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The Fiesta Plays of Bohol

PATRICIO R. CEBALLOS

We present to the reader in this article those local creations that were written in order to help celebrate a town-fiesta or even a barrio-fiesta. These are the plays or dramas — the *nilambays* or *moro-moros* and *zarzuelas* — that Boholano dramaturgos composed or, as was often the case, were asked to compose in order to insure a more colorful fiesta celebration.

Since time immemorial Boholanos have been observing their local fiestas religiously and, to some extent, fanatically. Even today, when many people everywhere speak of fiestas for progress or era of austerity or decade of the floating rate, it can still be truly said of Bohol that there are as many fiestas in Bohol as there are towns and barrios.

Call it a manifestation of the religious faith of the Boholanos. Call it an externalization of their instinct to socialize, to make merry, to spend quite lavishly, at least, once a year so that other people (relatives, friends, even strangers) will have a wonderful time. Call it a form of escape from the humdrum existence of everyday to a day of much food and drink, of wine and roses, of song and laughter. Call it a composite of all these things — the religious, the material, the physical, the psychological. Praise or condemn it. But this ancient practice, observed almost everywhere in the Philippines since the time of the Spaniards (which is really as old as man himself for man was created with the inalienable right to happiness), will continue to be a big yearly event in every Bohol town or barrio.

Of course, fiesta celebrations in the time of Pedring¹ were in

1. [The author uses Pedring as a symbol of the Boholano of 1888 to 1942. See "Pedring and His Times", *Philippine Studies* 21 (1973): 328-55. — Ed.]

many ways better and merrier and more colorful than today's fiesta celebrations. It is easy to detect that in today's fiesta celebrations the center of the celebration is contained within the smaller unit, say a family with its circle of friends and relatives, more so than within the larger group, say the community with its different members, whether rich, average or poor. That is why in today's fiestas the main and, sometimes, the only event is the feasting. Whereas in the time of Pedring there were quite a number of activities to give the community common enjoyment. There were different games or contests held in the public plaza. There were popular programs presented. There were plays or dramas open to everybody with simple benches fronting the stage given to those in the audience who would pay for a ticket.

These plays or dramas were regular fiesta attractions in many Bohol towns or barrios during the time of Pedring. These dramatic presentations were essentially the undertaking of amateur players, most of whom had no acting background to speak of except, perhaps, a few public appearances during their grade school or high school days when their teachers picked them as participants in a school operatta or programs. But they were naturally gifted. Some of them showed genuine promise and talent and the townspeople gave them due recognition. Fiesta after fiesta these so-called acknowledged artists would be asked to play a role. And their involvement was mainly an act of service to the community. They felt it would help make the fiesta-celebration livelier and more memorable. Hence, with the availability of local talents a relatively sure thing and with service to the community a valued norm of conduct, it should not be difficult, both in the town-level and in the barrio-level, for a group of persons to get organized for the purpose of undertaking a laudable thing like staging a play come fiesta-time.

Of course, there had to be one man to get them organized. If the local parish priest happened to be artistically inclined, he would likely exert his priestly influence so that things would get going. But there would normally be found in the locality a man from among the laity who would have the talent to write

either an adaptation of an old play or an original composition. This talented local "dramaturgo" would normally lead the group and on his shoulders would normally rest the main burden of getting the production-process moving.

Bohol, according to Rev. Fr. Ramon Neri,² Chairman and Director of Bohol Clergy Remuneration System and a poet and musician in his own right, has been wonderfully blessed with a goodly number of "dramaturgos" whose creative contributions have been an enriching factor in the lives of many Boholanos whether living in the barrios or in the poblaciones. To cite some names, he mentioned the following: Mr. Epifanio Fagud of Loay; Mr. Sirecio Villas of Maribojoc and Antequera; Mr. Felix Tubal of Daus; Mr. Hipolito Enriquez of Inabanga; Mr. Pablo Laruga of Clarin; Mr. Sebastian Culavite of Sevilla; Mr. Justo Cruzante Boiser, Sr. of Talibon; Mr. Elias Perin of Sevilla; Mr. Pedro Usarraga of Daus; Dr. Juan Rivera of Loay; Mr. Casiano Datoy also of Loay; Mr. Juan Paler also of Loay; Mr. Teodoro Tan Sarmiento of Tagbilaran; Mr. Honorio Grupo also of Tagbilaran; Mr. Policronio Escalante of Ubay; and Mr. Cristobal Cellan of Inabanga.

The above litany of names given by Fr. Neri, who unfortunately, had no additional information to offer the writer of this paper other than the fact that these names belong to talented Boholanos who have served the people in their hometowns and, perhaps, in other towns as well by supplying fiesta plays, is intended to reinforce the allegation that Bohol has been generously blessed with a great number of local playwrights, most of whom may merit only an average rating, with a few deserving a really high rating.

RANDOM CHOICES

Here are a few examples of fiesta-plays that were well received in the towns where they were staged. There's the play entitled

2. Rev. Fr. Ramon Neri, Tagbilaran, Bohol, May 5, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Halok nga Makahibulong (Wonderful Kiss) by Dr. Juan Rivera written for the 1930 Loay fiesta in honor of the Blessed Trinity. According to Mrs. Juana Cense Apat who was one of the leading characters in the play, this particular Rivera opus became so popular that, under the sponsorship of the late Senator Jose Clarin, it was shown again that same year in the Tagbilaran Cockpit as a benefit show for the purpose of raising funds for the purchase of "comparsa" instruments for Loay musicians.

The main plot revolves around the happy return back to the palace and her royal rank as a lovely and virtuous princess from an exile in the mountains imposed upon her by a scheming elder sister who was both jealous and proud. A stranger who is a hunchback arrives in the palace. He is instrumental in the healing of the king from a mysterious ailment. In return for that favor, all he asks is that the elder princess plant a kiss on his back. But the proud princess refuses to do so for she detests his misshapen figure. So the hunchback leaves the palace and, in his desperation, proceeds to the mountains to live far away from the society of men. There he meets the younger princess whose kind regard helps restore his confidence. They fall in love. When the princess kisses his back when he asks her to, a transformation takes place. From a deformed, despicable figure he becomes a dashing, princely knight. Informed of the true identity of her loved one, he becomes instrumental in restoring the good princess back to her rightful place of honor. They live happily ever after. Of course, the wicked princess learns a good lesson the hard way and promises to reform herself.

Here is another play entitled *Tumoy sa Kalibutan* (End of the World) written by Mr. Gregorio Villas, the third son of the late Mr. Sirecio Villas of Maribojoc and Antequera and the one child who inherited most the theatrical talent of the father. This particular play was staged in barrio Kawasan, Antequera, on August 16, 1933 on the occasion of the fiesta in the barrio. This three-act play depicts the trials and sufferings two orphaned children, a boy and a girl, had to undergo at the hands of a cruel step-mother, abetted, no doubt, by the fact that the father was away from home on a business trip. The cruel treat-

ment included the denial of the children's right to go to church. Eventually, the children ran away to Moroland where later the girl was to become a sultan's wife and the boy the husband of a princess of Moroland. The two were to become instrumental in the conversion to the Christian Faith of the people in Moroland. Things turn out happily for the two in the end; but a tragic ending befalls the cruel step-mother. Upon the disappearance of the two children she rushed to the grave of their real mother and heaped insults and abuses upon the tomb until she was struck by a bolt of lightning and she died on the spot.

Another play written by the same author for barrio Tupas, Antequera, on the occasion of its barrio-fiesta is this play entitled *Kahadlok sa Dios* (Fear of God). Mr. Gregorio Villas staged this play in 1939. The plot centers on an unbeliever, a vice-ridden follower of the motto: wine, women and song. When he loses all his money, he becomes so poor that his former women friends abandon him. Desperate, he goes to the convent to ask advice from the priest. But seeing where the priest keeps his money, he goes home filled with the desire to rob the priest. That evening he perpetrates the robbery but is foiled because the boy-companion of the priest is awakened by the intrusion of the thief. He shouts for help and the priest arrives and so the thief is cornered. He tries to attack the priest with a dagger; but he is overpowered. He then expresses his regrets and returns the money to the priest. But the latter forgives him and gives him the money instead. He is on his way down from the convent when the town policeman, alerted earlier by the cries of the convent-boy, sees him and apprehends him. He is taken to jail, is tried and sentenced to be hanged. Before the execution, he makes a general confession to the priest. At this point there is the insertion of an attempt on the part of the civil authorities to draw from the priest the sins confessed by the thief. Of course, he refuses to divulge anything and this seal of confession places him in some tight situations for a while until the thief saves him from further trouble by confessing publicly his own crime. He dies contrite — won by the fear of God.

Here is still another example of a fiesta-play entitled *Italia* the

authorship of which is very difficult to establish. The writer of this paper was allowed by the owner of the script, Miss Susana Hordista, at least one afternoon to read the old copy done in longhand in a notebook that must be more than thirty-five years old. Miss Hordista, who was born in Maribojoc and who grew up in Tubigon, is a spinster in her late sixties. The script that she has in her keeping is a *Nilambay* play which her mother, the late Mrs. Placida Baura for she became a widow and remarried, copied from an older script several years ago and which luckily survived the war. For she remembers that there were other *Nilambay* scripts belonging to her mother, who used to help in the production of *Nilambay* plays in Tubigon, and they all got lost.

Anyway, the *Italia* play which, according to Miss Hordista, was a fiesta-presentation in Tubigon in 1919 or 1920, tells of the many trials and hardships borne by Italia until in the end happiness at last comes to her and her family. Italia has a husband named Filipo who decides to desert her because he suspects somebody else to be the father of the son whom Italia gave birth to and who died shortly after birth. Filipo is, of course, wrong. Well, he goes to the place of the Moros and embraces their way of life. He is unaware that his wife will soon give birth to another child, his child. The pregnant Italia goes to Emperor Diocletian to ask his help so her husband will be located and returned to her. The emperor promises to help her but keeps her a house-prisoner in the palace. Then she gives birth to a girl. With no means of having her baby baptized in the pagan palace of Diocletian, she asks a guard for water and baptizes her baby herself, naming her Crucifina, after Christ. When she is fully recovered, the emperor calls for her and tries to make her forget her husband. He invites her to stay in the palace and be his wife. He tells her that Filipo is dead for no news has reached them. But she rejects the overtures of the emperor. The angry king has her sent into a dungeon. When the men sent to look for Filipo return with no good news, the emperor renews his offer to Italia. But she is adamant in her refusal. He has her buried up to the neck in the ground. Then she is

released only to be crucified. Crucifina, now a little older, is also detained in prison. Then the emperor has Italia placed inside an iron cage which is then dropped into the sea. But her prayers to the Virgin are answered and angels keep the iron cage from sinking and lead it to safety. Crucifina, on the other hand, dreams that her mother, still in that iron cage, has reached a certain shore safely. She prays that she be freed from prison so that she can go to the rescue of her mother. She is miraculously freed from prison and guided to the very place where her mother's cage has landed. With God's help she opens the iron cage and saves her mother. Then a scheming couple discover the reunited mother and daughter and report them to the emperor. Soldiers are dispatched and mother and child are again taken to the presence of an angry Diocletian who orders both to be hanged. Meanwhile, Filipino remembers his wife and misses her terribly. He then decides to leave Moroland and to go home to his wife. He comes in time to see the preparations for the public execution. He recognizes the would-be victims. At the climax a long duel takes place between Filipino and Diocletian. The latter is slain and the former is reunited with his wife and daughter.

The above summaries of some fiesta-plays which the writer of this paper had the pleasure of, at least, skimming through during one of his short visits to his home-province somehow show that the Boholano "dramaturgos" are pretty versatile in the way they handle the plotting of their dramatic stories. Most probably quite a number of the stories found in the fiesta-plays of the Boholanos are not original. But whether they are adaptations or adulterations or original versions, by and large the manipulation of events is commendable.

The Dr. Rivera vehicle entitled *Halok nga Nakahibulong* can be easier contrived rather than naturally developed; but the core of unity in the plot (namely the happy return of the exiled princess) is so deftly and smoothly engineered through easy handling of the different parts of episodes that an integral unity is achieved throughout.

The plays of Mr. Villas should be assessed in accordance with

the kind of audience addressed by the playwright. Both fiesta-plays were intended for the barriofolks. So, if in the plotting, there are in evidence certain elements which may not be to the liking of some spectators who belong more to the poblacion-type of audience, these same sore points may be overlooked altogether by the simpler, maybe more naive and less discerning folks in the barrios. Hence, the inadequately conditioned transformation or change in the fortune of the two orphaned children in the play *Tumoy sa Kalibutan* and the overly treated retribution scene depicting the step-mother's final fate would likely escape censure from the much easier-to-please barrio audience. The same can be said of the rather loose handling of the fate that befell the thief after his arrest by the police officer in the play *Kahadlok sa Dios* as well as the digressionary incursion into the complication of the seal of confession (a temptation too strong, perhaps, to resist on the ground that it's a barrio audience that is being addressed and an audience, besides, that is deeply and emotionally rooted in the Christian faith) which is added near the end of the play.

The elaborate plotting of the *Nilambay* play entitled *Italia* is not only in keeping with the very nature of the *Nilambay* play; it is a very challenging thing to do if one considers the big problem of coordinating and balancing and unifying all throughout its many complications. *Lambay* in Visayan means crab — that nice-tasting sea-food having so many feet. The *Nilambay* is supposed to be like that — a theatrical dish made attractive because of its color, its grand manner, its dimensions and “crawling” into the goodwill of its audience on its many suspenseful complications. No wonder the *Nilambay* plays were known to last all night or with one or two more nights added in order to show the entire play.

Besides the skill in handling plot of the Boholano “dramaturgos” evident even in the summaries of some fiesta-plays cited by the writer of this paper, another observation worth noting down is their preoccupation with the message of the play. There has to be a message. The play must be in one way or another didactic. It must advance a point, a thesis, a truth, a conviction.

It must teach something or convey a lesson. And this message must come out in explicit terms. The message has to be articulated either through a speech by one of the important characters or through a song, whether solo, duet or chorus. An implicit or indirect communication of the message will not do. As a matter of fact, although the message is often intimately interwoven into the movement or action fabric of the story of the play with this felicitous effect, namely that the audience, even a folk-audience, imbibes the message of the play in a more meaningful and enduring way, just the same the Boholano playwright easily falls for the temptation to break into the narrative in as subtle a manner as is possible in order to plug in, as it were, the message of the play like what people do with an ad in a radio or television program. Call it the playwright's mistrust of the audience or fear lest the audience fails to get his point. Call it an extension of the Boholano trait — to be open, to be frank, to be candidly direct. Anyway, whether excusable or not, it is there — this thematic emphasis.

THE NILAMBAY NI SAN VICENTE

It was through his brother, Mr. Jose Ceballos, registrar of the Holy Cross Academy of Tubigon (a town on the western coast of Bohol some 54 kilometers from Tagbilaran) and also a member of the Municipal Council in the same town, that the writer of this paper was able to obtain a copy of this particular *Nilambay* play. The copy belongs to Mr. Benigno Rosco, a native of Tubigon, who was active during his younger days in managing the production of fiesta plays in sitio Suba, Tubigon. As a matter of fact, he produced in May of 1922 a *Nilambay* play entitled *Florentina*.

Florentina tells of a virtuous and very beautiful princess who since her tenth birthday was kept a virtual prisoner inside a room atop a tower by order of her own father King Alfonso who was afraid to lose his daughter sooner than would be necessary because of her exceptional beauty. Actually many suitors came to inquire about her because the news somehow leaked out that

King Alfonso had a beautiful daughter. The king always told them that he had no daughter. When the right time came for her to get married, the king sent her a gift and a message asking her for her handclasp. This message was interpreted literally for Florentina's right hand was cut off and sent to her father. This enraged the king. He had his now deformed daughter placed inside a box to be thrown into the sea. But Mary and the angels saved her from drowning, had her hand made whole again and guided the box containing her person to a beach where a kind couple found her and adopted her as their own child. Later, the king in that new place found her and secretly wanted her to be his queen. But he first submitted her to a lot of tests to see the limits of her virtue (this is similar to the fate of the patient Criselda in one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). She passed all tests proving her virtue. In the end she became the queen of that place.

Although Mr. Benigno Rosco had little formal schooling, he had a natural talent reinforced by some rudiments in the art of the theater which he learned from the late Mr. Macario de la Victoria (popularly known as Madjo Karjo), who was sacristan mayor of Tubigon from 1912 to 1922 and who was, besides, a writer of a *Nilambay* play entitled *Constantino* which was shown in 1917 during the barrio fiesta of Pook, Tubigon.

Mr. Benigno Rosco's younger brother, Apolonio, was a regular participant in the *Nilambay* plays staged in Tubigon during the 1920's. He usually played the role of a soldier or artilleryman and, sometimes, of an army officer. In one particular performance, according to Mr. Juan Montoya who was himself a regular *Nilambay* performer in those days, Apolonio figured in an accident which nearly proved fatal when the lighted torch he was supposed to use to fire the cannon with accidentally touched a bag full of powder which was kept near the place where he was standing resulting in an explosion which left him with burning clothes and body-burns that were pretty serious. In those days fireworks were used liberally in order to add color to the *Nilambay* performances. As a matter of fact, Mr. Serapio Rosco, father of both Benigno and Apolonio and one time "Capital" or mayor of

Tubigon, was famous for his pyrotechnic business and was a regular supplier for the *Nilambay* "guerra-guerra."

Mr. Montoya recalled to the writer of this paper a big fire that destroyed many houses in sitio Suba, Tubigon, in the year 1921. The fire actually started in the house of Mr. "Ano" Mesina due to a gas-lamp which was carelessly left burning in the kitchen area. The fire spread fast to the neighboring houses until it reached the house of Mr. Serapio Rosco. Up in the ceiling of the Rosco residence there were many fireworks explosives (remnants from a *Nilambay* play entitled *Santa Filomena* which was presented in sitio Suba only a few nights ago in connection with the district fiesta). The fire turned into a veritable inferno with explosions rocking the area. In the memory of many old-timers of Tubigon who witnessed that conflagration, there has never been a fire in Tubigon that big and that devastating.

From information passed on to the writer of this paper by his brother who had several talks with Mr. Benigno Rosco and by other native-residents of Tubigon like Mr. Sulpicio Falcon and Mr. Juan Montoya and Mrs. Analotia Caluña Pilotos,³ a 63-year old widow and fishvender who lives in barrio Pinayagan Norte and who used to be a member of the cast in the *Nilambay* plays performed in her barrio in the 1920's, the following points regarding the *Nilambay* plays may be advanced.

The *Nilambay* is a long play in verse consisting of several rather loosely related episodes depicting a clash between the forces of good (normally those who are Christian believers) and the forces of evil (normally the heathens or unbelievers) with the former ultimately prevailing over the latter through the powerful intervention of God and His saints who fully support the cause of the protagonist. Usually the antagonistic force is won over to the Christian faith at the end. Encounters like swordfights or gun-battles add excitement to the presentation. The setting of the story is the distant past rather than the present. Colorful costumes worn by the participants (adorned with "libitos"

3. Mrs. Anatolia Caluña Pilotos, Tubigon, Bohol, May 15, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

which are shiny beads or sequins giving a glittering effect) contribute to the spectacle inherent in a *Nilambay* play. In the absence of a curtain or curtains, shifts or changes in time element or setting or situation are indicated by musical intermissions rendered by an orchestra. Another help is the stage-layout.

The *Nilambay* stage is three-leveled with the front stage measuring about 15 (width) by 7 (depth) meters and standing about 1-1/2 meters from the ground; the middle stage measuring slightly less and standing 1 meter higher than the front stage; and the back stage still slightly less than the middle stage and standing 1 meter higher than the middle stage. Wooden steps in the center or on the sides leading from the back stage down to the middle stage and from the middle down to the front stage make it possible for the participants to move up or down from one stage to another. The back stage is often the place or setting for action involving height or elevation like the apparition of a heavenly person or imprisonment in a high tower. The center stage is often the setting for action or dialogue involving a limited number of characters (from 4 to 10 people). The front stage is where action or dialogue scenes involving many characters (like a battle-scene or a royal court in session) often take place.

In a *Nilambay* presentation the impression of something big or dimensional is conveyed not only in the length of the presentation nor in the extensive time coverage of the story nor in the size of the cast; but also in the type of stage used for the presentation. Materials used for the construction of the stage are bamboo poles for the posts and the beams and wood for the flooring. Normally it would take nearly two months of community volunteer work to construct the huge stage. There may be background sceneries (not the hanging type but the standing type) used to indicate, for example, a hall in a palace or an open field for the "guerra-guerra." Stage-props are also used to help create the impression of verisimilitude.

According to Mr. Juan Montoya, one prop he can never forget in connection with the *Santa Filomena Nilambay* presentation in 1921 was an ingenious contraption shaped like a zeppelin which was hung to a strong wire tied securely between

two poles (one planted behind the backstage and the other planted out in front some one-hundred meters away) and which was so contrived that bombs (actually fireworks materials) were dropping from it as it moved over the stage in support of the friends of Santa Filomena against one of the heathen emperors courting her.

According to Mrs. Pilotos who played the role of a heathen princess in one *Nilambay* presentation in her barrio way back in 1922 when she was barely fifteen years old, the entire *Nilambay* cast would normally number at least forty people. It would take about a year to rehearse for the presentation. Because of the funding and technical problems involved, according to her, *Nilambay* presentations in her barrio alone could not be made regular fiesta-attractions. She remembers only five *Nilambay* presentations shown in her barrio: *Haring Bakonodosor* in 1922; *Haring Asuero* in 1925; *Haring Asuero* (with a new story version) in 1929; *Puntaflor ug Puntablanca* in 1935; and *Jacob* (the story of Joseph and his eleven brothers) in 1939. She further told the writer of this paper that only unmarried women were allowed to participate as a member of the cast. In her own case, she had a part in the 1922 presentation; that turned out to be her first and last, for she got married in 1924. With her experience and connections (her father, the late Mr. Laureano Caluña, was a barrio musician who knew how to compose music and to play the clarinet, saxophone and other wind-instruments and who normally directed the orchestra that played for the *Nilambay*), it would have been easy for her to get a part except for the fact that there was that rule banning married women. But married men, according to her, were allowed to be members of the cast.

The funding would vary according to the goal set up by the business-manager of the group handling the presentation. Mr. Juan Montoya revealed to the writer of this paper that the average over-all cost of a *Nilambay* presentation in the poblacion proper of Tubigon would be from five to ten thousand pesos. He said that it was easy to raise the needed amount because the substantial members of the community were willing to help with generous donations.

The writer of this paper made an honest attempt to trace the origin of the *Nilambay* in Bohol, but these are the only significant data he could manage to collect. They do not give conclusions but merely clues pointing to speculations that may sound pretty valid.

One contention made by an old-timer in the person of Mr. Felix Corbita Serohijos,⁴ an 80-year old native of Tubigon now residing in Pagadian, Zamboanga del Sur as an established land-owner and a dealer of musical instruments, whom the writer of this paper met in Tubigon during the fiesta-celebration in 1968, sets the *Nilambay* beginning, if not in Bohol at least in Tubigon which he claimed to be one of the first towns in Bohol to develop the *Nilambay*, to the year 1904. According to him, he was thirteen years old that year and it was at that age when he saw his first *Nilambay* presentation in barrio Pook, Tubigon entitled *Santa Elena*. From that year on he was an avid viewer of the *Nilambay* plays which, according to him, enjoyed great popularity in Tubigon especially from 1910 to 1921, the year of the big fire. It was in the *Santa Filomena* presentation in the year 1921 in Suba, Tubigon where he had his first taste of acting in a *Nilambay* play portraying a lion engaged in a mortal combat with a giant. His speaking part was roaring like a lion.

Another old-timer interviewed by the writer of this paper believed 1905 to be the year when the presentation of *Nilambay* plays came into vogue in, at least, the town of Maribojoc which he claimed to be among the first towns in Bohol to develop a *Nilambay* tradition. Mons. Manuel Mascariñas, bishop of Bohol, revealed to the writer of this paper that in that year when he was nine years old he saw his first *Nilambay* play which he heard people describe as the first such type of play to be presented in Maribojoc. As a matter of fact, he saw it twice that same year — the first time on May 3 during the fiesta of Santa Cruz and the second time on November 3 during the fiesta of San Vicente. Although he was a native of Antequera, his parents would often

4. Mr. Felix Corbita Serohijos, Tubigon, Bohol, May 15, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

visit Maribojoc with the children during fiesta time since his mother came from Maribojoc. If he still remembered correctly, the *Nilambay* play centered on the Christian figure Constantine and his exploits.

Another old-timer in the person of Mr. Sulpicio Falcon of Tubigon, who is almost of the same age as Mr. Serohijos, contended that the start of the *Nilambay* tradition, at least, in Tubigon took place (he did not specify the exact year) in the early 1900's. He mentioned a certain Manding Kulas as the initiator of the *Nilambay* in Bohol. Manding Kulas (this is how he is known) was a resident-native of Dauis, Bohol. He was often seen around in Tubigon because he was a family-friend of the Falcons (Mrs. Falcon, the former Miss Lalay Quezon and the mother of Mr. Sulpicio Falcon, came from Dauis, Bohol). This Manding Kulas was known to be a dramaturgo and he owned a collection of *Nilambay* scripts done on paper called "catalan" (an old type of paper) with the help of a pen made up of an eagle's feather and ink imported from Germany (these were the specifications supplied by Mr. Falcon). Mr. Falcon is of the belief that the *Nilambay* developed first in Dauis and from there spread to other towns where interest in such plays was aroused. He thinks Manding Kulas was one Boholano dramaturgo prominently involved in this initial stage of development. He does not, however, attribute the full authorship of those *Nilambay* scripts found in Manding Kulas's collection to Manding Kulas. Probably the parish priest of Dauis familiarized him with this dramatic form by showing him certain models that in one way or another came into the possession of the Dauis parish. Even before the turn of the century the shrine of Our Lady of the Assumption (Patroness of Dauis) was known to be miraculous and was a favorite pilgrimage-center with thousands of devotees swarming in from all over Bohol to pay special respects to the Virgin. Her August 15 fiesta was a grand celebration with a mammoth crowd in attendance. There, evidently, was great challenge for gifted persons like Manding Kulas to show resourcefulness along the line of fiesta-attractions like dramatic shows.

From the contentions aired above, the writer of this paper would like to think that the *Nilambay* tradition in Bohol started soon after the turn of the century and that its development was the collaborative effort of the catholic clergy and the laity with the latter deserving most of the credit because with such men like Manding Kulas they were the ones handling the staging of the *Nilambay* plays and that its peak years were from 1910 to 1925 when *Nilambay* plays found warm and popular acceptance, either in the poblacion or barrio level, in places where they were adopted as a regular fiesta feature, particularly in the municipalities of Dauis, Baclayon, Albuquerque, Loay, Loboc, Maribojoc, Tubigon, Clarin and Inabanga. The years of the *Nilambay* saw the Boholano folk involved in a theatrical experience where faith and virtue lorded it over unbelief and vice in a story of romance, of adventure, of fantasy about people not of today but of yesterday in situations belonging to the remote past rather than to the familiar present. The *Pedrings* who watched the performances enjoyed the spectacle unfolded before them; followed closely the different complications of the story as dimensionally shown in a three-level stage; listened to the rhythmical speeches of the different characters laid out in rhyming quatrains or couplets consisting of the ever-recurring three-stress lines; absorbed insights and meaning from the patterns of long-ago experience dramatized before them; and for three, four, five, six or more hours per performance stayed put under a starry sky to see a costumed neighbor or cousin or friend or brother or father go through a role, big or small, in a play that was truly of, by and for the community.

The *Nilambay ni San Vicente* script presents a cast consisting of no less than forty-one members with speaking parts of, at least, a few lines. Among them are kings and queens, princes and princesses, bishop and priests, a prophet, a devil, a trusted messenger, a soldier, persons afflicted with physical deformities, an ambassador, a sultan and his sultana and sympathizers or followers of a cause, a teacher and, of course, the central figure in the play — San Vicente the wonder-worker. Besides the forty-

one members there are the non-speaking participants who act as members of the court or soldiers or attendants.

The script shows no division into acts or scenes; but as one reads through it, he finds the seemingly no let-up dialogue broken into several parts or episodes depending on the nature of the action or situation being unfolded or on its location or on the characters involved in it. Normally, the several breaks or shifts in setting are indicated by the words *sulod* (enter) and *guwa* (exit). These movements of the characters are usually accompanied or accentuated by musical effects rendered by the orchestra which would be suited to the characters making the movements or to the situation or mood then prevailing. Quite often an episode or part ends with one of the characters or some of the characters engaged in a song. The length of an episode as staged with all the flourish and musical accompaniment and movements and dialogue combined would range from five minutes or less to twenty minutes more or less. The multiplicity of episodes, most of which are relatively short, would certainly create an impression of rapid movement to the story which is important to a *Nilambay* performance which would normally take four to seven hours to finish. Otherwise, the story would seem to bog down or to lag thus failing to sustain the interest of the viewers.

The *Nilambay* script hardly contains any element of comic relief. There may be a few instances of humor in the spoken lines of certain characters, but the humor in the veiled or implicit type rather than the direct or explicit. The writer of this paper is inclined to believe that the *Nilambay* audiences both in the poblaciones and barrios in Bohol must have had enough to laugh at while the performance would be going on perhaps because of the clumsiness of some of the participants or because of wrong cueing or a loose costume that would suddenly fall off or a battle scene that would turn out more like horseplay rather than a serious fight.

The writer of this paper saw it fit to reproduce in a more faithful manner the early portions of the *Nilambay ni San Vicente* so that the reader will get the feel of the script. The rest will come in summary form.

The play opens with an *Alavasion* recited by one of the characters named Cornelio. It serves the purpose of an introduction to the performance.

Cornelio: In the town of Valencia
There lived a couple
Pablo and Maria
Who had an only child;
This child was sent to the kingdom of Aragon
To learn the truths about his religion.

Companion: We shall now start our program;
St. Vincent the miracle-worker
Is our principal character.

Queen I: My dear one, I wish to remind you
That my days of infanticipation
Are now numbered.

King I: Dear wife, when that beloved child shall be born
We will send him to the kingdom of Aragon
To be taught his religion.

Queen I: The thought of the coming separation
From our only child
Makes me feel very lonely.

King I: Don't be distressed, my dearest;
We shall give the child to Pedro and Maria
To be reared as the second king of Valencia.

Queen I: Let us now retire and wait
The coming of our heir. (Exit)
(Enter Bishop and Priests)

Bishop: According to religious traditions and beliefs,
We believe in the intercession of the Saints
To save us from all danger.

Priest I: For that reason we are preparing
The devotion of St. Dominic.

Priest II: For he, even as a child,
Was full of virtue and truly sinless.
(Enter many other priests)

Other

Priests: Greetings, your Excellency!

Bishop: Now that you are all here,
Devotees of Saint Dominic,
Kneel and listen to this homily:
Let us all keep and obey
The words of Our Lord Jesus
So that God will reward us all
And from the fires of hell deliver us.
(Enter Prophet)

Prophet: Let me announce to you,
Devotees of St. Dominic,
That tomorrow at eight
A child will be born;
That child will shine
As the sun and the stars;
Their light will be over him
Who will be born in the cold night.
This child will be full of wonder
And truly virtuous
And will some day head the clergy.

Bishop: Are you sure, wise prophet,
Of what you have just said?

Prophet: What I have just said is true;
The child will be beautiful
And rich in wisdom and virtue;
But he will be a child of sorrow.

Priest I: I think that everything he has said
Is true, for I have had dreams lately
That we will have a new leader.

Prophet: Now that you have heard all the news
Let us go and prepare for his coming
(Exit all)

(Enter King I and soldier)

King I: Please notify the kingdom of Valencia
That there the new-born child will go
To be taught religious devotions.

(Exit soldier) (Exit King I) (Enter Royal Couple
II and Messenger)

- King II:* My dear Doña Maria my wife,
How sad it is to have no child
To cheer us and give joy to our life.
- Queen II:* Let us pray to the Lord
And to Him our loneliness offer.
- Messenger:* Your Majesty! It amazes me
To see a comet — a star
With a trail of smoke.
What tidings does this bring?
- King II:* Will you read your books
And look up the answers to these
Strange movements in the heavens?
- Messenger:* The star tells the birth of a child,
The second king of Valencia,
Who will be given to you.
- Queen II:* The child should be fetched at once
So he can be baptized and sanctified,
Go with the soldiers and bring here the child.
(Exit all)

So much for the faithful reproduction. After the above, the messenger arrives in the court of King I and Queen I and asks for custody of the child that will be taken to the court of his master. The queen admonishes him to take good care of her child. She also tells the child not to forget his parents.

The child exits with the messenger. His parents leave everything in God's hands. Upon arrival in the court of his master, the messenger relates about the sorrow that pervaded in the kingdom of Valencia after their departure. The new mother orders preparations for the baptism of the child and decides on Juan Beltran as the godfather. The child is christened Vicente, so he will be clever when he grows up. After the ritual, the child retires with the King and the Queen.

Meanwhile the king of England and his army gird for war against the catholics.

In Valencia, the King and Queen agree to send the child Vicente to school so he will acquire wisdom. He is to be accom-

panied by Vicentino, a nephew of the King, who hates being sent to school. Vicentino is chided by the teacher for his attitude.

The teacher is dumbfounded over the talents of Vicente. He says that if Vicente continues to be studious, he will really grow in wisdom.

In another episode three princesses, Florenda, Sonya and Laura, are in their garden enjoying the beauty and fragrance of the flowers there. A companion, Violante, sings and dances to entertain the princesses. Then a devil appears and destroys some of the flowers. Laura drives away the devil but the latter refuses to leave the garden. Vicente arrives and goes to the rescue of the princesses. They are grateful to Vicente for saving them from the snares of the devil. Before they exit, Vicente reminds them not to forget the story of St. Dominic's life.

Later Vicente asks permission from his parents to go to Rome and to further his studies. The parents later learn that their son is studying for the priesthood.

Faced with the threat of invasion from the Moors, the great warriors of Valencia, Leopoldo and Dioroco, are girding for battle. The king of England, Rudolfo, has decided to invade Valencia. He sends his ambassador to see for himself the conditions in Valencia and to notify the catholic king of the impending attack.

The English ambassador arrives in Valencia during the fiesta when the princes and princesses are singing and dancing in their plaza. He delivers his message to the King of Valencia who accepts the challenge. The princesses and princes and chief warriors pledge their loyalty to the kingdom of Valencia. Everybody readies himself for the battle.

The English army invades Valencia only to be repulsed by a superior force. Many English fighters are taken captives. One of these is Teodorico the ambassador who surrenders without much ado to Juanito, a brave soldier of Valencia. Vicente appears and sees many dead soldiers. Because of his miraculous powers, he raises some of them back to life. The princes recognize Vicente and pledge to follow and embrace the catholic religion.

Meanwhile the King and Queen of Valencia await the return

of their army. Juanito arrives with the captive Teodorico who is sent to jail at once. Teodorico tells the king of Valencia that the English army was badly beaten.

Vicente arrives from Rome but is saddened by the sight of so many dead soldiers along the road. His father explains to him how the war started. Vicente orders the release of Teodorico who has been converted so he can go home to his king and persuade him to embrace the faith.

Teodorico returns to his king and tells him about their defeat and the miraculous rising from the dead through the intercession of Vicente. The Queen is ready to become a christian, but the king is adamant and refuses to believe for he worships only money.

In another place a poor woman appears looking for the miracle-worker Vicente. She asks Vicente to change her face which is one of shame and evil. Vicente changes her face and she becomes a beautiful woman.

Still in another setting a young man named Ruben appears and professes his love for Angela who does not reciprocate his love. Another lady, a seducer, appears who sings and makes Ruben forget his disappointment. After Ruben left Vicente appears. The same seducer tries to tempt Vicente but the latter performs a miracle (fire appears but Vicente is not burned). This leads to the conversion of the seducer.

Meanwhile the sultan and warriors of the kingdom of the Moors prepare for an attack against the wealthy kingdom of Valencia. Before the attack a lame man named Bacol (he is really Rudolfo the English king who has been punished because of his lack of faith) visits Valencia. He meets a child who is turning blind and who is looking for Vicente. Later they meet a man who is deaf. The three find Vicente and beg him to intercede for them. The three go home cured and promise to be true to the faith and to honor the God who has given such powers to Vicente. Shortly after this miracle-episode, Vicente receives his call to heaven. He dies and is mourned by the whole city of Valencia.

Then comes the attack of the city by the Moors. This threat

is faced bravely by all. The English army has by now allied itself with the defenders of the city. Battle begins. The Valencianos visit the tomb of Vicente and ask for his help. The miracle-worker hears their prayers and instructs them on what to do.

The English army suffers initial defeat; but the army of Valencia routs the Moors. Many surrender and pledge to become christians. At the end of the play there is mass-singing in praise of San Vicente.

From the above summary it can be said that the *Nilambay* is an extension of the pulpit in the church for the edification and instruction of the faithful. It teaches the faith, ethical values, christian norms of living. It contains, therefore, strong religious and moral implications and explications.

THE BOHOLANO ZARZUELA

Less didactic but more entertainment-oriented is the Boholano zarzuela — another fiesta attraction and, therefore, a religious folk-literature specimen.

This popular form of entertainment enjoyed by the Filipino masses during the Spanish era, particularly towards the latter part of the nineteenth century and on to the early 1930's, appeared in Bohol on the heels of the *Nilambay* plays. Its initial appearance on the Bohol stage (that would be close to the 1920's already) may have been rather late; but, just the same, its coming was not only expected but inevitable because Bohol was not shut off from the stream of cultural influences coming from such places like Cebu and even far Manila. But once the zarzuela tradition made its footing on Bohol soil, it was to stay on through the 20's and 30's and the war years until the present time (though on a very limited scale). It became a regular attraction during fiestas.

Asked to speculate on a locally-composed zarzuela that could have been the first staged in Bohol, Mr. Pedro Huerbana Usaraga,⁵ a 70-year old dramaturgo who hails from Davis,

5. Mr. Pedro H. Usaraga, Davis, Bohol, May 14, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

Bohol and who is a zarzuela writer of note, contended that the first zarzuela ever shown in Bohol was a 3-act drama entitled *Elena* which was authored by the late Felix Tubal of Dauis (he would be 87 years old now if he were still alive) and which was the fiesta presentation in Dauis in August 15, 1917. Mr. Usaraga, who was already 16 to 17 years old at that time, was one of the more important players in that drama. The play which was full of strong emotions and singing parts centered on two lovers Elena and Fernando. Because the young man was poor, Elena's father made it impossible for him to win Elena. Frustrated, he left for another place where he found a new love. Later Elena who truly loved him managed to leave her father's place. A fugitive disguised as a Chinese male merchant, she finally found Fernando. But she discovered that he was in love with another woman. In her deep sorrow she committed suicide. When Fernando learned about the tragic happening and recognized Elena, he also was sorrow-smitten and killed himself.

That initial theatrical experience must have profoundly influenced Mr. Usaraga for, according to him, he pursued playwrighting from then on as a special avocation. From 1919 until 1940 he produced zarzuelas almost annually. Among the more successful ones which he rates highly are the following: *Ang Catahap* (The Suspicion) which was his initial venture in 1919; *Maramion* and *Payabon* (two zarzuelas written in 1922 and 1924 in the style of the *Nilambay* or *Moro-moro*); *Paciencia* (Patience) written in 1927; *Medalla* (Medal) written in 1931; *Ako Mao, Dili Siya* (I'm the One, Not He) written in 1933; and *Calbaryo sa Inahan* (A Mother's Calvary) written in 1935. Mr. Usaraga in his zarzuelas was very fond of touching on the plight of the downtrodden. A sentimentalist and a stern advocate of poetic justice, he liked to depict the change from misfortune to some form of prosperity befalling the down-trodden protagonist. He considers his *Calbaryo sa Inahan* as his best zarzuela.

Whether the contention aired by Mr. Usaraga regarding the first zarzuela in Bohol is correct or not, the fact is that the writer of this paper has not been successful in drawing any information from those same old-timers he had talked to regarding the

Nilambay tradition in Bohol that would indicate a zarzuela presentation earlier than the August 15, 1917 showing of *Elena* in Dauis. The one closest to that date was a December 8, 1919 presentation of a drama entitled *Katapusang Hukom* (Last Judgment) which, according to Mr. Julio Lamayo⁶ (a native-resident of Baclayon now in his seventies and at one time chief of police of Baclayon and later on of Tagbilaran), was shown in Baclayon on that date in connection with the town-fiesta. He was himself a member of the cast, playing the role of Christ. He further said that the same Baclayon group that staged it was invited to perform the same in the towns of Corella, Sierra-Bullones and Atequera in connection with their local town-fiesta. He could not remember the name of the author of the play, however. Besides, from the descriptions he gave, *Katapusang Hukom* seemed more like a modified adaptation of the Morality play *Everyman* with its serious treatment and its emphasis on the religious and moral connotations rather than on entertainment. Anyway, the writer of this paper has not come across another play-specimen in Bohol classified as a zarzuela that was staged before the 1930's.

In the Boholano context, the zarzuela is a melodrama depicting conditions and people closer to those found in the contemporary setting and so are identifiable and unfolding a plot-situation that is strongly emotional and sentimental and that advocates poetic justice and engenders pity for the protagonist and hate for the antagonist. Normally, serious consequences are posed for the protagonist (not honestly, sometimes); but they are external and will be escaped or evaded somehow. The ending is, therefore, happy in most plays notwithstanding the many tear-jerking complications shown as the story moves along. A fitting aid to heighten its sentimental propensities is the wide use of music and song which make it resemble an operetta.

From the world of the remote and the fantastic unfolded to

6. Mr. Julio Lamayo, Baclayon, Bohol, May 21, 1968, personal interview. Permission to quote secured.

them by the *Nilambays* the Boholano zarzuela brought *Pedring* and his contemporaries to the familiar world of the present with its laughter and tears, its cruelty and sweetness, its romantic and painful entanglements, its love of country and its treason, its long-suffering, its challenges, its nostalgic moments and all other conceivable moods inherent in man. Because of its drawing power and its impact on the masses the zarzuela became a popular tool for fiesta-entertainment in Bohol during the 20's and 30's.

One zarzuela writer whom many regard as a major contributor to the zarzuela tradition in Bohol is the pharmacist-turned-dramatist Mr. Justo Cruzante Boiser, Sr. of Talibon, Bohol. He is the author of the zarzuela entitled *Yam-id sa Kinabuhi* (The Irony of Life).

Mr. Boiser was born in Talibon on November 21, 1902. His father, the late Mr. Joaquin Boiser, was the first Boholano priest assigned to the parish of Talibon. He was known to be a gifted musician and orator. As a matter of fact, he was the one who delivered a special allocution during the consecration rites installing the late Mons. Juan Gorordo as bishop of Cebu. The mother of Mr. Justo Boiser, the late Miss Pilar Cruzante, was also known to be a gifted singer. The eldest among three brothers and two sisters, Justo had his elementary schooling in Tubigon where his father was assigned, his high school training in Colegio de San Carlos in Cebu where his theatrical experience formally began when he participated in a number of student plays and his college training in the University of Santo Tomas where he finished pharmacy and took up two years of medical training. Alongside these academic pursuits he took interest in honing up on his native musical gifts, learning how to play the piano at the age of seven and the banduria, guitar and trumpet before he reached ten. While in Cebu he took formal piano lessons under Professor Jose Estellal former director and conductor of the famous Municipal Band of Cebu. Later on in Manila he studied under Professor Serafin Madariaga and Professor Julio Esteban. He had quite an extensive training in musical composition.

This musical background of Mr. Justo Boiser is significant

because in his zarzuelas he wrote not only the script and lyrics but also the musical score and songs and arias. One distinguishing mark in his zarzuelas is the finer quality of the musical elements (the melodies are more controlled and integrated) which could only be attributable to his extensive musical training (a factor not found in most of the other Boholano dramaturgos whose musicology is mainly dependent on native abilities.)

Mr. Boiser's initial zarzuela contribution was a play entitled *Sala sa Sala* (The Sin of the Sin) which he wrote for the Del Pilar fiesta in Tagbilaran in October of 1928. He was to follow that up with a pretty prodigious output of about thirty plays written for the fiesta celebrations in Talibon, Ubay, Cortes, Tagbilaran, Balilihan, Bilar, Duero, Lila, Daus, Maribojoc, Tubigon, Jetafe and in the islands near Talibon and Ubay. His most active years were from 1933 to 1942. He lists his 1928 *Silot sa Palad* (Fate's Penalty), his 1936 *Yam-id sa Kinabuhi* (The Irony of Life), his 1937 *Caulipnan ug Ca-angayan* (Slavery and Equality) and his 1939 *Fifty-fifty* as among the more successful of his plays. Incidentally, when the writer of this paper visited Mr. Boiser in 1968, he admitted having been approached by another researcher in whose custody he gave some of his more important opuses. At his age he just could not remember exactly the titles and dates of composition of many of his works.

Besides the edge Mr. Boiser enjoys in the musical parts of his zarzuelas over his contemporaries, there is also this factor of diction which marks him out from the others. In his use of the Visayan dialect he may be described as a "purist" in the sense that he very rarely lapses into regional linguistic mannerisms. His Visayan is the Cebuano Visayan which Visayan lexicographers consider as the ideal Visayan. It is in recognition of this linguistic dedication that won for him a life membership in the prestigious *Ludabi* (Lumad nga Dilang Bisaya) which is an Academy of the Visayan language founded in Cebu City in 1955 with the purpose of developing the Visayan language. Membership in this group of Visayan experts from Cebu, Leyte, Bohol and Negros Oriental is very selective and is for life. There are only five Boholano

neither heaven nor hell but in-between. This comic scene closes with a funny duet sung by Iyo Basyo and Amboy.

In scene 3 Pilay comes back very weak and about to faint due to hunger. Amboy does not help her at all; he just leaves the house. But Iyo Basyo the joker attends to her. When she feels a little better, she reveals her troubles of the day to him — the little savings for the rice which Amboy squandered, her not having eaten anything the whole day, Amboy's decision to have Inday sold. She also tells him of the compassionate storeowner who allowed her to get rice and fish on credit. Iyo Basyo, now aware of Amboy's wickedness, urges her to eat and assures her that he'll be around often so Amboy will not beat her.

In scene 4 Amboy returns and asks first for food and then for money. Pilay has no money to give for she has not sold Inday and she dares not. Amboy now takes things in his own hands. He rushes outside with the baby to sell Inday to a rich childless couple he knows. If no buyer gets Inday, then he'll throw her into the river or into a pigsty for the hogs to devour. Pilay cannot stop him.

In the last scene of Act I, Pilay is shown in frenzied grief and, when Iyo Basyo learns the cause, he promises to go after Amboy to stop the sale of Inday.

Act II takes place five years later. In scene I Lucing, who works as a housemaid of the well-to-do couple that bought Inday, is heard singing a song telling of the difficulties orphans like her normally experience. In a soliloquy, as she begins doing her morning chores, she longs for the peace and quiet in the mountains where she was born and grew up. True, she is in a rich house and is so treated. A little later an elderly woman, dressed poorly and shabbily, arrives and talks to Lucing. She is Pilay. She inquires about Inday and learns that the child is now five years old and that her name is Linda. Lucing does not know about the sale.

In Scene 2 Linda is shown calling out from an upstairs window to see if Lucing is through watering the garden. Evidently Linda's second mother, Asiang, wants Lucing to help upstairs. Left to themselves (the mother downstairs and the daughter upstairs),

Pilay asks Linda to come down so she can give her something. Linda, however, is afraid to go near this strange woman for fear she may be a witch. The child's reaction pains the mother.

In scene 3 Asiang appears in order to find out what it is that scares Linda. When Linda points to Pilay, Asiang tells Pilay not to give anything to the child and dismisses her from the place unkindly. She is not aware of who Pilay really is. Pilay's sorrows are heightened in a soliloquy and song that end the scene.

In scene 4 Pilay, who still tarries outside the house of Asiang although she has been told to leave, meets a familiar face — Iyo Basyo. They recognize each other and exchange memories of the past. It is now known that Amboy and Pilay parted ways after the sale of Inday, that Amboy left for Davao and that Pilay has been in Manila for five years now serving as a laundry-woman. She is back to look for her child. This particular day happens to be Linda's birthday celebration and guests are expected and the little girls will be dancing in the garden. Pilay requests Lucing's permission to stay and watch from the background.

In scene 5 the garden is being readied for the birthday celebration of Linda. Pilay also helps in setting the benches. Guests arrive. Iyo Basyo provides comic elements with his bragging and his dancing. The little girls led by Linda go into their song and dance act. But then Pilay gets her chance to go near her daughter and she embraces her. Linda screams for fear of this strange woman. Asiang begins to berate Pilay whose only explanation for her behavior is that she is the true mother of Linda. It is not her intention to get her back. She merely wants the little girl to know that her mother is alive. Iyo Basyo supports her claim. Pilay is ordered to leave the place just the same. She is the veritable image of a mother rejected and disgraced.

The third act takes place some ten years later. In the first scene Pilay receives great news — a wire from the Sweepstakes Office in Manila telling her that she just won the first prize of ₱200,000. The mailman tells her to see the municipal treasurer for her prize. Pilay is happy at her new good fortune. She promises to give the mailman something. She also reveals to him

the big crosses in her life — a husband who maltreated her; a husband who sold their only child; a child who, when she visited her one time, would not mind her real mother. It's about time, according to the mailman, that she wins a fortune as a reward for her patience and resignation in the midst of life's miseries.

In the second scene, Lucing, the former housemaid of Asiung, passes by Pilay's place to congratulate her on her good fortune. From their talk one learns that Linda has been to Manila to study but that she's back for vacation; that Pilay has not dared to see her again since that affair of the party when she was scolded in the presence of everybody. Since Lucing was going to the office of the municipal treasurer, Pilay decides to go with her.

In the third scene Iyo Basyo, Linda and her fosterparents visit the place of Pilay. The old joker, is of course, interested in a cut of Pilay's great fortune. Filemon and Asiung, whose financial position has changed for the bad, are taking Linda to see her mother. Her schooling in Manila has to be given up for a while.

In the fourth scene Pilay comes back and meets her visitors. Good fortune has not changed her character. Asiung asks forgiveness and Linda likewise explains her behaviour to her mother. There's reconciliation effected in this scene between mother and child. The past is now forgotten.

In the last scene Amboy reappears and hears about Pilay's good fortune and goes back to her to ask her forgiveness. Pilay has no more need for him. She bids him to stay away permanently. A chorus ends the play. The theme of the song is life and its ironies — its tears and problems. But heaven does intervene and joy comes at last into the hearts of the sorrowful.

Except for the song sung in several scenes, the language spoken by the members of the cast is in easy prose. It is not like in the *Nilambay* where the language is in verse. This likeness to the language of ordinary everyday experience, however, is remarkably flowing with the stressed syllables fitting in together in a pleasant rhythmical combination. This is especially the case

in parts where an element of crisis or tension is depicted. Here are examples:

(Pilay speaking about her problems) *Pagka pa-it niining kinabuhi-a! Tanang himayang yutan-on gilikmo kanako. Luha ug mga kasakit maoy kanunay nga nakiguban-uban. Kanus-a pa kaha ako bulagi aron maka-pahulay na ning kabangis sa kagul-anan.*

(Amboy angrily talking to Pilay) *Aron ka masayud, Pilay, dili katambalag laha ang akong kagutom. Dili malingao sa bakho ang pangurog sa akong mga tuhod. Kun walay bugas nga imong hikit-an ibaligya kanang bata karon-karon dayon.*

(Pilay talking about her child Inday) *Inday, pagka pa-it sa imong palad. Bulak ka nga ming guho sa pangangong masakiton ug ala-ut, kansang mga gihay namuklad nga hubo sa ka-anyag ug naga luspada sa ka-amyon. Anugon! Anugon ka nga pupo-on pag sayo sa imong pungango nga dili matagbaw pag inum sa yamog sa kabuntagon, ug dili ka hagkan sa silaw sa adlaw.*

The above lines are thus freely translated:

- 1 — How bitter is this life. All earthly joys regard me an outcast. My constant companions are tears and sorrows. When will my moment of liberation come so that my griefs will come to an end.
- 2 — So you will know, Pilay, your tears will not cure my hunger. My weak and trembling limbs will not straighten at the sight of your weeping. If you see no rice, right now go and sell the child.
- 3 — My child, how sad is your destiny. You are a flower sprung from a diseased and unlucky plant whose petals open devoid of beauty and sweet aroma. What a waste! Alas that you should be ripped off prematurely before you could enjoy the softness of the morning dew and the gentle touch of the morning sun.

Earlier the writer of this paper stated that in his study of Boholano religious folk-literature (where, as a rule, the specimens to be considered are creations of the simple artistic mind) there may be some samples which may exhibit elements of artistic subtlety and creative finesse. Such samples, if there are any, should come from the field of the drama. For it is in the drama where the elasticity of the writer's power to create (even in the level of the folk-artist) is challenged very much. The dramaturgo does not merely project a human situation with meaning; he has to breathe life into it through characters who move and behave and talk in a manner that is believable. This way he may succeed in drawing a sense of empathy

from the audience, whether the unsophisticated crowd or the elite group.

Despite several shortcomings a discerning and critical reader may discover in the fiesta-plays of the Boholanos (flaws in the build-up of motivation, of characterization, of plot-direction etc.), there is no denying the fact that there are redeeming factors and there are elements of valid artistic achievement, particularly in the over-all craftsmanship and in the use of language. The truly great Boholano literary piece has yet to be written. The writer is inclined to believe that it will be in the field of the drama where such penetration into truly prestigious recognition shall be made. Will it be the play that Mr. Justo Boiser said to the writer he is seriously working on (he has been at it for the last five years now) which will carry the title *Katapusang Guinhawa* (Final Breath) and which he hopes will be the crowning work of his long career as a dramaturgo? Only time can tell.