

*Indigenizing the Zarzuela: Kapampangan Ethnocentric Adoption of the Foreign Genre*

**Julieta C. Mallari**

**Copyright©2011 Julieta C. Mallari. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged.**

**Abstract:** When the Spanish colonizers reached Pampanga, a province in the northern part of the Philippines, the meeting between the East and the West meant an impact of the grafted civilization over the conquered people. Religious and cultural hybridization (Bhaba 1994) inevitably took place in Pampanga. Kapampangan verbal art modestly welcomed an alien counterpart and a cultural synthesis in a “liminal space” took place. What the Spaniards introduced—religious literature, metrical romances and the zarzuela—to advance their imperialistic cause pressed on the folk and blended naturally with the Kapampangan sensibility. Kapampangan literature took on a hybrid form that came to be an incitement for the movement of the province’s literary history. Mariano Proceso Pabalan Byron, a Kapampangan poet, was the first to domesticate the form and content of the zarzuela, a Spanish literary genre. He, together with other writers such as Crisostomo Soto, established a zarzuela tradition and produced masterpieces. The enthusiasm for the zarzuela lasted for decades even after World War II; poets like Jose Gallardo easily adopted the favorite literary genre of his predecessors. The genre was most welcome because its elements constituted their familiar world. The zarzuelas that were produced reveal the constant appropriation of the native values and beliefs in the foreign literary form.

**Keywords:** indigenizing; hybridity; zarzuela; Kapampangan

## **Introduction**

Pampanga is a province in the northern part of the Philippines. The language used in the area is called Kapampangan. Fittingly, the choice of the metaphor *amanung sisuan* (the “language [they] sucked” instead of “mother tongue”) to describe the language is justified by the self-reliant and healthy culture nurtured by the Kapampangan verbal artists.

The Kapampangan tone is loud, strong and emphatic. Thus, in their pre-colonial era (before the 16<sup>th</sup> century), the people's sensibility showed itself consistently in their creative affairs, with their imagination taking shape in its oral form. Among the characteristics of orally based thought and expression exhibited by the Kapampangans, starting with their folk literature, were: agonistically tuned; traditionalist; close to the human life world; participatory and empathetic rather than objectively distanced; homeostatic; and situational rather than abstract (Ong 1982: 37-49).

The people's earliest civilization delighted in the highly rhythmic oral patterns of their folklore. For instance, their *kasebyan* (proverbs) and *bugtong* (riddles), both in versified forms, were the inherent aspect of their social life, the first being didactic and instructive, and the second recreational. Values were encoded, preserved and transmitted by these linguistic constructs. Folksongs, on the other hand, were plain and direct, communicating simple sentiment, thought and feeling. Verbal jousts such as *Karagatan*, an ancient poetic game and *Bulaklakan* were performed during funeral wakes to offer prayers for the soul of the deceased and to comfort or mitigate the pain being experienced by the bereaved family.

When the Spaniards conquered Pampanga during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Kapampangans' cultural transformation inevitably took place. The civilizing mission of the conquerors began its imposition of what was reckoned as cultural supremacy. Thus began the cultural hybridization process as the Kapampangans allowed their verbal art to have a simple-hearted welcome for an alien counterpart. Given the linguistic-cultural matrix shaped by folk wisdom and mentality, the literature brought by the Spaniards easily broke open the core of the native literary ground. Thus, religious items, metrical romances, *corrido*, *comedia*, zarzuela, etc., were adopted and embodied into the natives own repertoire.

As the native poets domesticated the form and content of the foreign texts, they experienced a kind of literary déjà vu: cultural synthesis happened. What the Spaniards introduced blended naturally with the Kapampangan sensibility. The literature they brought to advance their imperialistic cause pressed on the folk and meshed two levels of culture and two world-views. Kapampangan literature took on a hybridized form that came to be an incitement for the movement of the province's literary history. The colorful costumes and the good-looking actors and actresses particularly in the newly introduced Spanish plays were relished by the Kapampangan audience and became part of the tradition. Furthermore, the fantastic, the romantic and the melodic animated even more the existing verbal art, copying or integrating the foreign elements into its own system.

It may be emphasized that the writers' mimicry of the literary forms and style of the foreign masters reached down to the deepest levels of the former's being. Thus, although written in Kapampangan, their works were primarily products of colonialism: they are cultural documents that are at the same time records of Spanish domination. On the other hand, it may also be conjectured that in the writers' appropriation of their native talent to indigenize the foreign genres, an antithetical cultural subversion happened. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "The ambivalence of mimicry—almost but not quite—suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" (1994:91).

This paper analyzes selected Kapampangan zarzuelas, using as reference point the aforementioned Bhabha's dictum and pointing out, as it were, the writers' insistence on their identity even as they were conscious of their subjugation. In their mimicry of the zarzuela, they created an "ironic compromise": their demand for identity involved what Bhabha called the "counter pressure of the diachrony of history—change, difference." As they indigenized the genre, they unwittingly emerged as a "recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (86), and subverted the colonizers' strategy to dominate their culture.

The Kapampangan presence, so to speak, in the zarzuelas produced indicated their consciousness of their "otherness" that virtually liberated them from the colonizers—as the latter were definitely alienated from the indigenization pursued by the colonized. The writers' cultural assertion was enjoyed by their audience who easily understood the different elements of the local zarzuelas, being oral and close to their "human world". Moreover, as audience and part of the community, they were, in a sense, "participatory and empathetic". In the final analysis, the writing and watching of zarzuelas resulted in a kind of "collective catharsis," to use Fanon's words (Fanon in Bhabha 1994:90).

Thus, the zarzuela introduced by the colonizers was subjected to colonial imitation and transformed into a "menace" that subtly led to the shattering of the foreign authority—a consciousness that was intensified at the turn of the century when writers caught the fire of nationalism. Zarzuelas then became a cultural production testifying against the people's colonial status.

## **The Introduction of the Zarzuela in Pampanga**

The Spanish zarzuela, a musical theater genre with alternating sung and spoken text, created a most significant impact. It started to flourish in Pampanga in the nineteenth century. When Alejandro Cubero's troupe visited San Fernando Pampanga to introduce the zarzuela circa 1882, there was the "kindling of the youthful imagination" (Javillonar 1961:40) of writers like Juan Crisostomo Soto. Thus, the golden age of Kapampangan literature was spurred, in a sense, when zarzuela was localized in the province. A passionate theatrical group of writers, matchless in their talent, pursued their zarzuela writing career: the great triumvirate Mariano Proceso Pabalan Byron, Juan Crisostomo Soto and Felix Galura became prolific and famous.

Zarzuela became a popular literary form. Its being primarily a social performance and belonging to the genre of the spoken word would account for the ease with which it held the audience's attention. The communal world of the Kapampangans at the time it was introduced was enjoying the convention of recitation, singing and listening. Zarzuela as a dramatic form was valued primarily because of its very nature—a ritual-like community affair. According to N. Frye (1973), "Drama, like music, is an ensemble performance for an audience, and music and drama are most likely to flourish in a society with a strong consciousness of itself as a society ...." (249). And the zarzuela, being a musical drama, strengthened even more such collective consciousness among the Kapampangans.

At the root of the Spanish zarzuela were didacticism and romanticism, the dynamics of which had long been internalized by the Kapampangan verbal artists. Thus, mimicry of the genre was most welcome because the latter constituted a familiar world. There was an apparent reciprocity and commonality in the Spanish and Kapampangan literary sense and sensibility. Moreover, because zarzuela was oral in nature—being theatrical and therefore more ostentatious and grandiose—the foreign genre gave the Kapampangans a profound sense of fulfillment, be it personal or tribal. It was a matter of transmuting the substance of their traditional literary postulates to enter into the sinews of the hybridized form. Their previously cited literary world, deeply entrenched in their value system and basic folk beliefs, was of self-sustaining nature, underlying the creative act of the writers. With the introduction of Catholicism, a further enhancement of such beliefs was borne on the zarzuelas: indigenous messages residing inside a foreign literary form, much like the indwelling of *anitos* (ancient Filipino concept of spirits) in Caucasian-looking statues of Catholic *santo* and *santa* (saints).

The zarzuela was adopted into Kapampangan by then young writers such as Mariano Proceso Pabalan Byron (1862-1904), the first writer to Filipinize the genre because he believed in the inherent musicality of his own language and, therefore, its imitative capacity. The first zarzuela in Kapampangan was *Ing Managpi* (The Patcher), which was shown at the Sabina Theatre in Bacolor, Pampanga on September 13, 1900. Pabalan wrote about the manners and idiosyncrasies of the period in which he lived.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Pabalan assumed the long-lasting effects of language on people's consciousness, as though prophesying Fanon's concept that "To speak . . . means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (Fanon in Poulos 1996). Pabalan made an intuitive and decisive step in asserting the use of his own language in a moment of colonial confrontation between his culture and the foreign counterpart. He knew that the language of his people was their voice and their message.

Soto or Crissot (1867-1918) was more prolific. He wrote approximately fifty plays, some of which were adaptations of foreign texts (Manlapaz 1981:19). *Alang Dios!* (There is no God!), the most popular and acclaimed by many as most expressive of the beauty of Kapampangan language, was first staged on November 16, 1902.

Felix Galura Napao (1866-1919) wrote several zarzuelas, too, but only one, *Ing Mora* (The Moslem Woman), is extant. According to Manlapaz, two of his plays, *O Kasiran* (O Disgrace) and *Azucena*, are adaptations of Spanish works and one, *Ing Singing a Bacal* (An Iron Ring), is a translation done in collaboration with Soto.

In addition to the triumvirate, there were other zarzuelistas during their time such as Aurelio Tolentino (1875-1915), another famous and prolific writer who wrote in three languages—Kapampangan, Tagalog and Spanish. His most celebrated drama, *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas* (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) is an important contribution to Philippine drama. Most of his zarzuelas range from lighthearted comedies to melodramatic tragedies (Manlapaz 1981: 21). Since then, zarzuela became an accepted literary tradition until the time of modern writers such as Jose Gallardo.

In a characteristically Kapampangan zarzuela reminiscent of its Spanish origin, good looking actors and actresses were the main attractions. The underlying dictum of the zarzuela apparently was: the good must also be the beautiful. As expected, the

hybridized Spanish-Kapampangan mestizo/a looks, the measure of beauty, drew crowds that made the genre stand at high noon during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It may also be pointed out that Pampanga was among the first provinces to have theatres and theatre companies with resident playwrights, directors, and actors (Cruz, cited by Manlapaz 1981:23). Foremost among the companies was the Compania Sabina, organized by then Governor Ceferino Joven who also constructed the famous Teatro Sabina in Bacolor. Joven was an active patron of the zarzuelas. He appointed Soto as resident playwright and director and placed the group of aficionados under the latter's supervision (Manlapaz 1981:23). Joven was also a patron of a group of musicians, the Orchestra Palma, which composed and played the musical pieces for the zarzuelas. Among the famous composers were Amado Gutierrez David, Pablo Cordero, Pablo Calma, and Camilo Dimson (Lacson 1984:31)

The zarzuela became popular, resulting in the organization of more local troupes in 1902 by Jose Carvajal, Juan Barbero, and Carlos Rodriguez (Icban-Castro 1981:7). There was also the construction of other theatres such as Teatro Trining in Guagua where plays of Aurelio and Jacinto Tolentino were performed.

The historical moment of the flowering of Kapampangan literature, particularly in the days of the zarzuela, is interesting to note. At the turn of the century, there was the rise of nationalism which paved the way for a most important literary tradition: the treatment of literary elements was notably indigenized. Internalization in consciousness and in culture of the writers' historical and political position became the inevitable trend. E. Lacson notes the writers "took up the nationalistic tradition to heart: native setting, native characters, "*komanggi*" (brown complexion), with Kapampangan speech and humor" (1984:30). Furthermore, with the writing of *Ing Managpi* (The Patcher), a new theme, according to Javillornar, was introduced thereafter: the Filipino family. "There were infinite variations," she says, "...but always within the framework of family life" (Ibid., 324).

What was of utmost importance in Pabalan's initiative in domesticating the genre was his promotion of a kind of counter-culture: the Kapampangan writers' reorientation in terms of the content of their zarzuelas. The writers fully grasped the value of the inward shift of consciousness. They transcended, in a sense, the literary domain of the foreign conquerors and emancipated themselves from the compulsory homogenizing impact of the foreign genre. From this new self-definition sprang the creative wealth of their native sense which extended to the whole fabric of Kapampangan sensibility.

Soto, the best known Kapampangan dramatist, together with his contemporary writers responded enthusiastically to the spirit of the times by being productive. These writers produced works which remain unsurpassed—perhaps primarily because of their synchronicity with local culture and their relevance to the life of the consumers at that time. Given their artistic achievements, therefore, the zarzuela writers largely determined the course of the province's literary development.

Oddly enough, it was during that period when the best among the Kapampangan writers became actively involved in the revolutionary movement. Among the Katipuneros (members of the revolutionary group called Katipunan) were the Pabalan brothers, Proceso and Cornelio, Juan Crisostomo Soto, the Tolentino brothers, Aurelio and

Jacinto. Felix Galura and Paulino Lirag led the Voluntarios Locales of Bacolor and rose in revolt on June 4, 1898 (Icban-Castro 1981:414) Pabalan was one of the thousands who hurled flaming coconut husks at the Spanish garrison in Bacolor and slaughtered the Spanish soldiers there (Javillonar 1961: n.p.). During the Revolution, Soto wrote for *La Independencia*, joined the Macabebe volunteers under Col. Eugenio Blanco, and as a captain took part in raids to replenish the supply of arms of the *revolucionarios* from Spanish arsenals (Icban-Castro 1981: 36).

Given the foregoing background of the writers, it may be worth speculating that nationalism opened the fertile ground to literary development and crystallized the writers' promotion of the primacy of their cultural identity. The general terrain of Kapampangan literature since then has been widely governed by the masters of zarzuela writing. Although their products were imbued with Spanish ingredients, the writers paradoxically subverted their colonizers by transforming and molding their borrowings unto the local image. In effect, these native producers of culture surmounted the otherwise disparaging effects of colonization. Their worldview, although blurred by Spanish domination, underwent a "process of disavowal," to use Bhaba's term (1994:86), and their oral tradition was even enhanced.

A cursory look at the themes and substance of the produced works will show their romantic and sociopolitical nature. The unbroken literary tradition of definite rhyme scheme and the underlying Kapampangan pre-hispanic folk world-view, specifically articulate in the didactic, persisted and even intensified the conception of the heroic, the virtuous and the humane. The zarzuela was used to impress such ideals upon the members of Kapampangan society.

### **Popular Kapampangan Zarzuelas**

To be highlighted are three of the most popular zarzuelas, namely, Pabalan's "*Ing Managpi*," Soto's "*Alang Dios*" and Gallardo's "*Crucifijong Pilak*." It may be pointed out that the assertion of the writers' native values, ethnicity and language deflected the dominance of the colonizers even in the cultural hybridizing of the zarzuela. Thus, in the Kapampangan hybridization process and in the "ambivalent" site, an initiation of "new signs, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (Bhabha 1994:1-2) happened, with the prevalence of the latter.

**A. *Ing Managpi* (The Patcher) (ca.1900) by Mariano Proceso Pabalan Byron**

“*Ing Managpi*” heralded the beginning of the indigenized zarzuela and marked the endeavor of local artists to advance the literary form. Pabalan succeeded in proving his claim regarding the musicality of Kapampangan and in crystallizing the native sense in the foreign genre. His form of the zarzuela being mimicry is “like camouflage” (Lacan in Bhabha 1994:85) in the sense of being inconspicuous against the colonial background but really distinct with its “identity effects” (Ibid) surfacing naturally. And Pabalan’s attempt is an echo of Fanon’s observation: “From being a reply on a minor scale to the dominating power, the literature produced by natives becomes differentiated and makes itself into a will to particularism”(1959:n.p.). Pabalan, an autochthonous Kapampangan, knew that his language was part of his identity and only through his language could his particular culture be genuinely and meaningfully captured. Thus, his “will to particularism” was the beginning of a tradition in the zarzuela production transforming it according to the image of the natives’ character.

Pabalan’s zarzuela apparently aligned domestic and social elements in the context of Kapampangan affairs. Its performance, meant for the local people, was already Pabalan’s more progressive treatment of the genre. He skipped, as it were, certain stages in terms of Fanon’s timetable: “While at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnical or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people” (1959: n.p.). Pabalan did not make any bones about his determination to immediately address his own people, and he simply ignored the colonizers—neither charming nor denouncing them. Recognizing the worthwhile quality of the zarzuela, he was more utilitarian in adopting it, and his mimicry was self-serving, besides being subversive. As cited, the genre appealed to the Kapampangan sense and sensibility. Pabalan therefore instinctively pursued its indigenization and spontaneously expressed the thoughts, feelings, experiences and idiosyncrasies of his people.

The one-act comedy features domestic quarrel, and, as the title implies (“*managpi*” literally means “someone who patches or covers up”), the practice of patching up things. The happy resolution underscores the centrality of harmonious relationship in the family.

Dona Juana is a jealous wife who accuses her husband, Don Diego, of womanizing. She threatens to leave him, especially when she finds a woman’s handkerchief under the sofa in the living room and after being told by the comical houseboy Fermin that Diego is calling her names. The housemaid Sianang claims the handkerchief and tells her that her suspicion is unfounded. Juana heeds the advice and decides not to leave. In another scene, Sianang is with Pablo, another helper who is shown to be her lover. While the two exchange sweet talk, Diego is about to come in. Sianang tells Pablo to hide under the sofa. To dispel Diego’s distrust, Sianang tells him that the dog *Managpi* makes the noise under the sofa. But Pablo suddenly sneezes. Diego reprimands the two when Juana arrives. Diego turns to her and scolds her for her irrational jealousy that results in her failure to look after her house. Juana, together with the rest of the cast, apologizes to the audience. The zarzuela ends happily with the characters asking for “a little applause.”

The final words of Diego and Juana emphasize the moral of the story—a most common feature of Kapampangan works. Moreover, Kapampangan humor is also an important facet of the zarzuela. The Kapampangans' penchant for humorous expressions ramifying into mingled tones of ridicule, criticism, sanguinity, etc. is remarkably revealed in the dialogues. In fact, the exchange of remarks between Fermin and Juana exudes shades of culturally fraught meanings;

Juana: You are another fool, another scoundrel, another cross on my shoulders.  
Fermin: That's what I get!....  
Juana: What? Don't you meddle?  
Fermin: Oh, I don't know about that, maybe sometimes....  
Juana: So take care, you treacherous servant if you don't want to get hurt.  
Fermin: (Thanks a lot.)

Scene 2

Juana: Did he come home, is Diego here, where is he?  
Fermin: Right now he is not here. He stayed only awhile and left soon afterwards.  
Juana: Did he ask you to tell me?  
Fermin: That if you returned ahead, to tell you....  
Juana: Don't lie!  
Fermin: That he is out....  
Juana: Nothing but that?  
Fermin: He also said "you good for nothing" and "you beast."  
Juana: He asked you to tell me that?  
Fermin: Yes, ask him.

Scene 6

Most noticeable in the lines is the verbal instigation leading to uncouth descriptions meant to elicit humor. Hilarious verbal exchanges, in fact, enhance the plot by creating complication—as in the case of Fermin's provocation. It may be assumed that the Kapampangan audience, having an oral culture, relished such verbal performance. For obvious reasons, the words—spoken or sung—in zarzuelas encouraged the oral tradition of the Kapampangans. Orality can transmit the signals of the inherent content of words in a fuller and more vivid manner.

It may also be supposed that the crude language of Fermin, the house help, illustrates the idea that "To the lower class, a speech is no less a weapon and a vengeance. Words may be appropriated and suborned...by being given a clandestine significance.... (Steiner 1977:32). The zarzuela becomes a representation of difference between the rich and the poor, the former being the representation of Spanish influence and the latter being the product of the social stratification markedly established and perpetuated by the foreign masters. The form of discourse uttered by the house servant subtly ruptures the refined surface, as it were, of the ruling class as he launches his verbal agitation that causes the conflict between the couple. Then a problematic situation ensues which, to a certain extent, puts the servant no longer at the periphery but at the center. Fermin becomes the agitator such that marital disturbance results from petty and irrational jealousy of the wife. Through his psychological manipulation, there is a reversal of role as he, in a sense, exercises psychological control over his masters.

Such ironic situation is a subtle subversion of the social positions defined by the colonizers even among the natives. The master-servant relationship is hitherto given a twist and might have been perceived as anomalous by the Spaniards, who were inherently discriminatory against the lower class. To a great extent, authority is dislocated—a case that could have caused the colonial authority a parallel provocation, given the cheeky posture assumed by the servant.

Worth noting as well is the major role of the other servants, Sianang and her lover Pablo, in the unfolding of the plot, including its complication—such as their secret amorous relationship which, being discovered by their master, finally leads to the resolution of the conflict. The remarkable character portrayed by what was to be considered a lesser creature is another aspect of the indigenous presence affirming the “otherness” of the Kapampangans. Sianang, in fact, covers up the possible causes of conflict between her masters and becomes the real “patcher”. The word, whose double meaning (the name of the dog and Sianang’s part in the story) indicates the theme, is peculiarly Kapampangan and, therefore, can be understood only by the natives. It is this kind of difference that authenticates the people’s consciousness of their identity. Presented are the common lot of people and the major role of the insignificant members of the household. This idea would have been taken as inappropriate by the foreign masters and is clearly discernible as an outright political avowal of a local writer.

From the foregoing may be deduced that *Ing Managpi* (The Patcher) illustrates “mimicry [that] is at once resemblance and menace” (Bhabha 1994:91). What the Spaniards introduced as part of their civilizing mission, i.e., a literary genre from the imperial country, was problematized: the result was only a partial resemblance of the literary form and more of a full-blown representation of the culture of the natives. Instead of achieving a thorough cultural domination and reform or refine the literature of the colony, the Spaniards had to come to terms with only their impartial presence in the zarzuelas produced but with the ample essence of the Other. Significantly, this “gaze of otherness... liberates marginal elements” and “menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority,” (Ibid.) to use Bhabha’s terms again.

Pabalan did a great service to his *kabalen* (province mates) through his indigenization of the Spanish literary genre: he propagated the natural linguistic expression of the people that made them survive and stay alive in their cultural milieu as well as undermined the imperial power even through his own ambivalence in mimicking the zarzuela’s entirety.

### **B. *Alang Dios!* (There is no God!)(ca. 1900) by Juan Crisostomo Soto**

A Kapampangan literary giant is Crisostomo Soto or Crissot, a most versatile and prolific writer. His zarzuelas, particularly *Alang Dios!*, have unsurpassed popularity. The zarzuela was dedicated to his daughter, Maria Luz Generosa. His note states:

When you died, I involuntarily shouted the horrible exclamation: “There is no God!” because He had taken you away from us so soon. However, now I have come to realize that God, in His incomparable wisdom, had taken you away only to bring you to a place of infinite joy and happiness. (Manlapaz 1981:56)

The same exclamation is shouted by the two characters in the zarzuela when their love interest dies. Furthermore, the same moral principle uttered by Soto is brought to mind in the zarzuela.

The story line of *Alang Dios!* revolves around the love triangle of Enrique, a poor painter, his sweetheart Maria Luz, and Ramon, a rich man. Enrique, who has been accused of stealing a diamond crucifix of Maria Luz, returns to his town upon his release from prison. He finds out that she is betrothed to Ramon. Maria Luz explains that she is pressured by her stepmother, Dona Cucang. Enrique refuses to believe Maria Luz despite her pleadings. When the wedding is about to take place, Clara, Maria Luz's maid, suffers from guilt and decides to reveal the truth: that Enrique did not steal the diamond crucifix. Clara makes it appear that Enrique stole the crucifix to protect the reputation of Maria Luz who was having a secret date with her lover on the night of the supposedly theft incident. Clara's confession, however, is too late to prevent the wedding. The two men decide to have a duel, but Don Monico, a family friend, discloses that they are actually half-brothers. They reconcile and try to see Maria Luz, who dies brokenhearted. Both exclaim "There is no God!" Don Monico rebukes them, saying, that "God has willed her death...that she should not stand between two brothers." They repent and agree to the idea that there is a God "who rewards the good and punishes the bad."

Being part of the tradition started by Pabalan, Soto's zarzuela is also basically a hybrid, diluting the authorized version, so to speak, of the Spanish literary genre. First, the linguistic difference is a foremost contagion: Kapampangan, particularly Soto's beautiful prosody, reverberates, drawing attention to itself thus decentering the language of the colonizers. It should be emphasized that Soto was never a second rate, trying hard copycat in his zarzuela writing. His adoption of the genre, which constituted his mimicry, may be perceived as a valuable cultural acquisition enhancing the use of his own language. In other words, the literary hybrid that he created actually engendered a fresh location of culture for his people in terms of savoring the "language [they] sucked".

Second, didacticism, indicative of the Kapampangan folk tradition, persists in the work of Soto. The moralizing that runs through the zarzuela is of central inherence in the very notion of Kapampangan literature. The ethic-aesthetic reciprocity affirms a deliberate conjunction between the moral and cultural values of the people which embody their own mechanism of self-definition. Rather than destabilizing their identity, the foreign literary genre as hybridized by Soto has, in fact, strengthened their sense of self, culture, and tradition.

Third, the Kapampangan zarzuela, being transcultural, reinterprets the elements of the foreign genre and re-contextualizes them to such extent that estrangement from colonial power and its de-authorization result. Thus, Soto's zarzuela has all the ingredients of the Spanish original but with the Kapampangan flavor. The characters, the setting, the theme and all the minutest details are expressing the essential being of the people. Charged with such moralistic modes of perception, the zarzuela sustains the Kapampangan conception of the good and the beautiful.

Fourth, a crucial aspect of the zarzuela is the title which is exclaimed by the main character, namely, "There is no God!" Although the context provides a most plausible

justification for such an utterance, as a title it draws attention and interpretation as oppositional (being blasphemous) to the Spanish religion. At first glance, it is an outright rebellious statement negating the colonial belief system. Although infused with Soto's personal disappointment, the title nevertheless problematizes an important colonial domain and may be perceived as a direct assault on the imperial power. In the end, of course, an explanation is made by one of the characters, reverting to the common belief upheld by the people.

Soto's zarzuela exhibits the linguistic and cultural values of the people being artistically enmeshed, making unbounded aesthetic explorations possible. His literary craftsmanship achieves hybridity that allows his people to relish their "otherness" and "difference" and be glad for having such an identity. Significantly, "the presence of colonialist authority is no longer immediately visible..." (Bhabha 1994:114).

### **C. *Crusifijong Pilak* (Silver Crucifix) (ca. 1956) by Jose Gallardo**

The enthusiasm for the zarzuela lasted for decades even after World War II, and Jose Gallardo, in his time, easily adopted the literary mannerism of his predecessors. Although as a playwright he did not attain the stature of Crisostomo Soto, he, nevertheless, is an acclaimed *zarzuelista* in his own right.

It is also interesting to note that the constant writing of zarzuelas until the modern period has "normalized" the genre: the liminal space, where cultural transmission happens, has generated texts, including Gallardo's, almost obliterating the colonial impression and authenticating the indigenous presence.

*Crusifijong Pilak* (Silver Crucifix) is characteristically integral to the Kapampangan literary 'ethos': sentimental, moralistic and romantic. Its realistic elements reinforce the settling down of these literary sediments, so to speak, and illustrate the adaptive nature of the hybridized literary paradigm.

The story is about Fidel and Laura who used to be sweethearts, both swearing their love for each other upon the silver crucifix of the latter. Fidel, however, is seduced by his rich landlady, Loida, whom he eventually marries. Because of his infidelity, he is cursed by Laura. All the attempts of Fidel to ask for forgiveness are never heeded. Elena, Laura's mother, tries to dissuade the daughter from cursing Fidel. Elena reveals that she also has once been betrayed by her lover and Laura is the offspring of the affair. But Laura is unmoved by her mother's plea.

Soon Loida gives birth to a baby. Her father, Don Miguel, and Fidel at a certain point have a disagreement regarding the problem of the tenants. Taking the side of the workers, Fidel is driven away by his father-in-law. The curse apparently takes effect. Fidel gets crippled after defending Don Miguel against robbers. Loida is involved with another man, Eddie. Fidel suffers very much, particularly when he is not even allowed to see his child. He, therefore, decides to take the baby with him. They both disappear until one day, Loida's house helper finds out that they have become beggars.

Laura, on the other hand, takes a job in Manila. At one point, she discovers that Fidel is the father of the beggar girl to whom she offers help. Repenting for the misfortune of Fidel caused by her curse, Laura runs away. Meanwhile, Don Miguel and Loida find out where Fidel lives. They try to convince him to give them the custody of his daughter. At first Fidel violently refuses. However, realizing his inability to provide for his daughter, he tries to appear harsh to her just so she will leave him and join her mother. The girl obeys her father but her affection for him prevails upon her, so she decides to leave her new home and go back to him. Laura and Elena follow her and then they find Fidel almost dying. He asks Laura for forgiveness and touches her crucifix, after which he is miraculously healed. Don Miguel comes to the scene and recognizes the crucifix; he remembers that it belongs to Elena, the woman he betrayed. He asks for forgiveness and receives it.

Loida, who decides to separate from Eddie, is now being forced by the latter to ask her father for money. When she refuses, Eddie stabs her. Despite her wound, she goes to see Fidel who forgives her before she dies.

Gallardo's *Crusifijong Pilak*, remains deeply rooted in the folk tradition despite its apparent realistic and modern dimension. In fact, it authenticates further the original nucleus of Kapampangan values generated through literature. Most obviously dramatized are the moral norms associated with relationships. Any deviation from these norms would result in conflict and a catastrophic end. In Gallardo's zarzuela, infidelity is the thematic thread that has produced a sticky web, so to speak. Those who are caught in the web suffer a great deal as they become subject to the complicated consequences of their undoing. Fidel is cursed; Loida is abused; Don Miguel is broken in the end.

By and large, the basic folk beliefs of Gallardo and his society are demonstrated. To begin with, the idea of cursing someone—believed to be a form of righteous indignation—is the key that opens the catastrophic door of Fidel's fate, and, consequently, the other characters' as well. He gets physically disabled, loses his dignity and all, including his wife and becomes too helpless to raise his child. By the sheer act of fate or perhaps divine justice—associated with the crucifix—the curse brings about a morally intelligible downfall. Suggestive of a strong sense of justice and moral principle, the world of Gallardo's drama manifests the consequences of any violation of such beliefs in the grim effects of the curse. In other words, the sinner deserves his fate, and he survives so that his action closes with an adjustment to a transforming experience. Thus, Fidel humbles himself and gets miraculously healed by the object upon which he commits his broken vow.

The curse also takes effect in the life of Loida who is instrumental in Fidel's sinning. Being a temptress, she has sown havoc not only in the life of Fidel but in her own life as well. She brings destruction upon herself because of her promiscuity. In the course of her adulterous relationship with Eddie, she suffers from the very hands of her illicit partner. Her death in the end is an expected final judgment of her immorality.

The conventional dishonor accorded to an antagonist like Loida may again be associated with the values of Kapampangan society, at least at that time. For instance, Loida's house helpers are shown to be making fun of her being sensual.

Basiu: Cang cong Fidel? Inta, ati-na-yo?

- (To Cong Fidel? Why, is he already here?)  
Gari: Nandin ya pa.  
(He has been here for quite sometime.)  
Basiu: Case mipaldan ne canian  
Ing senioritang ma., ma., ma..  
(Then she will be satisfied  
The *seniorita* who is ma., ma., ma..)  
Gari: Nanung Ma? (What is *Ma*?)  
Basiu: Malambing  
(Affectionate.)

The sexual tone of Basiu's words describing Loida is quite obvious. In the form of a joke, the indirect reference to her sensuality is given in Basiu's deliberate withholding of a derogatory word, and then uttering a positive description instead. Hinted in the scene is the pungent smell of sexual promiscuity. The folk, in particular, are most sensitive and usually take a high moral line. Here the helpers place themselves in a position of moral superiority as they comment on the weakness of their *seniorita*. Similar to the peripheral-turned-central case of Fermin in "*Ing Managpi*," the polarity between master and servant is, at this point, blurred.

It is also important to note that related to the belief about the curse is the folk's religious association with objects such as the crucifix. The concept of hybridity is not just cultural but also religious. Folk Christianity, which involves the conversion of Catholic icons into mystical talismans, has always been a prevailing system of belief in Pampanga. In the zarzuela the crucifix is assumed to have a potent mystical force, besides being a holy object. Thus, the vow of Laura and Fidel upon it is to be faithfully honored; otherwise, the guilty party is courting disaster since the vow is almost as sacred as the object. Moreover, a divine energy is supposed to be the potent power of the icon, causing a great deal of affliction, similar to the *ingkanto* (talisman) effects, once provoked. Laura's curse, therefore, operates in the context of the violation of the sanctity of the vow. Unless she decides to bestow her forgiveness upon Fidel, he is likely to suffer to the end.

Like the legends and myths, this zarzuela contains the following motifs: the mythic symbol of the crucifix, breaking of a taboo, punishment inflicted upon the wrongdoers, restoration of order after the purging process. The crucifix is the unifying element as it provides a framework of symbolism, associations and correspondences that involve a whole range of religious beliefs, superstitions and magic—religious hybridization that happens in the Kapampangan zarzuela meant to entertain and educate the audience; it was created out of a common desire to arrive at a "better" world.

## Conclusion

The zarzuela has given Kapampangan literature a long-lasting tradition. Embedded in the genre is the cultural memory of the people whose indigenous beliefs, traditions and worldview figure prominently as the recurring lead around which the stories develop. To a great extent, the nature of the Kapampangan zarzuela brings out indigenizing and hybridizing explorations: creative endeavors that complement the richness of the foreign

genre as well as the native culture. Moreover, as hybrid objects, Kapampangan zarzuelas are documents of resistance against colonial power, whose presence is being displaced and deprived.

## **Works Cited**

- Aguas, Juan. *Juan Crisostomo Soto and Pampangan Drama*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1963.
- Bhaba, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Blair and Robertson. *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. 55 Vols. Cleveland: A.H. Clark, 1903-1909.
- Calixto, Eufrosina. *A Criticism of Pampango Literature*. n.d.
- Castro-Icban, Rosalina. *Literature of the Pampangos*. Philippines: University of the East Press, 1981.
- Fanon, Franz. "Speech to Congress of Black African Writers." *Wretched of the Earth*. Pelican, 1959. Retrieved December 6, 2010, from <http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/national-culture.htm>
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973. .
- Gallardo, Jose. *Crusifijong Pilak*, circa 1956.
- Javillonar, Ely. "The Significance of Proceso Pabalan in Capampangan Dramatic Literature." Master's Thesis, University of the Philippines, 1961.
- Lacson, Evangelina. *Kapampangan Writing: A Selected Compendium and Critique*. Manila: National Historical Institute, 1984.
- Manlapaz-Zapanta, Edna. *Kapampangan Literature: A Historical Survey and Anthology*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press. 1981.
- Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy*. New York: Methuen Co. Ltd., 1982.
- Poulos, Jennifer. *Frantz Fanon*. 1996. Retrieved December 7, 2010, from <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Fanon.html>
- Steiner, George. *After Babel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1977.
- Webber, Christopher. *The Zarzuela Companion*. Lanham: Scarecrow, 2002.
- Presidential Lectures: Homi Bhabha. 2004. Retrieved December 7, 2010 from

<http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/bhabha/reviews.html>.

*Zarzuela*. 2003. Retrieved November 13, 2009 from  
<http://www.seattleluxury.com/encyclopedia/entry/Zarzuela>.

**Julieta C. Mallari** holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. She has been the Director of the University of the Philippines Extension Program in Pampanga since 2000. Besides being a professor in English and literature, she is also a cultural worker in Pampanga, a province in the northern part of the Philippines. She has written several articles on Pampanga literature. She has also produced two coffee-table books.