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## **Consolidation of Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Tagalog Poetry**

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# Consolidation of Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Tagalog Poetry

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BIENVENIDO L. LUMBERA

**B**ETWEEN the sixteenth century and the middle of the eighteenth, the Philippines was the private archipelago of the Spaniards. The islands were closed to foreigners as a matter of policy, so that the natives knew of Europe only through their contact with the *conquistadores*. True enough, some foreigners managed to get to Manila on the galleons from Acapulco in spite of a standing prohibition.<sup>1</sup> However, their number was small and their interest purely mercantile, so that their impact on the cultural life of the natives was practically nil. Walled against European influence that was not filtered through Spanish politics and literature, the Philippines suffered from an insularity of outlook that persisted down to the second century of Spanish reign. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, with the establishment of the Real Compañía de Filipinas in 1785, the wall was breached. In 1790 the Real Compañía obtained permission for European ships to enter the Philippines, thus beginning the cosmopolitanization of Manila.

The economic prosperity that came to the Philippines during the nineteenth century has been attributed by Fr. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., to what he calls an "agricultural revolution." By the term, Fr. de la Costa means the change-over

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<sup>1</sup> William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (Dutton Paperack ed., New York, 1959), p. 277.

from the subsistence economy of the country, when it was dependent for revenue on the galleon trade, to commercial agriculture which had its start during the years following the British invasion in 1762 and finally reached full development with the end of the Manila-Acapulco trade in 1812.<sup>2</sup> When the galleon trade stopped, there was an attempt to find a way of raising revenue which hitherto was almost exclusively provided by income brought back to Manila by the ships from Acapulco. In 1834 Manila was thrown open to foreign trade, and the firms that set up business helped develop the agricultural potential of the country by giving crop loans. The British consul in Manila described the change in 1845:

The character and interest of the trade in these possessions is now entirely changed. Formerly it was a traffic in the commodities of other countries exclusively; now it is that in those of its own soil. Formerly it enriched and employed only the speculators and agents in transaction; now its advantages are diffused through the labouring masses of the population. Formerly the government of these Islands was sustained by supplies from Spain; now they contribute nearly half a million annually to the treasury at home.

The change has been to a very great degree wrought during the last 25 years by our merchants, and they are now the chief influences by which it is being carried on for the benefit of the people and the government conjointly with their own interests; and their capital, industry, credit and connections (which are resources which no Spanish merchants could supply) now constitute the effective machinery by which the trade of these Islands is principally conducted.<sup>3</sup>

The agricultural revolution led to the rise of a middle class elite whose income had given them access to higher education, here and abroad, and to the society of Spaniards and other Europeans. Typical of the new middle class was Don Jose Alberto of the town of Biñang, Laguna, of whom the British traveler Sir John Bowring wrote:

He spoke English, having been educated at Calcutta, and his house—a very large one—gave abundant evidence that he had not studied in vain the arts of domestic civilization. The furniture, the beds, the

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<sup>2</sup> *Readings in Philippine History*, ed. Horacio de la Costa, S.J. (Manila, 1965), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> *Readings*, pp. 144-145.

tables, the cookery, were all in good taste, and the obvious sincerity of the kind reception added to its agreeableness.<sup>4</sup>

Don Jose was among the mestizos and natives touched by the newly-found economic progress of the colony. Men like him were to form the nucleus of a middle class that was to produce an intelligentsia, mostly educated abroad, from which the leaders of the Revolution of 1896 were to emerge. With the implementation of the royal decree of 1863, the growth of this class was abetted. The decree provided for a complete educational system which would consist of elementary, secondary and collegiate levels, finally making officially available to Filipinos valuable training for leadership after three centuries of colonization.<sup>5</sup>

Previous to the decree, primary education for the natives did not go beyond the parochial catechetical level, and it was a rare native (like those fortunate enough to be admitted for study toward the priesthood in the eighteenth century) who received the equivalent of a collegiate training. It did not necessarily bring about a sudden Age of Enlightenment, but as one historian notes, the graduates of the Escuela Normal Elemental, founded in 1863, might be considered as the first *ilustrados*, the "enlightened ones" among the *indios*, who "were looked up to and [who] exerted a great political and social influence" in the provincial communities where they went out to teach.<sup>6</sup>

But it was not only the 1863 decree that was bound to bring about change in Philippine society. Direct trade with Spain, which began in 1766, made it easier for the colony to feel the repercussions of political events in the Mother Country, and the first four decades of the nineteenth century were particularly troubled times for Spain. The period was crowned by the Carlist War which split the Spaniards into Liberals and Conservatives. During the reign of Isabela II (1833-

<sup>4</sup> *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (London, 1869), p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> Domingo Abella, "State of Higher Education in the Philippines to 1863—A Historical Reappraisal," *Philippine Historical Review*, I, No. 1 (1965), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Abella, 43, n. 58.

1868), the political preeminence of the Liberals brought to the Philippines many officials of Liberal persuasion. These were the men who unwittingly sowed the first seeds of a political whirlwind for their country. Being liberal for many of them meant being anti-clerical. Their attitude needed no special effort to communicate to the natives who were becoming more and more restive under the oppressive tutelage of the Spanish friars. Thus, the encounter with fresh ideas brought about by higher education abroad and by association with Spaniards holding Liberal views, worked to undermine the old colonial order.

The *indio* of the nineteenth century was becoming more and more articulate about his complaints against the colonial government. When "an offended native" spoke out against the forces of oppression in 1821, he had to hide under the protective mantle of anonymity in attacking those Spaniards who opposed the teaching of Spanish to the *indios*:

Is this what it means to be one and the same family, one and the same nation, one and the same monarchy embracing East and West? Is this how the law is observed which enjoins "most strictly that no one constituted in authority, whether ecclesiastical, civil or military, should under any pretext whatsoever, however reasonable it may appear, commit any injury against the person of the Indian"? Or is it not rather oppression, despotism, arbitrary rule, and egoism?<sup>7</sup>

About half a century later, the *indio agraviado* no longer feared to speak his mind openly.

As a result of the Carlist War, many religious were fleeing from Spain, seeking to escape from the hostility of the Liberal government. The colonial administration in the Philippines had to find parishes for the new arrivals, and the parishes they found were usually those run by native priests. The conflicts that the turnover of parishes aroused served to sharpen the *indios'* awareness of the distinction between Spaniard and native, an awareness that the parishioners themselves were beginning to see in a light that was becoming increasingly political in color. When Jose A. Burgos, a native

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<sup>7</sup> *Readings*, pp. 213-214.

priest serving as synodal examiner of the archdiocese of Manila, was reproved by the Archbishop for raising certain difficulties in approving the assignment of some Spanish religious to parishes then occupied by native priests, he sent to his superior a letter explaining his action. He closed the letter with a mixture of courtesy and insolence that characterized the new temper of the hitherto docile *indio*:

If your Illustrious Lordship preceives in all this anything injurious to your venerable dignity, I hasten to beg your forgiveness on my knees. But I must make clear, Venerable Sir, that I have always held that since we are all equal in God's sight, the Filipinos deserve better treatment in the Church, though always in conformity with their merits. Any injustice done to them touches me to the quick, although I harbor no prejudice one way or the other. The course I have always followed is to give merit its due, without much caring where this course may lead me.<sup>8</sup>

Tagalog poetry, at least written poetry, was slow to reflect the new temper. While the *indio agraviado* and the native priests asked to be treated with dignity, the poets were more concerned with respectability. A *sainete* by Francisco Baltazar, the most important poet of the century and of the entire period of Spanish domination, may now be read as social commentary and, by implication, as an account of the change taking place among Tagalog poets and their audiences. The farce is called *La India Elegante y el Negrito Amante*,<sup>9</sup> and it tells of a pygmy streetcleaner who falls in love with a Tagalog girl. Capitan Toming, the *Negrito amante*, finds that he cannot make an impression on his lady-love as long as he wears his tribal costume of a simple G-string. He tries various costumes—"outfit of the Tagalog half-breed" (*damit-mestisong tagalog*), "Chinese shirt and pants" (*baro't salawal insik*), and "Muslim clothes as worn in the town of Balangginggi" (*damit-morong Balangginggi*) — and still fails to win the girl. When the *sainete* opens, Capitan Toming has dressed up in clothes worn by Spaniards, and he is sure now of being accepted by his lady. He has even learned to sing in pidgin

<sup>8</sup> *Readings*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Sampung Dulang Tig-lisang Yugto*, ed. S. Flores and P. Jacobo Enriquez, Rev. ed. (Manila, 1950), pp. 3-16.

Spanish. However, Menangge, the *india elegante*, turns down the suit of the would-be gentlemen: Captain Toming is still recognizably a man from the hills.

The search for urbanity already noted in connection with the development of the metrical romance (cf. *Philippine Studies*, 16[1968], 622-662) was intensified in the nineteenth century. For the Tagalog poet at this time, it was essential to cease being a man from the hills like Capitan Toming. It was as some kind of countrified versifier that the Spaniards regarded him, and the new temper brought about by economic progress and education rebelled against the stigma of being identified with the hinterlands. A singer of songs about love and the farm—that was how Martinez de Zúñiga described him. Hitherto the Tagalog poet was a folk artist who fitted very well into the cultural background of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries when the Philippines was still one vast rural outpost of the Spanish empire. Now that the outpost had come in contact with other countries in the West and found the means to urbanity, the poets were no longer content to play the folk whom the Spaniards, representing urbane society, could treat with condescension. And so, like Capitan Toming, the Tagalog poets began to put on the rhetorical garb of Spanish poetry.

Since higher education had become more easily available to natives with money, talent and determination, it was not difficult to acquire urbanity, or at least its veneer. Learning lent Tagalog poetry the respectability it needed. The immediate result was to push the refinement of language already seen in Jose dela Cruz's verse to the point of artificiality. A note of affectation, nurtured as a virtue, began to take roots in native poetry. In the desire to avoid revealing their folk background, the poets dropped the images of daily life and strove for fanciful figures of speech derived from the conventional imagery of Spanish ballads on love and Greek and Roman themes. Writing in 1882, Wenceslao E. Retana describes the poetic temper of the Batangas natives among whom he had lived in terms that reflected the amusement of his coun-

trymen who, at one time or another, read nineteenth-century Tagalog poems:

Y, entre enfrascarse con los faunos en lo mas intrincados de la selva, ó vagar con los silvios por los bosques, a la manera que los poetas bucólicos, echanse a volar en alas de su desenfrenada fantasía, y hendiendo "espacios y mas espacios," lleganse hasta el empireo, les hablan a los astros y, por ultimo, van a confundirse una falange de querubes con los cuales cantan, rien, lloran.<sup>10</sup>

The popular songs of the period were especially marked by this artificiality which was taken for urbanity. One song, transcribed at mid-century by the French traveler Jean Baptiste Mallat in *Les Philippines* (Paris, 1846), shows us that it was not only the diction of poetry that had changed but the tone as well.<sup>11</sup> The song is a lover's lament. Having been denied a woman's love, the lover is in deep grief:

Sinong tao kaya sa sandaigdigan  
ang may dusa nitong aking kahirapan?  
Di mo na nilingo't pinalungaylungay  
pagsinta sa iyong walang kaliluhan.<sup>11</sup>

To end his pain, the lover calls on death:

Signos at planetas, nangasaan kayo?  
Ikaw, Kamatayan, ngayo'y sumaklolo.  
Anhin ko ang buhay sa panahong ito,  
Wala ring halaga kung ang sinta'y lito.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *El indio batangueño*, 3rd ed. (Manila, 1888), p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> "Which man in this wide world/has grief like my sorrow?/You didn't heed, but left uncertain/ this love untainted by deceit." Bowring reproduced the music and text of the song, titled "Comintang de la Conquista," in the final pages of *A Visit to the Philippines*. As transcribed by Bowring from Mallat, the lyrics are hardly intelligible, and Bowring's free translation does not help clarify their sense. Epifanio de los Santos, in his note in Retana's edition of *Sucesos*, gives a reconstruction of the song. My own reconstruction differs somewhat from Santos'.

<sup>12</sup> Zodiac and planets, where are you?/Come, Death, now to my rescue./What need have I for life in this state,/It isn't worth a thing if love stays dazed.

The final strophe addresses the loved one and asks her to be on hand for the lover's funeral::

Maghintay-hintay ka, irog kong pumatay,  
itong pinatay mo kung pagbabalikan  
di ko naman wikang ako'y panangisan,  
ihatid mo lamang sa tabi ng hukay.<sup>13</sup>

The sentiment expressed in this song may not be encountered in previous poetry that has come down to us. The romantic exaggeration is something that we do not find in the folk poet who would not dare nor care to indulge in such sentimental excess. Note how the opening line locates the lover's grief within a universal context, an egocentric gesture absent from Tagalog folk poetry. The invocation to the zodiac and the planets and the apostrophe to Death—these are, suspiciously, poetic paraphernalia common in medieval and Renaissance poems on courtly love. The concluding stanza, which portrays the loved one as *la belle dame sans merci* only serves to confirm the literary influence at work on the poet.<sup>14</sup>

We have seen how the romances had been adapted into Tagalog metrical tales and plays during the eighteenth century (*Philippine Studies*, 16 [1968], 622-662). In the early phase of this contact with Spanish ballads, the poets were content to take only the plot, omitting either by design or necessity the subtleties of style. This may be noted in Jose de la Cruz's adaptation of the Gayferos ballads. In the nineteenth century, Tagalog poets began to take an interest in finer points of rhetoric as exemplified by Spanish poetry available in the country. This interest must have led into attempts at closer imitation of the ballads, resulting

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<sup>13</sup> Don't go yet, beloved, my murderer,/turn back and look upon the man you killed;/not that I ask you to mourn over me,/I only ask that you attend me to my grave.

<sup>14</sup> An exhaustive study of the subject of courtly love in Spanish literature is the first volume of Otis H. Green's monumental work *Spain and the Western Tradition*, 3 vols. (Madison, Wis. 1963). Chapters II-VI trace the evolution of the theme of courtly love from *El Cid* to Calderon de la Barca.

in the assimilation of the courtly love tradition and the poetic devices associated with it. In the *romances eróticos*, of which Agustín Durán has over 250 examples in the second volume of *Romancero General* (Nos. 1375-1930), one finds the origin of at least four mannerisms of nineteenth-century Tagalog poetry that have persisted to the present. These mannerisms are fondness for the apostrophe, liberal use of personification, cloying lugubriousness in pining for impossible love, and a tendency to talk about emotion rather than presenting it.

The short poem below, written by the fifteenth-century troubadour Nicolas Nuñez, exhibits characteristics that have become part of Tagalog poetry since the nineteenth century:

Durmiendo estaba el cuidado  
 Qu'el pesar le adormescia;  
 El dolor del corazon  
 Sus tristes ojos abria.  
 Si triste estaba velando,  
 Durmiendo mas mal sentía,  
 Con suspiros y llorando  
 Su grave pasion decia:  
 —Di, muerte, ¿por qué no vienes,  
 Y sanas la pena mia?  
 Darás fin a mi esperanza  
 Y a mi deseo alegría;  
 Que á la vida que tal vive,  
 Morir mejor de sería.

*Villancico de finida.*

"No puede sanar ventura  
 "Mi dolor,  
 "Pues morir es lo mejor."<sup>15</sup>

Here we have personification (*Durmiendo estaba el cuidado*), apostrophe (*Di, muerte, ¿por que no vienes/Y sanas la pena mia?*), and exaggerated emotion (*Pues morir es lo mejor*). Furthermore, Nuñez induces the emotion of sorrow in the reader by telling him about it when he should be recreating

<sup>15</sup> *Romancero General*, ed. Agustin Duran (Madrid, 1954), II, No. 1378, p. 426. This is Vol. XVI of the *Biblioteca de los autores españoles*.

it in the reader through specific details such as objects, gestures, events, etc. In poems like this poetic artifice becomes a mechanical means to the creation of an effect, instead of being an organic part that contributes to the texture of the experience contained in the poem.

A *comintang* transcribed by Retana in 1882 shows how the frustrated lover and his grand sorrow had become an obsessive theme among Tagalog poets intent on writing urbane poetry. The courtly lover in the pose of grieving is almost caricatured in the strophe below:

Naririto nang hihina-hinagpis  
ang puso cong ualang saua sa pag-ibig  
iuacsi man tuina ay nagpupumilit  
ihandog ang sinta na iguiniguiit.<sup>16</sup>

The use of personification and of the extravagant metaphor is a prominent feature of this excerpt from a *cundiman*:

Hayo na,t, dimoguin ang bato mong puso  
ang pait nang aquing luhan tumutulo,  
nang ang mailap mong aua,i, nang umamo  
sa ualang hanganang tapat cong pagsuyo.

Bucsi aquing irog ang pinto nang habag  
saguip ang lulubog sa laot nang hrap,  
at yaring puso cong aapu-apuhap  
sa dilim nang dusa,i, quiqitang liuanag.<sup>17</sup>

Metaphors are mixed in the frenzy of the unloved lover and in the eagerness of the poet to infect the audience with sentiment. Another *cundiman*, recorded by M. Walls y Merino in 1892, insists on the lover's woe, again a sorrow born of a woman's failure to return his love:

<sup>16</sup> Retana, *El indio*, p. 27. Here, sighing and moaning,/is my heart which cannot unlove love;/I put it behind me, but my love insists/on being offered again and again.

<sup>17</sup> Retana *El indio*, p. 32. Come now and let your heart of stone erode/under the rush of my bitter tears./so that your wild pity may be tamed/by my love that is both boundless and true./Open, my love, the gate of pity/and rescue one who drowns in the midst of sorrow's sea;/then will this groping heart of mine/find light after the dark of grief.

May dusa payata na lalo nang hapdi  
 sa nilalama,i, cong maña dalamhati  
 sasang maliuanag bucod aco,t, tangui  
 nadi na na ibsan, nang maña pighati.

Saan patutuño,t, canino lalapit  
 ang pobring lagay cong na cahapis hapis,  
 tumachu,t, paaua sa di nag pasaquit  
 anong madadating lacs mang ang tanguis.<sup>18</sup>

In these songs we have the unfolding of the tradition of sentimentalism in love poetry which was to become a permanent mark of Tagalog poetry even long after the Spanish Occupation. This sentimentalism was well on its way to becoming a tradition as early as the middle of the century, as a remark by another friar grammarian indicates in 1879; "*El estilo poético de los tagalos es siempre melancólico como sus cantares, triste come sus bosques.*"<sup>19</sup>

When Retana, in *El indio batangueño*, expresses puzzlement over the Tagalog poet's preference for "dithyrambic" over "anacreontic" verse, he fails to see the poetry of his time from the perspective of history. Folk poetry, from which the poets of the nineteenth century wanted to get away, was the *género anacreontico* that Retana missed in 1882. Urbane poetry, *el dítirambo*, was what the noted scholar found amusingly confused when he noted about the poets he had heard and read:

...aman el dítirambo, pecan de incoherentes, plazan sus versos de voces arcaicas y rimbombantes, de concordancias saladisimas; abundan en pensamientos embrollados, frases caóticas, similes atrevidos....<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *La música popular de Filipinas* (Madrid, 1892), p. 38. Is there sorrow keener than mine/while I keep vigil over my woes;/in this world I'm the only one/whose burden of grief never lifts./Where should I go, whom approach,/I whose state is most piteous;/I can run for pity from those who hurt me not,/but what good can I expect though I pour a million woes?

<sup>19</sup> Toribio Minguella, *Ensayo de gramatica hispano-tagala* (Manila, 1878), p. 287.

<sup>20</sup> Retana, *El indio*, p. 41.

Superficial as it may be to us now, the acquired urbanity of Tagalog poetry was instrumental in winning for it the patronage of middle-class readers and even of the budding intelligentsia. Jose Rizal, perhaps the most learned native of his generation and later a martyr of a Revolution he did not approve of, carried with him in his travels through Europe a copy of Francisco Baltazar's *Florante at Laura*. The great intellectual of the Revolution of 1896, Apolinario Mabini, transcribed Baltazar's poem from memory during the years of his exile after the Americans took over the Philippines. A Spanish student of the Tagalog language noted in his grammar that *Florante at Laura*, among Tagalog poems, was the only one worth the trouble of reading.<sup>21</sup>

The new poetry of the nineteenth century was not necessarily better than folk poetry, but it accomplished the desired effect of gaining respectability for writing in Tagalog. The price paid for that respectability—the loss of concreteness and a growing tendency toward abstraction—is a virtual return to the Tagalog poems missionary poets were writing during the seventeenth century. This return, aesthetically regrettable but historically necessary, was ironically enough the peak of urbanity that Tagalog poetry was to reach during the nineteenth century.

*The Pasion*. Even in the nineteenth century, the tradition of religious writing persisted and dominated the literary scene. There are three principal reasons for this. First, the major printing presses were still the ones owned by the religious orders, so that the materials published were inevitably religious in character. In addition to new books, these presses also reprinted a lot of out-of-print works from the previous centuries. Second, the writers themselves were either priests or lay members of religious organizations. A Tagalog newspaper founded in 1890, *Patnubay ng Catolico* (The Catholic's Guide), had among its writers Mariano Sevilla, Esteban Sales, Simon Ramirez, Lucas Layco, Pablo Tecson, and Andres Caguicla, all of them native priests. For the publication *Apostolado de la Prensa* (founded in 1894), native priests pre-

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<sup>21</sup> Minguella, p. 278.

dominated as contributors, among them Juan de la Rosa, Leocadio Dimanlig, Luis Ignacio, Francisco Ortiz, Jose Mercedes and Baltazar Leaño.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the Comisión Permanente de Censura (founded in 1856) saw to it that only books "safe" for the natives to read were published or allowed to enter the country. A document spelling out the regulations governing printing, issued in 1857, sheds light on the amount of red tape involved in securing approval for books to be published, of the penalties for illegal printing, of the difficulties entailed in the importation of books, and of the religious bias in the approval of applications for permission to publish.<sup>23</sup> There are two other things that the document clarifies: that previous to 1857, attempts were made to publish or import books that the government and the Church considered dangerous; and that the lack of variety in the literary output during the period need not necessarily reflect lack of inventiveness or imagination on the part of the writers. As in the previous ages, secular compositions flourished in the oral tradition or circulated in manuscripts.

In 1814, Aquino de Belen's *pasion* was more than a century old. In the interim between 1704 and 1814, Tagalog as a language had changed so much that the eighteenth-century poem became less intelligible because many words in it were already archaic. *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal ni Jesuchristong Pañginoon Natin* (Account of the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ Our Lord), published in 1814<sup>24</sup> by an anonymous writer, turns out to be a piece of plagiarism which attempted to update the language of Aquino de Belen and add new material to the earlier *pasion*. It has been traditional to attribute the book to Mariano Pilapil, a native priest in the faculty of Colegio de San José, so that the *pasion* has

<sup>22</sup> Jose Esperanza Cruz, "Ang Pahayagang Tagalog" (The Tagalog Newspaper), *Publications of the Institute of National Language*, IV, No. 6 (November 1938), pp. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> "Reglamento de Asuntos de Impresores," *Archivo de bibliófilo filipino*, ed. Wenceslao E. Retana (Madrid, 1895), I, pp. 297-322.

<sup>24</sup> The edition used is that published by the Imprenta de Amigos de País in Manila, 1873. The book has gone through numerous editions and remains as the most popular version of the *pasion*.

been popularly referred to as *Pasion Pilapil*. The fact, however, is that Pilapil's only contribution to the work was to correct the edition prepared by Manuel Grijalva.

The *pasion* of 1814 is also known as *Pasion Genesis* because the author, departing from Aquino de Belen, begins his narrative with an account of the creation of the world and closes it with a glimpse of the Last Judgment according to St. John's Apocalypse. Here the precedent might have been provided by Francisco Hernandez Blasco's sixteenth-century epic *Universal Redención* (1584) which covered "the history of man from the creation to the descent of the Holy Spirit."<sup>25</sup> *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* is twice the length of Aquino de Belen's *pasion*, but unfortunately not half as good.

Much of its verse is deplorably bad. Its author has no sense of either rime or rhythm, a lack made more obvious in the passages stolen from Aquino de Belen. From the scene of Peter's denial, we have this stanza from *Ang Mahal na Pasion*:

Pedro, icao ma,y, naligao,  
at nagcamali sa daan  
moli ca sa catoviran,  
Pastor aco,t, iyong ilao,  
na pagcacaguinhavahan.<sup>26</sup> (XI)

The author of *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* rewrote the stanza in order to set the rime at o:

Ay naligao ca man Pedro  
sa ibang daan tumunõ  
muli ca sa daang totoo,  
aco ay siyang Pastor mo  
na sumusunod sa iyo.<sup>27</sup> (p. 100)

<sup>25</sup> George Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature* (Boston, 1866), II, p. 473.

<sup>26</sup> Though you've gone astray, Peter,/though you've lost your way,/come back to the path of righteousness,/I'm your Shepherd and your light,/in whom you'll find comfort.

<sup>27</sup> Alas, though you've lost your way, Peter,/though you've taken the wrong way./retrace your steps into the true one;/I'm your Shepherd/who follows you.

The idea remains the same, but the richness of the rimes in Aquino de Belen's version has been lost, and with it the wealth of implications created by the words *naligao* (gone astray), *daan* (path), *catoviran* (reason, the straight path), *ilao* (light), and *pagcacaguinhavahan* (that which will give comfort). The lack of sensitivity to language by the nineteenth-century *pasion* writer is further shown up by his failure to recognize the value of manipulating the syntax of a poetic line in order to bring a word into focus. Aquino de Belen brings his stanza to a climax with the seven-syllable word *pagcacaguinhavahan*, which holds all that the denial has robbed Peter. The poet of *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* closes his stanza on an anticlimatic note by pursuing the image of the shepherd searching for the straying lamb.

Two other sections plagiarized from Aquino de Belen are the dialogue between Jesus and Mary on the way to Calvary, and the vivid description of the nailing on the cross. Here again, the original versification has been retouched in various places to eliminate archaisms and perhaps conceal the plagiarism. Sometimes, as in the dialogue between Jesus and Mary, new stanzas are added to amplify a single stanza in Aquino de Belen. Meant to be improvements, these stanzas only serve to reveal all the more fully the ineptness of the poet.

Nevertheless, *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* is not a complete fiasco. When the writer relies on his own creative inventiveness, he gives indication that he can rise to the dramatic demands of his material. This is in evidence in two scenes that are original with him. On the evening prior to the Last Supper, Jesus says farewell to His mother. Mary fails to understand why He should leave and be away for the Pasch. She pleads with Him to stay home and to explain to her what the priests want with Him. Jesus explains, telling her about His mission to redeem mankind from its sins. Mary goes to her room and prays. She asks God the Father why it is necessary that her Son should give up His life to save mankind. Why can't the Father spare His Son's life? God replies with the explanation that only the sacrifice of the Son can cleanse the world of sin, exhorting the querulous mother to remember the example of Abraham.

The scene is a daring attempt to probe into the psychology of Mary, and the result is a very human portrait of the mother of the Savior. Perhaps the portrait is not quite in accord with traditional Mariology (as indeed it is to meet with censure a few decades later from another writer of a *pasion*), but the characterization stamps *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* with the same kind of earthiness that made Aquino de Belen's re-creation of New Testament figures believable. Certainly, this is not Mary of the Annunciation as she has been conventionally portrayed, saying *Fiat* to the angel's message. However, the portrait is not as radically unconventional as it appears at first glance. The Bible itself gives a hint regarding the commonsensical streak in Mary, who remonstrates with Gabriel that she cannot be a mother because she is not married. When she speaks with God the Father, she appears as a representative of any ordinary human being baffled by divine design and searching desperately for clarification:

Ano baquit o Poong co,  
pinalalo sa Anac Mo  
ang manga hamac na tauo?  
di yata,i, mamahalin mo  
sa gayong sala sa iyo?

Yayang ganap na totoo  
manga capangyarihan mo  
di man mamatay Dios co,  
manyayari cun loob mo  
sacupin ang madlang tauo.<sup>28</sup> (p. 72)

The episode is reminiscent of the dialogue between God and Job in the Old Testament. It is possible that the association was intentional on the part of the poet. The expository stanzas closing the dialogue seem to point to this:

Nang matanto at mabatid  
nang Inang Virgeng may hapis

<sup>28</sup> But why, O Lord,/do You value over Your Son/miserable mankind?/How can You love them/who have sinned against You?/ . . . Since Your power/extends over everything,/even if He does not die, my God,/if You so will,/mankind will be redeemed.

na yao,i, loob nang Langit,  
munti ma,i, hindi umimic  
nag bata nga,t, nag tiis.

Mahapdi mang ualang hanga  
mapait man at mapacla,  
gayong hirap ay binata,  
nang Poong Virgen Maria,  
pag sunod sa Dios Ama.<sup>29</sup> (p. 73)

In the other scene original with *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal*, Mary laments the death of her Son at the foot of the cross, and she is joined by John and Mary Magdalene in a climactic outpouring of grief. She has not arrived at a final understanding of the Passion, but she resigns herself to her sorrows because the Father has willed everything:

Masaclap man at mapait  
na di masaho nang dibdib  
bunso itong iyong saquit,  
tiisin co,t, siyang ibig  
nang Dios Hari sa Langit.<sup>30</sup> (p. 165)

The last time Mary appears in the book is at her death-bed. She has called on her Son to take her with Him to heaven because she misses Him terribly. This explanation for Mary's Assumption will appear terribly naïve to the theologian, perhaps even heretical. As a literary touch, however, it completes the portrait of Mary as a simple woman, later to become the archetype in Tagalog prose and poetry of Filipino motherhood, whose simplicity is perhaps what makes her a most approachable figure in folk Catholicism.

Towards the middle of the century, the desire for urbanity seemed to have manifested itself in poetry not merely

<sup>29</sup> When the grieving mother/heard and understood/that it was the will of Heaven,/she didn't say a word/but bore her pain in silence./Endless and deep the pain,/bitter and unpalatable,/but the Blessed Virgin Mary/endured her pain/in obedience to the Father's will.

<sup>30</sup> Though my mouth is full of bitterness,/and heart can't comprehend/Your suffering, My Son,/I'll bear everything since it is willed/by God the King of Heaven.

as a preference for foreign subject matter and Hispanic poetic mannerisms, but also as an insistence on "correctness." This "correctness" extended not only to the use of rime and meter but to the development of subject matter as well. In religious writing, it appeared in the *pasion* of Aniceto de la Merced which bore the title *El libro de la vida* (Manila, 1852).<sup>31</sup> Poets were moving away from folk poetry towards self-conscious poetry of which the distinguishing mark was learning. Of the more learned poets of the century, many were native priests. They were motivated by the desire to demonstrate to the Spaniards who discriminated openly against the native clergy, that as poets they were as good if not better than the missionary poets. They also wanted to set aright the confusions and errors that lay poets, particularly those with strong folk roots, tended to create or commit when they wrote on religious themes. This last reason seemed to have been the motive which impelled de la Merced to write another *pasion*, the authoritative *pasion*.

In a pamphlet titled *Mañga Puna na Sinulat nang Pbro. D. Aniceto de la Merced* (Criticism Written by the Rev. Fr. Aniceto de la Merced),<sup>32</sup> the *pasion* of 1814 comes under severe attack. De La Merced takes some 90 passages from *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* and points out errors in style, doctrinal content and historical fact. He announces his intention in this passage:

Ipaaninao nitong casaysayan  
ang di na iinong maling maghambalang  
niyaong tinatauag na Pasiong mahal,  
bago'y isang catha ng isip na culang.<sup>33</sup> (p. 5)

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<sup>31</sup> The full title is *El libro de la vida; historia sagrada con santas reflexiones y doctrinas morales para la vida cristiana en verso tagalo*. The edition used is that published in Manila, ca. 1906.

<sup>32</sup> The only edition of this pamphlet I have been able to find is dated 1907, but it is fairly certain that de la Merced wrote his critique of *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* before he wrote *El libro de la vida*.

<sup>33</sup> This account will open your eyes/to the errors, unnoticed but littering/that book called *Pasiong Mahal*,/which is really the work of an ignoramus.

The major criticisms of de la Merced against *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* are incoherence (p. 59), faulty scholarship (p. 77), and repetitiveness (p. 82). He accuses the author of failing to make his points with clarity because of clumsy and inaccurate use of language. The author's scholarship is exposed as dubious, and his lack of talent is emphasized by pointing out that he had taken good poetry (Aquino de Belen's) and turned it into bad verse:

Dito'y, ilalagdang ipaquiquilala  
ang tulang binagong masarap ang lasa,  
ang ihahalili ay lubhang mapacla  
ng masabi lamang dunong niya'y, iba.<sup>34</sup> (p. 8)

*Mañga puna* further complains that the Lessons in *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* are "childish and meaningless."

*El libro de la vida*, being a demonstration of how the story of the Redemption should be told, avoids the faults of the *pasion* of 1814. The result is a *pasion* that is correct in every way: it is meticulous in its use of documentary evidence; its materials are systematically and symmetrically organized; it is "safe" in its presentation and interpretation of Biblical details; and above all, its versification is neat and polished. De la Merced's poem has been called the "most literary" of the three Tagalog *pasions* perhaps for the reasons given above. For the very same reasons, it is also the least interesting.

Considered purely as dramatic plot, the story of Christ has been fixed in detail and meaning by the four Gospels. It has been mythified as a narrative in the same way that the story of Oedipus became a myth for the Greeks of the fifth century B.C. For literary purposes, the details of the life of Christ need re-interpretation so that the plot can be charged with new meaning. This was what was done and is still being done to the myth of Oedipus. But Christ's life is not a simple story; it is the core of an entire religion. Unlike the myth of Oedipus, therefore, it cannot be told except as the Evange-

<sup>34</sup> Here will be noted and revealed/sweet verse that had been altered,/replaced with something acrid/to show that he [the author] has a mind of his own.

lists had presented it. Otherwise the writer risks going against religious orthodoxy. To be safe, therefore the writer will have to work within the framework established by orthodox theology. This allows him to view Biblical figures, other than Christ, under a new light. As we have seen, Gaspar Aquino de Belen, in 1704, devoted much space to the characterization of Peter, Judas and Mary. In 1814, the author of *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* copied Aquino de Belen's portrait of Peter and amplified the picture of Mary as the uncomprehending human mother of the Son of God.

Although de la Merced takes the poet of the *pasion* of 1814 to task for introducing into the Passion story episodes that are neither in the Bible nor Church tradition, he himself follows the tradition set by the previous *pasion* in portraying Mary. At the foot of the cross, Mary hears Christ say, "Woman, behold thy son," by which John is entrusted to her care. In *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal*, Mary's lament dwells on the desertion of her Son by the men He had come to save. In de la Merced, the grievance is startlingly personal—Mary feels at this point in the Passion that her Son has rejected her, her sense of loss emphasized by the vast difference between the Son she actually bore and the new son that has been given her:

Anac coi, isang Dios  
 si Juan ay di pa ood  
 paano bunso cong irog  
 na matanggap cong tibubos  
 ang palitan mong linoob.<sup>35</sup>

Once again departure from orthodoxy hits us with the shock of recognition. Here is a new insight into Mary. In the *pasion* of 1814, Mary appears as a rather simple woman who does not understand the necessity for her Son's suffering. She is an intensely devoted mother of Christ the Man, but the divine plan for the redemption of mankind is above her comprehension. As such, she emerges as a moving fig-

<sup>35</sup> My Son is God./John is not even a worm;/how then, my beloved Son,/can I accept with my whole heart/this exchange that You will.

ure in a most pedestrian poem. De la Merced's Mary understands too well the divinity of her Son, and for this reason sees the grievousness of her loss and irony of her gain. Here is a Mary whose intellectual acumen might alienate her from the reader's sympathies. But de la Merced does not leave matters at that. Mary explains that her words have been prompted by Christ's seeming refusal to allow her to share His pains:

O bugtong cong iniirrog  
tagubilin mo'y, ilambot  
sa ina mong inuunos  
sumisinghap nalulunod  
na inaalon sa laot.

Cung lubhang napacaantac  
ang dala mong madlang hirap  
hali na'i, suma balicat  
nang Inang sisinghap-singhap  
may munti pang icacauag.<sup>36</sup>

The intellectual turn of mind of de la Merced is in greater evidence in the passage about the Good Thief. When the latter reproves the criminal who rails at the crucified Christ, de la Merced interprets his gesture as a sign of contrition for the sins of his past life. After Christ has spoken, promising the Good Thief a place in Paradise, the poet addresses the Thief in an ironic vein:

Ang pag nanacao sa lupa  
ay tinangisan mong bigla  
caya pala'i, iyong daya  
ang mapag nanao mong bigla  
ang langit na masagana.

Ang Cruz ni Cristong mahal  
siyang ginagauang hagdan  
nitong iyong pagnanacao

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<sup>36</sup> O my one Son, my dearest,/temper the hardness of Your command/to your mother caught in a tempest,/gasping for life and drowning/as the waves at mid-sea beat about her./Should your burden of suffering/become too painful to bear,/come, ease it onto the shoulders/of your half-drowned mother,/for I can still flail my arms.

linihim ang cayamanan  
nang langit na caharian.<sup>37</sup> (p.171)

The cross as the thief's stepladder is a bold metaphor that reminds one of the highly elaborate conceits of Spanish baroque poetry, with which de la Merced was no doubt familiar. It is truly unfortunate that the author of *El libro de la vida* came into the literary scene as a cautious scholar and theologian rather than a poet. That he had the poetic gift cannot be doubted. Like Aquino de Belen, he rimed intelligently. And over Aquino de Belen and the poet of *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal*, he had the advantage of a more sophisticated sense of structure. The earlier *pasion* writers seemed to have understood structure as purely a physical relationship of parts—stanzas are shown to be related to one another by their appearance under one heading or by the plot that holds them together. De la Merced's work has logical structure as well, whereby chapters are made to illustrate a theme explicitly stated in the *Aral* that follows every chapter.

Early in the book, de la Merced states that his purpose is to tell about the coming of the Messiah and he does not propose to digress from his theme. This no-nonsense attitude about his task as a writer is indicative of the tone of the whole book. *El libro de la vida* follows *Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal* in giving an account of Genesis and the fall of man, using dodecasyllabic quatrains for this part instead of the usual *quintilla*. The first chapter narrates the coming of John the Baptist, the Annunciation, the Visitation, in the usual octosyllabic meter. The book concludes in the twenty-third chapter which tells of the destruction of Jerusalem and looks forward to the coming of the Anti-Christ and the Last Judgment.

After every chapter de la Merced has an *Aral* based on the episode just narrated. This is followed by a *Panalanġin*

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<sup>37</sup> Your thieving on earth/you summarily foreswore with tears;/  
you were being clever, it turned out,/having figured out in a glance/  
that heaven abounds in wealth./The Cross of Christ the Lord/you  
were using as a ladder/in this plot to commit theft;/you took by  
stealth the wealth/of the kingdom of heaven.

(Prayer) which is based in turn on the *Aral*. Thus, after the temptation of Christ, the *Aral* counsels the reader to resist temptation and explains certain points of doctrine regarding sin. The prayer is for God's help in times of temptation. This arrangement is not without precedent in religious writing in Tagalog. Francisco de San José, in 1605, employed a similar disposition of parts in *Memorial de la vida cristiana*, in which explanation of each of the Commandments was followed by an *avit* based on the points of doctrine touched upon in the explanation. Alonso de Santa Ana, in 1628 explained each part of the Credo in prose and then followed it up with verses that enjoined the reader to apply in their lives the lessons learned from the explanation. San José's and Santa Ana's seventeenth-century works find reincarnation in *El libro de la vida*, which is actually the final synthesis of the traditions of religious versification in Tagalog.

In the same way that San José's and Santa Ana's verses were prosaic, de la Merced's poetry is most utilitarian, generally avoiding the metaphorical language of the previous *pasions*. The lucidity of his verse is perhaps best suited to the intention of the poet, which is to instruct and, incidentally, to inspire. Given the intention behind it, the lucidity of de la Merced's poetry becomes the lucidity of prose, lucidity that is explanatory rather than expressive. In *El libro de la vida*, then, we have evidence that Tagalog poetry was ready to handle ideas. The ability had been acquired at a certain loss—the richness of implication of primitive poetry “full of metaphors” was squeezed out of Tagalog verse. The loss was to prove itself a gain towards the end of the century when discursive verse originally created by the needs of religious evangelism became the tool of evangelists for the Revolution of 1896.

*Francisco Baltazar: The Confluence of Traditions.* The life of Francisco Baltazar may, in our time, be read in the fashionable, erudite manner of his time as itself the story of the rise of Tagalog poetry to respectability.<sup>38</sup> More popularly

<sup>38</sup> The only full-length biographical study of Baltazar and his works is *Kun Sino ang Kumatha ng "Florante"* (The Man Who Wrote “Florante”) by Hermenegildo Cruz which was published in

known as "Balagtas," Baltazar was born in a farm to a poor family in Panginay, a barrio of the town of Bigaa in the province of Bulacan on April 2, 1788. He learned the catechism and the alphabet at the local parish school. When he was eleven, Baltazar went to Manila and worked as a servant in the household of a rich family in Tondo. Tondo was then a district known for its good poets, foremost among them being Jose de la Cruz who had for disciples lesser poets like Ananias Zorilla, Tomas Ledo, and the brothers Juan and Prudencio Feliciano.<sup>39</sup> Legend has it that Baltazar was one of de la Cruz's apprentice poets, but that the two came to a parting of ways because Baltazar was once unable to give the master the chick that de la Cruz was supposed to have demanded from everyone who came to him for advice on the writing of poetry. Baltazar's services as a servant must have been rendered in exchange for the opportunity to study at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran where he obtained the equivalent of a high school education. From San Juan de Letran, he went to the Colegio de San José for higher studies which included Latin, philosophy, theology, canon law and Roman and Spanish laws.<sup>40</sup> In 1835 he moved from Tondo to the district of Pandacan where he fell in love with Maria Asuncion Rivera. While in Pandacan, Baltazar was convicted of an unspecified crime and put into jail. He was released in 1838, the year *Florante at Laura* was supposed to have seen its first printing. Two years later Baltazar was in Balanga, Bataan, working as assistant to a judge. In 1842 he married Juana Tiambeng, a wealthy woman from Udyong (present-day Orion) in the same province, and settled down in his wife's hometown as a respected man of property. A legal

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Manila, 1906. Cruz leaves a lot of questions about Baltazar's life and career unanswered, but his book is well-researched and documented. *Kun Sino* contains an edition of *Florante at Laura*.

<sup>39</sup> These poets exist for us today only as names mentioned in Jose Ma. Rivera's *Huseng Sisiw*.

<sup>40</sup> There has been some confusion regarding the education of Baltazar. Cruz mentions only the Colegio de San José, but subsequent commentators say that the poet attended San Juan de Letran after San José. I have followed Cruz in tracing Baltazar's higher education to the Colegio de San José.

suit in 1856, involving a woman servant who claimed that Baltazar had cut her hair for reasons that are not clear, sent the poet to jail for four years. The cost of litigations and the length of his term in jail reduced Baltazar's family to penury. When Baltazar regained his liberty, he had to go back to clerical work. He died on February 20, 1862, and it is said that at his death-bed he prohibited his seven children from trying to make a career of writing poetry.

Of Baltazar's output as a poet, only two full-length works have been handed down to the twentieth century intact: the metrical romance *Florante at Laura* and the farce described earlier, *La India Elegante y el Negrito Amante*. Hermenegildo Cruz, in his biography of the poet, *Kun Sino ang Kumatha ng "Florante,"* reproduces fragments from the plays *Orosman at Zafira* (*Orosman and Zafira*), *Rodolfo y Rosamundo*, *Nudo Gordiano*, *Abdal y Miserena*, and *Bayaceto y Dorlisca*. Other plays that have been lost are *Don Nuño y Zelinda ó la desgracia del amor en la inocencia*, *Auredato y Astrone ó la fidelidad de una mujer*, *Clara Belmori ó el sitio de la Rochela*, *Mahomet at Costanza* (*Mahomet and Costanza*), and *Almanzor y Rosalina*.<sup>41</sup>

In the works of Baltazar, we have the sum-total of all the traditions that had underlain Tagalog poetry from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The folk tradition is represented by the monoriming quatrain from which even the urbanity-conscious poets of the nineteenth century were never able to get away. The tendency for the quatrain to split into two balancing couplets also persisted. What had become modified was the *talinghaga*. In the folk poems, it was a metaphor drawn from daily life which always served as the pivotal element to which the concept, whether stated or implied, was pegged. Baltazar's *talinghaga* did not depend upon a single metaphor but upon a combination of rhetorical figures, such as personification, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., in clarifying

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<sup>41</sup> The excerpts from long works and the short poems that Cruz reproduces in his book were collected, with one exception, from Baltazar's children who had memorized them. The page numbers given after the titles of works discussed in this chapter refer to *Kun Sino*.

or intensifying the poet's intended effect. A passage from one of the minor poems titled "*Pangaral sa Isang Binibining Ikakasal*" (Admonition to a Young Lady About To Be Married) (pp. 151-152) might be used to illustrate this point:

Bago kang papasok sa daang matinik,  
pasan sa balikat ay matinding sakit,  
ng pagkakamali nang yapak mo'y pilit  
na subyang ka't luha'y siyang isusungkit.<sup>42</sup>

The first line is something that a folk poet might have said. The next one, however, is something else—its metaphor derives from Spanish sources in its combination of the concrete (*pasan sa balikat*, borne on the shoulders) and the abstract (*matinding sakit*, great suffering). The fourth line is even farther away from the folk *talinghaga* in its employment of the conceit which makes of the wifely teardrop a needle that could be used to dislodge the thorn from the hurt foot.

"*Pangaral*" also reveals that Baltazar's art was caught up in the tradition of missionary poetry which was didactic and discursive. As a piece of advice, the poem paints a rather discouraging picture of the married life, the intent being to prepare the innocent bride-to-be for all the vicissitudes that she might encounter:

Nguni't ilan na sa lalaki ngayon  
sa matinding dusa ang makatutulong,  
nabubusog ka nga sa kani't pag-inom  
ang puso mo naman sa payapa'y gutom.

Kung magka-anak ka'y narito ang hiram  
bukod sa babathing kapagura't puyat,  
mura ng asawa't sa batang pag-iyak  
sabay titiisin ang nasawing palad.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> You're about to take a thorny path,/bearing on your shoulders great suffering;/once you take a wrong step, you're certain to get/a thorn in your foot, and only tears can extricate it.

<sup>43</sup> But how many among the menfolk of today/will help in bearing the burden of troubles;/you'll have food and drink, to be sure,/but your heart will starve for peace./When the children start coming,

The woman is then asked to think hard before she decides on the life she is choosing for herself, reminding her that she gives up the security of parental protection once she goes off to marry. After the gloomy thoughts about the future, the poem then closes with an exhortation that is almost a threat:

Lakad, kapatid ko't huwag na humantong,  
hayo na't umakyat sa bundok ng Sion,  
tangapin sa templo ng haring Solomon  
ang handog nang sintang bendecidong liston.<sup>44</sup>

Other poems by Baltazar are not as explicitly didactic as "*Pangaral*," but the intent to instruct is ever-present in Baltazar's art. This intent must be seen against the background of written Tagalog poetry since the seventeenth century to be understood. The idea that art could be for art's sake would have been unthinkable in a culture which identified the poet with the sage. The force of the folk tradition, especially that aspect deriving from the proverbs, was an influence that the nineteenth-century poet could not completely escape. *Colección de refranes, frases y modismos tagalos* (Guadalupe, 1890) by Gregorio Martin and Mariano Martinez Cuadrado reminds us that proverb-making was one pre-Hispanic activity that the natives never did lose. If didacticism in the poetry of Baltazar is traceable to the combined effect of missionary poetry and the proverbs, to the latter alone does Baltazar owe the aphoristic quality of his verse, a characteristic that has made his lines readily quotable.

The two *laos* in Cruz's book on Baltazar further confirm the poet's relation to missionary poetry, and tell us something about the economics of writing poetry during the nineteenth century. Both poems are examples of occasional verse turned out by Baltazar on commission from committees in

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misery arrives:/aside from weariness and lack of sleep,/there'll be the husband's nagging and the child's wailing,/both of which you'll have to endure as your lot.

<sup>44</sup> Go then, my sister, and don't hesitate/go now and climb Mount Zion,/ receive in the temple of Solomon,/the blessed bond that your loved one offers.

charge of religious activities during fiestas. Originally, the *loa* was a dramatic form introduced by the Spanish missionaries during the seventeenth century. During Baltazar's time, it had become a species of eulogistic poetry delivered in praise of a patron saint on his feast day or of a visiting dignitary. During the Governor-General's stop-over in Lipa, Batangas, in 1800, Martinez de Zúñiga describes an elaborate presentation of a *loa* in which its dramatic origins were still in evidence. Martinez de Zúñiga notes that it was full of classical allusions and details of the marvelous, remarking that *loas* must have been composed by priests "*en tiempos antiguos*."<sup>45</sup> Baltazar's *loas* are interesting only insofar as they shed light on the forces at work in his art. The first one (pp. 154-155) is in praise of St. Michael, patron saint of the town of Udyong, relating how the archangel had vanquished the forces of Lucifer. The second (pp. 156-157) is in celebration of the accession to the Spanish throne of Queen Isabella II of the Bourbon dynasty, the poem being a tribute to the queen who is seen as a harbinger of peace to the Spanish nation.

The poetry of the *ladinos* like Bagongbanta and Pinpin also left its mark on Baltazar. In the poem "*Paalam Na sa Iyo...!*" (And So Farewell to You...!) (p. 153), we find the same mixture of Spanish and Tagalog that we observed in the poems of the aforementioned seventeenth-century writers. Baltazar's use of Spanish differs, however, from the use to which Bagongbanta and Pinpin put it. Whereas the latter were writing Spanish poems with interlinear Tagalog translation, Baltazar wrote a real bilingual poem in which the speaker, a deserted lover, shifts from Spanish to Tagalog in expressing grief:

Inhumano dolor—hirap na matindi,  
sufre despreciado mi pecho constante,  
mis tiernos amores—na iyong inapi,  
destruye mi alma con rigor y fuerte.

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<sup>45</sup> Martinez de Zúñiga, I, 60-61.

Adios ingrata! —paalam na irog!  
 me mata tu desden—puso'y dinudurog,  
 acuerdame—kahit isang himutok  
 en la sepultura—kung ako'y mahulog.<sup>46</sup>

The poem continues in the same vein for four more stanzas which are in pure Tagalog, except for the use of the word *querida* in the fourth line of the fourth stanza. One is at first hard put to decide whether Baltazar is writing a serious love poem or parodying lugubrious love verse popular during his time, but the final stanza proves that the poet is in earnest:

Buntong hininga ko ang siyang inunan  
 kinumot ang hirap sa iyong pagpanaw,  
 tinapik-tapik yaring abang buhay  
 ng nag-aalilang lilong kamatayan.<sup>47</sup>

The indecisiveness of the tone betrays the poet's uneasiness with the *ladino* tradition, something he seemed to have affected only because it was fashionable.

It was the Tagalog theatre that deeply influenced the poetry of Baltazar. The fact that the farce *La India Elegante* is the only full-length play of his that has been preserved is unfortunate, for it has led students of Baltazar to overlook the poet's career as a playwright and its influence on his verse. Hermenegildo Cruz mentions ten dramas by Baltazar, and only one metrical romance. If Cruz's information is accurate, then we might conclude that the poet was primarily a playwright, a conclusion borne out by the techniques employed in *Florante at Laura*.

The excerpts from the plays that Cruz reproduces tend to give the impression that, as a playwright, Baltazar excelled in the writing of eloquent speeches and little else. It must

<sup>46</sup> Inhumano dolor—intense pain,/sufre despreciado mi pecho constante,/mis tiernos amores that you despised/destruye mi alma con rigor y fuerte./Adios ingrata! Farewell my love!/me mata tu desden—you're crushing my heart,/recuerdame even with just a sigh/en la sepultura when I'm laid to rest.

<sup>47</sup> For a pillow I used my sighs,/for a sheet, the pain of your departure,/my miserable life was given comforting pats/by the villain death who cared for me.

be remembered in this connection that these excerpts were transcribed, with one exception, from the memory of Baltazar's children, so that what we have now of the plays are perhaps only the memorable passages.

One fact that emerges clearly from the excerpts is that Baltazar, as a writer of dramatic verse, was most at home with the dodecasyllabic line. If *Orosman at Zafira* is typical of his other works, he must have experimented quite a bit with metrics. According to writer and critic Anacleto I. Dizon, this play shows two metrical innovations, namely, the insertion of a hexasyllabic line with no rime into the usual quatrain of monoriming dodecasyllabic lines, and the use of eighteen-syllable lines.<sup>48</sup> The excerpts also reveal the sonority of Baltazar's poetry, a quality well suited to the deep melancholy into which his lovers invariably fall.

*Orosman at Zafira*, the best of the excerpts, is based on the eternal triangle: Orosman saves Zafira from enemies who captured her, and falls in love with her although she is betrothed to Zelim. The passage given in *Kun Sino* (pp. 136-139) is taken from the scene where Orosman says farewell to Zafira. Zafira has fallen in love with her deliverer and detains the young warrior who cannot, in honor, take her away from the man who has a previous claim on her. Orosman bids Zafira good-bye in eight dodecasyllabic quatrains in which he bewails his hopeless love and the grief and envy that Zelim's good fortune will bring him:

Hangang tinatangap ng puso ni Zelim  
ang lahat ng twa, ligaya at aliw,  
ang puso ko nama'y mapapailalim  
sa laot ng dusa, pighati't hilahil.<sup>49</sup>

Zafira tries to detain him, but Orosman wants to prove himself the gentlemen:

<sup>48</sup> "Ang Panulaang Tagalog sa Pahapyaw na Tingin" (Tagalog Poetry at a Glance), *Parnasong Tagalog* (Malabon, Rizal, 1964), p. 1011. The lines quoted by Dizon are not found in the excerpt in Cruz's *Kun Sino*.

<sup>49</sup> While Zelim's heart fills/with every joy, happiness, bliss,/mine, on the other hand, will sink deeper/into the sea of sorrow, grief and pain.

Bayaan mo ako himalang karikitan,  
 huwag mong pigilin ang aking pag-panaw,  
 at kung ang dalita'y di na makayanan,  
 makitil na yaring hininga kong tangan.<sup>50</sup>

Zafira's reply comes in thirteen quatrains chiding Orosman for having saved her life only to leave her without a champion who would finally accomplish her revenge on her enemy Baulasem. She climaxes her long speech with the dramatic gesture of kneeling at Orosman's feet, a princess pleading like a slave:

Hayo na, guerrero't iyong ipangako  
 ng ako'y tumangap ng ligayang boo!  
 tingni ang Prinsesang mataas na puso [luluhod]  
 na sa iyong yapak ay susuyosuyo!<sup>51</sup>

As in Jose de la Cruz, characterization is flat in spite of all the words expended by the characters in expressing their feelings. In the above scene, action comes to a standstill, and emphasis falls on the beauty of language, the sonorous music of the melancholy verse, and the extravagance of emotionality communicated through all manner of rhetorical devices borrowed from Spanish *romances*.

In *Bayaceto y Dorlisca* (pp. 140-147), we are given a glimpse of what Baltazar can do with the dodecasyllabic line when the mood called for is not melancholy. The play tells of the struggle between the brothers Celim and Acmet for the right to succeed to the Sultan's throne and their rivalry over the love of Dorlisca. Acmet has taken his brother out of prison where the Sultan has committed Celim for reasons not given in the excerpt. Acmet has two henchmen with him and he wants them to kill Celim. Osman is willing to do Acmet's bidding, but the other henchman Acomat finds something anomalous in Acmet's desire to put Celim away in

<sup>50</sup> Let me go, O lovely vision,/don't keep me from taking my leave,/for when my torment I can no longer bear,/death will come to take my breath away.

<sup>51</sup> Then, good warrior, promise me that boon/that I might find happiness entire./Look, this proud princess [Kneels.]/woos your very footsteps.

secret. The scene gives Baltazar an occasion to use the dodecasyllabic measure to heighten tension.

- Osman. Dakilang principe, mabayaning Acmet  
utos mo'y hintay ko.
- Acmet. Sundin ang matuid  
na hatol ng Sultan.
- Acomat. Kayo'y tumahimik,  
sa sasabihin ko'y sandaling makinig.
- Acmet. Ano ang nasa mo? Ibig mong humadlang  
sa utos ng ating mabunying Sultan?
- Acomat. Ang prinsipe Celim ay dapat pugutan  
sa gitna ng plasa't hindi sa lihiman.
- Acmet. Osma'y patain mo ang prinsipe Celim.
- Osman. Mamatay ka taksil!
- Acomat. Kamay mo'y pigiling<sup>52</sup>  
abot yaring tabak . . . .
- Celim. Itong pagtataksil! . . . .
- Acmet. Di ka rin liligtas sa tangang patalim.<sup>53</sup>

Baltazar handles the dialogue here in much the same way that de la Cruz handles it in the quarrel scene between Guifero and Roldan in *Principe Baldovino*. The lines of the quatrain are distributed among the four characters in the scene, so that the rigidity of the stanza form as a vehicle for speeches is made less obvious. But as a metrical measure, there is one very important difference between the octosyllabic and the dodecasyllabic lines—the latter has a compulsory caesura after the sixth syllable. The octosyllabic line has no caesura so that one line of verse flows into the next, making it the more naturalistic meter for dialogue. In the scene, above

<sup>52</sup>Acomat's lines seem garbled here. In the first part (*Kamay mo'y pigiling*), he seems to be addressing Osman who is about to strike Celim. The second part (*abot yaring tabak*) seems to be directed to Celim.

<sup>53</sup>*Osman*. Great Prince, heroic Acmet, I await your order./*Acmet*. Follow the just/command of the Sultan/*Acomat*. Hear me,/listen for a while to what I have to say./*Acmet*. What do you want? You wish to disobey/the command of our great Sultan?/*Acomat*. Prince Celim should be beheaded/in the middle of the square, not in secret./*Acmet*. Osman, kill Prince Celim./*Osman*. Die, you traitor!/*Acomat*. Stay your hand.../Here, take this sword./*Celim*. This is treachery....!*Acmet*. Still, you can't escape my sword.

Baltazar could not break away from the compulsory caesura of the dodecasyllabic line. The poet turns the predicament into an advantage. By breaking the measure of the lines into units of six syllables, he is able to create more variety in the rhythm of the dialogue. Note how he assigns Osman six syllables (*Mamatay ka taksil!*), Acomat the next six (*Kamay mo'y pigilin*) which complete the line. Acomat starts the new line (*Abot yaring tabak*) which Celim completes (*Itong pag-tataksil*). Sometimes, one character says a line of eighteen syllables (Acomat's "*Kayo'y tumahimik/sa sasabihin ko'y sandaling makinig*"), another a line of twenty-four (Acmet's "*Ano ang nasa mo? Ibig mong humadlang/ sa utos ng ating mabunying Sultan?*"). Aside from the variety of rhythm achieved, there is also the matter of suppressing the riming sounds which would otherwise call attention to the dialogue as verse instead of realistic speech. This effect is made possible because Baltazar could end one line of dialogue at the point where the caesura occurs, thus withholding the riming sound until another character picks up the remaining six syllables.

An excerpt from *Rodolfo y Rosamundo* demonstrates Baltazar's handling of the octosyllabic quatrain in serious verse. Given by Cruz the title "*Ano ang Pag-Aasawa*" (What is Marriage?) (pp. 153-154), the speech is a shorter version of the poem "*Pangaral*" which was discussed earlier. What is striking about this piece is the effect of austerity produced in the reader who has become used to the richness of music and the emotional affectiveness of Baltazar's dodecasyllabic lines. One is tantalized by the possibilities of other dimensions to the poet's art that we can never discover simply because whatever other serious works he might have written in the octosyllabic measure have been lost to us.

Martinez de Zúñiga, after sitting through a performance of a "short" Tagalog play that lasted for five hours, remarks: "...*el estilo de los indios es muy difuso, y los actores hablan muy despacio* ...."<sup>54</sup> A speech from Baltazar's play *Abdal*

<sup>54</sup> Martinez de Zúñiga, I, 140.

y *Miserena* is probably typical of the "diffuse" style of Tagalog drama. Titled "*Labindalawang Sugat ng Puso*" (Twelve Wounds of the Heart), the speech consists of nineteen quatrains in which a suffering lover complains of the "wounds" that love has inflicted on him:

Hirap, Kalungkutan, Dalita't Hinagpis  
Pighati at Dusa, Dalamhati't Sakit  
Panibugho't Sindak, Bagabag, Ligalig,  
Umiwang lahat sa aba kong dibdib.<sup>55</sup>

Each of the next twelve stanzas takes a "wound" and elaborates on it. After the last "wound" has been exposed, the speaker apostrophizes Heaven and names the culprit:

Tingni, mga langit, yaring pagkalagay  
tunghayan ang aking kaalipustaan,  
Sintang alibugha! wala kundi ikaw  
ang bukal at sibol ng Karalitaan!<sup>56</sup>

The entire passage presents a problem in translation because the twelve "wounds" refer to concepts practically synonymous with one another in the conventional language of the suffering love of Tagalog poetry. It manifests an intoxication with language which we have not encountered in the poetry of the previous centuries. That Baltazar could stop the narrative line of his plays in order to give his characters extended speeches like this is an indication that his audience was no longer as keenly interested in plot as was the audience for the dramas of Jose de la Cruz and earlier playwrights. The change in the audience certainly reflects the growing sophistication of the natives who flocked to the performances of plays like *Abdal y Miserena*. The primitive interest in narrative as a series of incidents each one of which whets curiosity regarding the final outcome of the plot had been out-

<sup>55</sup> Weariness, Melancholy, Suffering, and Dejection,/Grief and Sorrow, Depression and Affliction/Jealousy and Fear, Worry and Anxiety,/All these stab my miserable heart.

<sup>56</sup> Look down, ye skies, upon my lot,/lay your eyes upon my misery;/faithless Love, you and only you/are the fountainhead of all my woes!

grown by the nineteenth-century audience. While the change was not conducive to the production of better drama, it was good insofar as it confronted the poet with the fact of language, a confrontation that could lead to the poet's exploration of the expressive possibilities of language. In Baltazar's hands, what was originally rural speech became urbane language through the assimilation of Spanish rhetorical devices. This was a genuine service to Tagalog poetry in the nineteenth century. That twentieth-century idolaters of Baltazar took the poet's experiment with language during his time to be the highest peak in the poetic use of Tagalog is regrettable shortsightedness, a failure to see their idol in the context of history.