

The Evolution of the *Loa* in Spanish America

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The *loa* has a long history in the literary and cultural tradition of Spain and colonial Spanish America. It usually functioned as a laudatory prologue or curtain raiser to the performance of full-length dramas. *Loas* are all much alike; it is easy to lay out a priori the pattern of most of these brief pieces. No doubt they filled their place on the program acceptably enough; yet one can not help but feel that many a spectator was bored by their stilted language and mechanical, monotonous form. Nevertheless, the *loas* composed in the New World merit attention in the first place because they offer further evidence that the writers in America imitated European forms as closely as possible during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and also because the later eighteenth century *loas* contain some of the first references to New World problems and the emergence of new *criollo* and Indian types and attitudes.

The earliest datable use of the word *loa* as the equivalent of a dramatic prologue appears in a Peninsular Corpus Christi play published in 1551.¹ This was, however, a *loa* only in form, not in content. The laudatory nature suggested by the nomenclature was a later development. Until 1581, at least, the *loa* remained the exclusive property of the religious drama.² The *loas* composed by the Mexican Fernán González de Eslava (1534-1601?) for eight of his colloquies were, therefore, almost contemporary with the first eulogistic *loas* published in Spain.³ They offer unmistakable evidence that even in the sixteenth century new forms were introduced in America soon after they were adopted in the mother country.

All of the *loas* of González de Eslava are of a uniformity which enables us to treat them as one. They are all brief monologues which open with praise for a saint, the sacrament, or a governing Viceroy, followed by a

resumé of the colloquy, and usually concluding with a plea for attention. Like their early Castilian prototypes these *loas* are simple compared with the magniloquently forced and abstruse expression which flowered in the following centuries. Completely lacking, too, are the pretentiously academic pedantry and endless wordplay which, along with stock words and phrases, were to constitute the formula of these panegyrics. But despite their simplicity, we begin to note, even at this date, an extravagant straining for *altisonancia*, or sublime expression. It would be difficult, indeed, to distinguish the following verses from those composed by a seventeenth-century poet:

Fuerza de vuestra virtud
Por el orbe resplandece,
Y en vuestras obras parece
Y en vuestra propia virtud
Que por ella siempre crece.⁴

Los arcos del cielo afables
Con su luz el Sol nos muestra,
Y visibles y palpables
Vemos en la vida vuestra
Virtudes innumerables.⁵

These stanzas contain eight of the standard words—*virtud*, *orbe*, *resplandece*, *arcos*, *cielo*, *afables*, *luz*, and *Sol*—used to an almost painful extent by later dramatists to effect an ultra-majestic air.

The *loa* gained prominence as a New World dramatic form in the seventeenth century. Poets attached to the viceregal courts were ready and willing to flatter their patrons or the monarchs of Spain with these encomiastic pieces. Although hundreds were undoubtedly composed both in Peru and New Spain throughout the seventeenth century, only eighteen from the pen of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) are extant.

Like González de Eslava, the Creole nun composed both secular and sacred *loas*. The former are more numerous; twelve of them celebrate birthdays of monarchs and members of the royal family, two others commemorate special events. The four sacred *loas* are largely propaganda pieces to discourage pagan practices among the indigenous masses. Since the rigid mold of the *loa* precluded any modification of expression or substance, an analysis of one of each type will suffice to demonstrate the elaborate development of the form in the hands of such a capable artist.

A flattering mythological *loa* dramatically celebrating the first birthday of Joseph de la Cerda, son of the Viceroy Conde de Paredes, illustrates the vacuous pomp and ceremony typical of most royal festivals.⁶ Neptuno, Venus, Amor, Thetis, Apolo and El Sol, assisted by two musical choruses, all join in heaping lavish praise upon the infant. The power, nobility and

demi-god virtues attributed to young Joseph are just so much empty sounding rhetoric, displaying more clever pretense than sincere conviction:

- VEN. Yo, y el Amor, de quien
Madre
Soy, le rendimos cortesés;
- CANTA. Yo la beldad à su rostro
divino
Cupido, à sus ojos las flechas
ardientes.
- SOL. Oy de su florido curso
Cumple vn circulo luziente
- CANTA. Esparciendo en las luzes
que tira,
vivisimas luzes, centellas ardientes.
- VEN. De Marte y Minerva es hijo,
de Venus, y el Sol descende:
- CANTA. Porque con el amor, y
hermosura
discrecion, y nobleza se vniessen
- SOL. Del Cerda, que Apolo y Marte,
Cordura y valor exerce.
- CANTA. Y la excelsa Maria, que
hermosa,
y discreta à Venus, y à Palas
contiene. [pp. 128-29]

It is not unlikely that this figurative panegyric exceeded even the fondest hopes of the proud royal parents.

The identification of Don Joseph with the illuminating power of the sun leads to a spirited and pretentiously academic debate. Venus and El Sol claim that the sun "ilumina, y no abrasa." Thetis and Neptune counter with "que alumbrar, y no encender, no puede ser." They argue the issue at length until Amor interrupts them, picks up the cue of the oft-repeated phrases "si puede ser" and "no puede ser" and with them introduces the play that followed:

si puede, ò no puede ser
para las celebridades
nos han de servir del dia
haziendo a sus anuales
obsequios vna Comedia
que *no puede ser* se llame:⁷
porque en ella se prosigan
las mismas contrariedades
que se han propuesto en la Loa; [p. 132]

and further glorifies the royal infant:

AMOR. Viva el Joseph generoso,
pues otro sol más hermoso
no puede resplandecer [p. 132]

and Mexico City:

AMOR. Viva la Ciudad leal,
que tener ninguna igual
en lealtad, y proceder.

MUS. No puede ser

CORO. Si puede ser

CORO. No puede ser [p. 133]

Notwithstanding the unctuous, mechanical expression of Sor Juana's *loa*, there are instances in which she achieved some dramatic effectiveness. The alternating long, short, and even single line speeches lend considerable variety to the general rhythm. The debate scene, in particular, moves along more rapidly than one would expect because the more lengthy disquisitions are balanced by short speeches. And dramatic intensity was achieved by a sequence of verses such as the following:

THE. Si arde el mar, què harà la tierra?
Si el agua, què haran las flores?
Si los pezes, què los brutos?
Si las hondas, què los montes
Si la espuma, què la yerva?
Si los fluxos, què los bosques?
Si el agua, que es quien al fuego
diametralmente se opone. . . . [pp. 126-27]

While the secular *loas* are all form and no plot, the sacred *loas* develop a unifying action. The expression is more direct, less pompous, less laudatory, and free of what seems ostentatious mythological references. Sufficiently representative of this type is the *Loa para el Auto de el Divino Narciso*.⁸ All of the characters are allegorical: the pagan indigenous tribes are symbolized by El Occidente and La América; La Religión and El Zelo are the Spanish emissaries of Christian devotion.

As the scene opens, El Occidente and his consort merrily call their brethren to join in praise of "el gran Dios de las Semillas," the most reverend of the two thousand odd Gods they worship. A band of Spanish soldiers led by Religión and the impetuous Zelo interrupt the festivities. When their arguments cannot persuade the Indians to desist from such unchristian cultism, Zelo orders the armed soldiers to put the unholy gathering to flight. The lives of Occidente and América are spared by the

compassionate Religión. However, this benevolent act does not mitigate their pagan devotion, but rather they arrogantly counter:

AMER. Si el pedir que yo no muera,
y el mostrarte compasiva
es porque esperas de mi
que me venceràs altiva
como antes, con corporales,
despues con intelectivas
armas; estas engañada,
pues aunque llore cautiva
mi libertad, mi alvedrio
con libertad, mas crecida
adorarà mis Deydades.

occi. Yo ya dixè, que me obliga
a rendirme à ti la fuerça;
y en esto claro se explica,
que no hay fuerça, ni violencia
que à la voluntad impida
sus libres operaciones:
y assi, aunque cautivo gima,
no me podràs impedir
que acà en mi coraçón diga,
que venero al gran Dios de las Semillas. [p. 362]

This, however, does not upset Religión's determination to convert the Indian couple. Rather, she patiently outlines simple lessons from the gospel until the haughty unbelievers are won over to the Christian faith.

With the exception of the singing and dancing, and the intensity of the struggle between Christian and pagan staged in the opening scene, Sor Juana's sacred *loa* suffers from didactic dullness. As for the Indian characters, they are strange, shadowy figures, mere toys of the imagination, too intellectual to be natives. We look in vain for indigenous traits. The best that can be said for the *loas* of Sor Juana is that they were less strained than most of the eighteenth-century efforts with their staggering multitude of mythological and allegorical characters, their complex elaboration of metaphors, and a versification which startles the reader with its twists and turns for effect.

The best known eighteenth-century Peruvian dramatist, Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo (1663-1743), wrote four *loas* to commemorate royal festivals. They are all cut of the same cloth and offer unquestionable evidence of how such an artificial form could stultify even such a clever satirist as Peralta Barnuevo. Nothing can express better the general humdrum quality of these *loas* than the oft-repeated words *augusto*, *inclito*, and *fúlgido*.

The *loa* which precedes his play *Triunfos de amor y poder* was performed during a royal feast by order of his excellency Don Diego Ladrón

de Guevara, the Bishop of Quito and Viceroy of Peru, to celebrate the victory of the French forces over the Austrians at Villaviciosa in 1710, setting the crown of Spain securely upon the head of the Bourbon Philip V.⁹

Eolo, Apolo and Neptuno lead the winds, muses, and marine nymphs, or air, land and sea respectively, in praise of Philip V and Guevara. They laud the fulfillment of the great mission of the Hispanic world, before whom even “. . . los pérfidos, impíos británicos” must bow. Every verbal trick of the trade is utilized to make the obsequious bombast effective. Especially interesting is the use of the *eco*, a type of verbal handspring popular in the eighteenth century:

CORO DE MUSAS.	todo el orbe le aclama	
CORO DE NINFAS.		clama
CORO DE VIENTOS.		ama. [1.151]
MUSAS.	El Perú le declara	
NINFAS.		clara
VIENTOS.		ara. [1.166]

The *loa* sung in the form of an opera before the play *Afectos vencen finezas*, differs only in its dedication.¹⁰ The same combination of mythological and allegorical characters sing the praises of the union of America and Spain, symbolized in the person of his Excellency Señor Doctor don Diego Morcillo Rubio de Auñón, the Viceroy of Peru. Land, sea, air and fire, too, applaud the actions of the *augusto* Morcillo, “por ínclitos blasones,” and celebrate the influence of his “fúlgido decoro.” These are only empty words which really should not have flattered the pompous Viceroy since any other name could have been substituted for his without changing the meaning of the piece in the slightest.

The theatre of Spain and its glorious continuation in Peru is the theme of the *loa* written to introduce his drama *La Rodoguna*.¹¹ The gods join in praising Spain's theatre with special reference to Calderón, Monteser, Solís, Mendoza, Salazar, Cándamo and Zamora, and promise to continue to grant their unique gifts to Spain's theatre so that its glory may be perpetuated. The *loa* is of interest only as a clue to the Spanish playwrights who, at the time, enjoyed the favor of the public. But such self-glorification could be expressed only with lavish platitudes which are not convincing as propaganda nor appealing as poetic drama. It is rather ironic that this *loa* should have introduced a play which was an obvious adaptation of *La Rodogune* written by the French master Corneille.

It is not necessary to read more than the opening and closing four lines of the *loa* honoring Luis I, the newly crowned King of Spain, to classify it as another highly repetitive and lifeless collection of hyperboles:

A aplaudir la más ínclita gloria,
la acción más augusta que vió el universo
con gozos festivos se eleve y se descienda

más bella la tierra, más fúlgido el cielo. [11.1-4]

Que al cerrar la más fúlgida pompa
que la ínclita Lima debido a su celo
sus gozos se exalten, haciendo que sea
el nombre de Luis, Armendáriz el eco. [11.291-95]¹²

Besides the already familiar *ínclito*, *augusto*, and *fúlgido*, many other flatulent words of praise are lavished upon the far from illustrious Don Luis by a host of mythological admirers.

It is apparent, therefore, that Peralta's *loas* were at most intended as propaganda pieces to restore the seventeenth-century devotion to peninsular order and culture. Because of their affectation and sometimes obscure allusions, they must have had little value, even when they were first performed, except for the persons to whom they were addressed or for the narrow circle in which those persons moved.

Another Peruvian satirist, Fray Francisco del Castillo (1716?-1770), bard and friend of the common people, was also inhibited by the formal structure of the *loa*. In a *loa* composed as an introduction to Calderón's drama *Los empeños de un acaso*, Castillo praises the election of Don Pedro de Villar y Sullán to the post of Mayordomo of the Hospital de Señor S. Andrés.¹³ The initial letters of the five allegorical characters, Poder, Entendimiento, Dicha, Regocijo and Obligación spell out the name Pedro and also form the anagram *poder*. In a monotonous series of uninspiring verses, the abstract virtues introduce themselves and then bless Pedro with their powers. The acrostic of Pedro is doubly reproduced in the final speeches by the first letters of the performers' names, and the initial letters of the verses they recite:

POD. Perdón pide el tiempo escaso;
ENT. En lo poco que ha ofrecido;
DIC. Dando a la disculpa paso;
REG. Razón para esto han tenido
OBL. Oy empeños de un acaso. [p. 221]

The pattern was repeated in the *loa* recited to celebrate the coronation of Fernando Sexto.¹⁴ Readily detected is the acrostic Fernando in the initial letters of the allegorical characters, Fama, Europa, Regocijo, Nobleza, Amor, Nación Peruana, Dicha and Obligación. They praise the new monarch, Spain's civilizing role in Peru, and hail the blood union of Peru and Spain. The *loa* is made extra long and tedious by Nación Peruana's lengthy speech proving historically her kinship with the mother country. As in the previous *loa*, the initial letters of the personages and the final verses form the name Fernando.

Mechanical as both these *loas* may be, we should greatly regret not to have them for they add materially to our knowledge of Castillo as a man

and as a poet. They demonstrate that he could adapt himself equally to the pompous atmosphere of the court and salon as to the hovels and taverns of Lima. For the pleasure of the unlettered groundlings in the pit and *cazuela*, he could improvise a wild and lusty one-act farce, and then rise, when the occasion demanded, to an aristocratic level with formal, melodious and dexterous verses which Peralta himself would have envied.

A *loa* performed in Santa Fe, Argentina, in 1717, would merit little more than a perfunctory perusal were it not the first known extant dramatic piece composed by an Argentine, and were it not the first *loa* to offer an interesting sidelight on a local economic grievance.¹⁵ Its author, Antonio Fuentes del Arco, was a person of some note in the internal affairs of the old and noble city. From 1717 to at least 1722, he held the post of "Defensor de Viudas y Menores de Santa Fe."¹⁶ The *loa* was performed as part of the celebration to commemorate the royal decree of Philip V in 1717 exempting Santa Fe from payment of the *sisá*, or tax on all merchandise entering the port, either to be sold in the city or shipped elsewhere. This was probably considered as a personal triumph for Fuentes del Arco since he had often urged the monarch of Spain to grant concessions to Santa Fe so that its position could be strengthened.

The interlocutors are three Caualleros who gather to announce publicly the edict of Philip V, and a musical chorus which echoes the words of praise for the Spanish monarch. Conspicuously absent in most of the dialogue is the verbal bombast so typical of previous *loas*. In fact, the rhythm is at times almost prosaic. This is especially visible in the long speech delivered by the Cauallero 1° in which he informs his companions that the monarch has finally heeded their pleas and lifted the unjust tax imposed on *yerba [mate]* from Paraguay.¹⁷ The *yerba* was specifically referred to since it was the most important product passing through the home port.

Fuentes del Arco could not escape entirely, however, from using some of the traditional vocabulary, metaphors and word play. Familiar sounding are the introductory speech of Cauallero 2°:

Del mal que Ocupa entre ambos orisontes
 Por crespas greñas de encumbrados montes
 Sacaba febo Sus cauellos Rojos,
 Y con dorados Ojos
 Al Orbe esta mirando,
 Las oscuras tinieblas desterrando,
 Que es monarca fogozo
 Que destierra tinieblas luminoso. [p. 228]

the reference to Philip V:

Asi uso Philipo (Dios lo guarde)
 Oy de sus Luses he de a haser alarde,

qual otro Sol Ermoso
 Mirando a nra Esfera mas piadoso

 Y el Eco de su aliento
 Pueblo sonoro la Region de el Viento. [p. 229]

and the verbal echo:

CAU°2°. Rinda el orbe a las altas magestades
 MUSICA. lealtades
 CAU°2°. Y feruorosos todos sin tiuiesas
 MUSICA. finesas
 CAU°2°. Y los que Ocupan puestos y exersisios
 MUSICA. Seruicios [p. 233]

When the laudatory speeches are concluded, the *loa* is closed with the announcement that a play of Agustín Moreto, *Guardar una mujer, no puede ser*, will follow immediately.

Spain's Bourbon monarch, Fernando VI, and Fernando José de Caicedo, the Alférez real of Bogotá, were lavishly regaled in a *loa* performed in Ibagué (today the capital of the Departamento de Tolima, Colombia) during a week of festivities begun on September 8, 1752.¹⁸ As in most of the previous *loas*, its author, Jacinto de Buenaventura, displayed more patriotic zeal than regard for truth as he glorified with conventionally turgid phrases Spain's role as defender of the Catholic faith.

Besides a musical chorus and four captive Moors, there are six interlocutors: El Rei, Embajador, Europa, Asia, Africa and México. The four allegorical characters pay homage to Fernando VI. As a token of their good will, they offer to surrender to him the four Moors whom they have conquered. Moved by love and pity, the good Monarch forthwith pardons the ancient enemies of the faith and orders their bonds to be loosened. The captives sing and dance with joy, fall on their knees before Fernando and praise his benevolence. A long speech by México follows in which the Monarch is extolled as the symbol of the four great virtues of the Middle Ages: *Prudencia, Justicia, Fortaleza* and *Templanza*. The four parts of the world then join in congratulating Ibagué for counting among its neighbors the noble Alférez Real, Fernando Joseph Caicedo, and his beautiful wife, Doña Teresa Flores from Vélez.

From a poetic *Descripción de los festejos* which follows the *loa*, we learn that it was Caicedo who had officially approved and sponsored the seven day festivities which featured, in addition to the above *loa*, *toros, entremeses, saraos, pandorgas, buenas comedias* and "otros lusidos festejos."¹⁹

The "vasallos correntinos" eloquently expressed their admiration for Spain's enlightened monarch Carlos III in the *Loa Colonial en honor de Carlos III* performed on January 17, 1761, in the province of Corrientes, Argentina.²⁰ The mood and theme of the piece can be gathered from the opening verses sung by a musical chorus:

MÚSICA A la Exaltación dichosa
de Carlos nuestro monarca
que ambos mundos ilumina,
y sin ofender abraza:
oy sus vasallos rendidos
a luzes tan soberanas
combocan para su obsequio
para hazer festivas salvas
Las fuentes, las aves, las flores,
las plantas. [p. 9]

Then Eolo, god of the winds, Neptuno, god of the waters, and Ceres, the goddess of plant life, all pay homage to the monarch. Their wordy sentiments are summed up in a succinct musical chorus which closes the *loa*:

MÚSICA. El Ayre le adore,
el mar se le rinda
y en flores, y frutos
la tierra le sirva. [p. 19]

Carlos III was perhaps more worthy than other monarchs of the praise heaped upon him. We learn nothing, however, of Carlos III, nor of the social, political and economic reforms initiated during his reign, which would be of interest to the modern reader. Dramatically, the *loa* is equally dull. The speeches of the symbolical deities are little more than monologues connected by only the slightest thread.

Judging from its many performances, another *loa*, entitled *El año de 1775 en Buenos Aires*, must have been a popular favorite.²¹ Perhaps this was due largely to the appearance of a *gracioso* whose warmth and humanity accentuated the insipidness of the allegorical characters.

The purpose of the *loa* is to praise Spain and its glorious tradition. Obsequio, the herald of the piece, calls forth the four elements, "la luz del fuego," "el ayre," "el agua," and "la tierra" symbolized by Marte, Venus, Neptuno and Ceres respectively, to pay homage to the Spanish monarch. His appeal is then echoed by a musical chorus:

Al festejo que pechos rendidos
al Monarca Hispano dedican afectos,
vengan todos y todos aclamen
sus ínclitos timbres, sus altos trofeos. [p. 479]

The mass of hyperboles which form the unnatural responses of the elements become almost absurd when Neptuno proclaims:

Las ovas del mar, os amen;
perlas, os adoren finas;
el coral, se admire, al veros;
el nacar, rendido, os sirva. [p. 481]

Ceres adds:

Las plantas tiernas os busquen,
 las rosas os rueguen vivas,
 las frutas brinden gustosas,
 las flores os quieren, finas. [p. 481]

Marte sings:

calor, llamas, luces, fuego,
 silvos, ecos, plumas, auras,
 plantas, rosas, flores, frutas,
 ovas, perlas, coral, nacar. [p. 481]

And Venus performs a verbal handspring with:

Nacar, perlas, coral, ovas,
 plumas, auras, silvos, ecos
 flores, frutos, rosas, plantas
 calor, luces, llamas, fuego. [p. 482]

Obsequio finally draws the laudatory phase of the *loa* to a close, announcing that a *comedia* has been prepared to add to the festivities of the occasion:

Ya que en armoniosa salva
 habéis saludado el bello
 esplendor del sol hispano
 que ostenta sacro hemisferio,
 habéis de saber que yo
 al mismo *asumpto* he dispuesto
 el hacer una comedia,
 i quiero para este efecto
 me prestéis vuestro favor.
 Los Cuatro
 Todos te lo prometemos
 Obsequio
 Yo lo acepto; pero solo
 carecemos para esto
 de uno que gracioso haga. [p. 482]

This is the cue for the *gracioso* to pop his head over the backstage curtain and offer his services as a fifth element, much to the chagrin of the allegorical figures. Over their protests, he directs a vigorous and amusing appeal to the audience which is, in effect, a mockery of allegory:

Miren ustedes señores
 Aquestos cuatro elementos
 que aquí presentes están
 son mui grandes embusteros,
 porque ni es tierra, ni es agua,

ni es el ayre, ni es el fuego.
 El agua no come pan,
 el aire ya lo sabemos,
 el fuego no tiene piés,
 ni la tierra tiene pelos;
 i vosotros camaradas
 andáis en dos pies, lo menos,
 con ojos, nariz i boca,
 lo mismo que un hombre entero;
 esto es porque á mi me digan
 si puedo ser Elemento!
 Amigos, en este punto,
 lo mismo soi yo que ellos,
 aprended si no sabéis
 aquello de lo que quiero
 para mí, para mi prójimo
 ha de ser, ni más, ni menos. [p. 482]

When *Obsequio* finally manages to placate the resentment of the *gracioso*, the latter joins forces with the elements in begging the attention and indulgence of the public for the play that is to follow.

That the general public of Buenos Aires did not share the laudatory sentiment of this *loa* is proved by the fact that only a month after a repeat performance in 1810, the first call to arms was sounded against the mother country.²² Thus the "*inclitos timbres*" and "*altos trofeos*" were excoriated and the curtain lowered on the chauvinistic nonsense that had marred the colonial stage for more than a century.

It was not until the final decade of the eighteenth century that a marked change occurred in the stereotyped form and content of the *loa*. Two anonymous *loas* performed in Mexico in 1790 are the best extant examples of this type. Like the sacred pieces of Sor Juana, they were written for the religious edification of the Indian, but with emphasis upon local color, colloquial language, and the adventures of indigenous types.

An Indian fruit peddler is the lone character of the *Loa en obsequio de la Purísima*.²³ His long monologue is interrupted only by occasional verses sung by an invisible divine chorus. The setting is a public square where Indians gather to hawk their wares. The scene opens on a strident note with the peddler shouting lustily to attract the public's attention to his large assortment of fruit. The appearance of what he believes is a woman transported on a portable platform, turns the cries into an earnest personal plea to buy the fruit he has been unable to sell since dawn. When the Indian suddenly realizes that it is the Virgin he is addressing, he begs her forgiveness, sets the fruit aside, and improvises a comical *loor*. The result is a very original version of the fall of man in the terms of a fruit peddler, and a simple commentary on some of the divine lessons of the catechism. A local

note is sounded in the final stanzas when he begs the Virgin to bless the village priest with the power to spread happiness among the inhabitants, and urges that a place be set aside in heaven for the *alcade* and the "poeta autor" of the *loa*.

The mark of ecclesiastical patronage is still more evident in the *Loa en obsequio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, which dramatizes the contest of religious faith against misbelief.²⁴ The interlocutors are a pair of rogues, Loco and Meco, the benevolent Saint Michael, and the evil Lucifer.

When the gluttonous Loco takes the stage, he is visibly disturbed by the musical chorus in the background. He wants to be left alone so that he can stuff himself with food to his heart's content. After he threatens to stone anyone who angers him, Saint Michael suddenly appears and spirits away his food. Loco's interpretation and graphic description of the winged St. Michael is especially amusing:

Ay! qué hermoso pajarote!
 ¿Sois canario, ó sois gorrión?
 No de balde por el viento
 se escuchaba tu canción.
 En fin, declara quién eres:
 acaba; dime ¿quién sois?
 ¿Por ventura eres armado?
 Creo que traes morrión;
 más bien pareces danzante.
 Pero . . . aguádate; que no,
 que no, mírenle los pies,
 No hay que hacer: es bailador.
 Pero bailador con alas,
 ¿qué será? válgame Dios!
 En fin, sea lo que fuere,
 vaya, dime tu intención
 antes que vuelva á venir
 esa cantada ó rumor,
 que no me deja comer
 cuando más á gusto estoy. [p. 106]

This is the cue for the divine creature to reveal his identity, tell the story of the fall of man and the coming of the Saviour so that the naive Loco may be moved to affirmation of the faith. The new Loco shakes hand with Saint Michael, pledging faithfully to carry the gospel to others.

The roar of drums and a blast of thunder then usher in the arrogant Lucifer shrieking the traditional lines of horror:

Arma! arma! guerra! guerra!
 infamia! furia y horror!
 Avaricia, Lujuria, Ira,

aprontaos! llamo yo!
Gula, Pereza y Envidia! [p. 109]

In a long soliloquy, the demon glorifies the infamous deeds which have earned him the titles of "Rey de los vicios" and "Príncipe del Abismo."

In the meantime, Loco has lived up to his vow and successfully converted Meco, a Chuchumeco Indian fugitive. Angered by this conspiracy, Lucifer is about to slay them both when Saint Michael intervenes. Cowering shamefully at the feet of the holy protector, the demon is forced to repent his evil deeds. Loco and Meco are so astounded by the display of Saint Michael's power that they both express undying devotion to the Creole Aurora Guadalupana.

Such a combination of supernatural and folk melodrama is obviously a continuation of the medieval miracle plays with only a single innovation. After two long centuries the church had compromised to meet the exigencies of the new environment; a *mestiza*, the Virgin of Guadalupe, shared the holy pedestal with the Virgin Mary.

Despite the less conventional inspiration of these *indianista loas*, the form was doomed to extinction. A shroud had already been woven by the mechanical formula which had pursued in vain a higher ideal of art. Its roots did not strike into the national soil, so it could hardly be a suitable literary vehicle for the national spirit which was to develop in the nineteenth century throughout almost all of Spanish America.

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Notes

1. Joseph A. Meredith, *Introito and Loa in the Spanish Drama of the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1928), p. 103.
2. Meredith, p. 115.
3. Joaquín García de Icazbalceta, ed., *Coloquios espirituales y poesías sagradas del presbítero Fernán González de Eslava* (México, 1877), pp. 5-6; pp. 61-62; pp. 71-72; pp. 86-87; p. 97; pp. 113-14; pp. 162-63; pp. 186-87.
4. Fifth Colloquy: "Loa al Virey," in *Ibid.*, p. 61.
5. Seventh Colloquy: "Loa al Virey," in *Ibid.*, p. 86.
6. "Loa al año que cumplió el señor Don Joseph de la Cerda, primogénito del Señor Virrey, Conde de Paredes," in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Poemas*, tomo I (impreso en Valencia por Antonio Bordazar, tercera edición, 1709), pp. 125-33.
7. *Guardar una mujer, no puede ser* by Agustín Moreto.
8. In Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, pp. 358-66.
9. In Irving A. Leonard, ed., *Obras dramáticas de Pedro Peralta Barnuevo* (Santiago de Chile, 1937), pp. 23-30.
10. Leonard, pp. 107-12.
11. Leonard, pp. 229-37.
12. Leonard, pp. 347-53.
13. In Rubén Vargas Ugarte, ed., *Obras de Fray Francisco del Castillo Andraca y Tamayo* (Lima, 1948), pp. 215-21.
14. Ugarte, pp. 222-37. This *loa* introduces Castillo's play *La conquista del Perú*.
15. In J. Luis Trenti Rocamora, "La primera pieza teatral argentina," *Boletín de Estudios de Teatro* (Buenos Aires), año IV, no. 15 (1946), 228-34.
16. Rocamora, p. 227.
17. Rocamora, pp. 230-32.

18. Jacinto de Buenaventura, "Loa para la jura del Rey Fernando VI," in Harvey L. Johnson, "Loa representada en Ibagué para la jura del Rey Fernando VI," *Revista Iberoamericana*, VII (1944), 296-303.

19. Johnson, pp. 303-05.

20. The text of this *loa* is transcribed in *Instituto de Literatura Argentina* (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Sección de documentos), I, no. 1 (1923), 7-19.

21. In Mariano G. Bosch, *Historia del teatro en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires, 1910), pp. 479-85.

22. Bosch, p. 85.

23. In Enrique de Olavarría y Ferrari, *Reseña histórica del teatro en México* (Mexico, 1895), I, pp. 97-100.

24. Olavarría, pp. 100-17.