matter immediately to the Prior and to the Deputy of the Holy Office, and they kept everything secret with a certain respect, not wanting to give the least publicity, and fearing guilt for irreverence, leaving to Divine Providence the revelation of what, for the moment, nobody could comprehend. Nevertheless, it did not take many years before the truth about the event was known with great certitude.

It was the case that, in the said year, D. Juan de Silva, Governor of these Islands, ordered that two galleys with another five vessels, under the command of D. Fernando de Ayala, should sail from the port of Cavite on October 7 to bring reinforcements to our possessions in Ternate. In one of the galleys named Guadalupe went a Spanish artillery man named Francisco Lopez, a man with evil ways, vicious, and without conscience; by a strange anomaly he kept the habit of praying (even in the midst of this vices and turpitude) the Rosary of Mary. When the convoy was situated opposite Calavite Point on the opposite coast of Mindoro, they were overtaken by a furious storm which wrecked the five vessels and the Galley Guadalupe on the rocks of the island, most of the men saving themselves by swimming, Francisco Lopez among them.

It is noted that the indios who manned the galleys were for the most part forced, and they wanted to take this opportunity to escape through the bush and thick jungle. The Spanish soldiers intended to pursue them and hold them; but the indios positioned themselves on elevated ground, and hurling big stones, succeeded in killing the few Spaniards, hurling them off frightful ravines. Francisco Lopez did not die immediately; but he was full of wounds on the head, face and hands; on his feet and on his knees: no part of him was left unhurt, and bleeding hopelessly. In order to have an idea of his pitiful condition, it is enough to cite what the records say: "As the poor fellow could not move himself, and was lying on wet ground, his face and body was horribly swollen, and was monstrously disfigured; and the rotting flesh became infested with worms which could be removed by the handfuls, which were coming in and out of the wounds, and they were everywhere, and they fed on his flesh without his being able to scrape them off because his arms were all wounds and useless like all the rest of his body. His flesh which was against the ground, as it was more rotten, fell from the
Doña Ana de Vera, Camarera de la Virgen y una de las señoras principales de Manila, queriendo en una festividad mudar a la Virgen el vestido, observó con no pequeña extrañeza que las sandalias de Niño estaban sucias con alguna arena y lodo, y aun parecían estar gastadas, como si hubieran servido para andar por lugares pedregosos. Creció más su admiración cuando vio que el vestido de la Virgen, aunque nuevo, (y apesar de estar la Señora en un trono tan seco como elevado) estaba también hasta la altura de una cuarta parte inferior rozado con bastante lodo y humedad. Dió parte inmediatamente al Prior y al Comisario del Santo Oficio; quienes, si bien guardaron las prendas con cierta veneración, no quisieron dar a negocio la menor publicidad, temerosos de incurrir en alguna ligereza, dejando a la divina Providencia la revelación de lo que por el momento nadie pudo comprender. No pasaron sin embargo muchos años, sin que se supiese la realidad del suceso con la mayor certidumbre.

Fué el caso que, en el indicado año 1613, D. Juan de Silva, Gobernador de estas Islas, dispuso que dos galeras con otras cinco embarcaciones, al mando de D. Fernando de Ayala, salieran desde el puerto de Cavite el dia 7 de Octubre para conducir refuerzos a nuestras posesiones de Ternate. En una de las galeras llamada la Guadalupe iba un artillero español de nombre Francisco Lopez, hombre de malas costumbres, vicioso y de conciencia perdida; pero que por una anomalía singular conservó la costumbre de rezar (aun en medio de sus vicios y torpezas) el Rosario de María. Cuando el convoy había enfrentado a la punta Calavite en la contra-costa de Mindoro, les sobrevino tan furioso temporal, que las cinco embarcaciones y la galera Guadalupe se estrellaron contra las peñas de la isla, salvándose a nado la mayor parte de la gente, y entre estos Francisco Lopez.

Es de advertir que de los infieles que tripulaban la galera, eran la mayor parte forzados, y quisieron aprovechar esta ocasión para fugarse por la maleza y espesura de los bosques. Intentaron perseguirlos en contenerlos los soldados españoles; mas colocados los infieles en algunas eminencias y arrojando gruesas piedras, consiguieron matar a los pocos españoles, precipitándolos por barrancos espantosos. Francisco Lopez no murió por el momento: mas quedó lleno de heridas, en cabeza, rostro y manos, en los pies y en las rodillas; no tenía parte sana, y se desangraba sin remedio. Para formar una idea de su estado lastimoso, basta recordar lo que nos dice la historia: “Como el pobre no podia menearse, y estaba tendido en tierra humeda, hinchose rostro y cuerpo horrendamente, y quedó monstruosamente desfigurado; y pudriéndosele la carne se enjendraron tantos gusanos, que a puñados se le podían quitar los cuales entraban y salían por las heridas, y lo tenían todo contaminado, y se cebaban en sus carnes sin que pudiese raerlos, porque tan heridos tenía los brazos y tan sin provecho como todo lo demás. La carne que estaba pegada a la tierra, como mas podrida, se deshacía de los huesos.
bones and left them exposed, and hunger and thirst did not fail to do their
duty during the thirteen days that the unhappy Francisco Lopez was there
more dead than alive."

The unfortunate Lopez, seeing himself in such miserable conditions and
knowing that the terrible danger of his death was coming, he started to pray
most sincerely for the protection of the Virgin of the Rosary, asking her only
for time and opportunity to erase his past misconduct with a good confession.
This loving Mother was not deaf, because the other galley called Nuestra
Señora de Guia, which had arrived safely at the very same point of Calavite,
could not move on because of contrary winds which had overtaken them
there, being for four days unable to move an inch forward. D. Pedro de
Almazan, who commanded it, ordered that some men go ashore to see if
there were people and buy some food stuff, and Francisco Lopez, hearing
the noise, and "the Virgin miraculously giving him strength, he got up and
recognized Gonzalo Salgado and he called him by name" to whom he had
come near, and the dying man told him these words: "Oh! Blessed be God
that I see a Christian!" and the record says that "he told him how the
Virgin of the Rosary was sustaining him without food nor drink, so full of wounds,
until he would have confessed himself, and thus he implored him to do him a
favor and bring him a confessor."

Salgado, moved to pity upon seeing his friend pitifully disfigured, sent
word to the galley that they should come to administer to him the necessary
aids. The men, therefore, gathered around him to see this extraordinary
event, and he was such that even his friends did not recognize him, and if he
did not talk, they would never have known who he was, because they could
see only a body covered with worms, a frightful corpse which was wound all
over." The surgeon, for his part, thought that any effort to save the life of
the man would be useless, and since on the other hand he was asking only for
confession, they left him with Fr. Pedro de los Cobos, religious of St. Francis,
so that he could confess, which he did with many tears and with sincere
repentance. He asked them afterwards forgiveness for his bad example which
he had given them in his previous behavior, and the obligations of a Christian
being fulfilled, "his soul thereafter departed for the other life, for heaven it
is believed, for the Lord had given him much time in looking for him in so
many wounds, so much pain and labor."

"This miracle was very much celebrated, so says the record of this event,
when it was confirmed in 1621, and with memory retracing back the course
of time, it was found that it was at this same time when the Image of our
Lady of the Rosary of this convent was found with its vestments wet, and
the sandals of the Child with sand and worn out as if he had walked much
over rough road."
y los dejaba descubiertos, y la hambre y la sed no dejarían de hacer su oficio en los trece días que estuvo el triste Francisco López más muerto que vivo.”

Viéndose el infeliz López en tan angustiosa situación, y conociendo que era llegado el terrible trance de su muerte, comenzó a implorar con las protestas más sinceras la protección de la Virgen del Rosario, pidiéndola únicamente tiempo y proporción para borrar con una buena confesión sus pasados extravíos. No se hizo sorda esta Madre cariñosa, porque la otra galera llamada Nuestra Señora de Guía, que había llegado hasta la misma punta Calavite con toda felicidad, no pudo montarla por los vientos contrarios que allí le sobrevinieron, estando cuatro días sin poder andar un paso. Dispuso D. Pedro de Almazán, que la mandaba, que saltase gente a tierra, para ver si había población en comprar algunos víveres, y oyendo Francisco López el ruido y “dándole la Virgen milagrosamente fuerzas para ello, se levantó y conoció a Gonzalo Salgado y le llamó por su nombre,” a quien habiéndose acercado, le dijo el moribundo estas palabras, “Oh! bendito sea Dios que veo cristiano!” y luego, dice la historia, “le contó como la Virgen del Rosario lo sustentaba milagrosamente sin comida ni bebida, y tan lleno de heridas, hasta que se confesase: y así le rogaba el hiciese tan buena obra que le diese confesor.”

Enternecido Salgado de ver a su amigo tan lastimosamente desfigurado, dió aviso a la galera para que viniesen a suministrarle los auxilios necesarios. “Cercóle en efecto la gente para ver tan extraordinaria cosa, él estaba tal, que aun sus muy amigos le desconocían, y sino hablara, nunca supieran quién era, porque solo veían un bulto envuelto en gusanos, un cuerpo espantoso hecho todo una llaga.” El Cirujano, por su parte, creyó toda tentativa desesperada e infructuosa, y como por otra parte solo pedía confesión, dejaronle con el P. Fr. Pedro de los Cobos, Religioso de San Francisco, para que confesase, lo que hizo con abundancia de lágrimas y con arrepentimiento fervoroso. Pidioles después perdón del mal ejemplo que les había dado con su conducta anterior, y llenados los deberes de un cristiano “luego al punto se partió su alma para la otra vida, y es de creer que para la gloria, pues tanto lugar le dió el Señor para buscarla entre tantas llagas, dolores y tragajos.”

“Celebrase mucho este milagro,” añade la historia, “sobre este particular, cuando se comprobó el año de 1621, y corriendo la memoria y contando los tiempos, se halló que era este cuando la Imagen de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de este convento se halló con la saya mojada, y las sandalias del Niño con arena, rozadas y gastadas, como de quien había caminado mucho y por aspero camino.”