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Soledad S. Reyes

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Urbana at Felisa

Soledad S. Reyes



Since its initial publication Modesto de Castro's prose work *Ang Pagsusulat ng Magkapatid na si Urbana at Felisa* (1864) has been highly regarded as a privileged text for a number of reasons.

Firstly, de Castro's work was one of the longer prose narratives written in Tagalog. Thus, it joined Miguel Lucio Bustamante's *Si Tandang Bacio Macunat*, another original work in the native tongue, in the select group of discourses which proved that Tagalog could be used to explore facets of experiences other than those delineated in the *awit* and *corrido* or the *pasyon*. Against a context where privilege was bestowed on texts written in Spanish, the language of power, *Urbana at Felisa* was no mean achievement even as it created a space for a lengthy treatise which constituted a wide range of experience in the language of the colonized.

Secondly, *Urbana at Felisa* has been credited as a precursor of the novel, a significant source of influences especially on the Tagalog novel which would emerge and flower in the first decades of American rule. This proto novel is notable, from a literary point of view, for its awareness of its own fictionality, of its being an artifact carved out of the raw but culture-bound experiences of a middle class family in the first half of the nineteenth century (see for example, Almario 1974, 1-38; Mojares 1976, 46-54; and Reyes 1982, 6-7).

Thirdly, the book has been traditionally regarded as a repository of lessons meant not only for nineteenth-century readers, but also intended for twentieth-century readers. Critics have emphasized the number of times the text has been reprinted—1877, 1889, 1907, 1925, and 1938—and the different translations in Ilocano (by Jacinto Caoili), Bicolano (by Fruto del Prado), and in Visayan (Alzona 1939, 4). Its popularity could be traced to its appeal not only in the Tagalog-speaking areas but in other places as well.

Lastly, in a society where the cast of characters was dominated by men, *Urbana at Felisa* featured two female characters as the heroines of the discourse. In hindsight, the central position assigned to these women, even if limited to the world of fiction, must have provoked some questions in the minds of those used to following the adventures of saints and sinners, of adventurers and fortune hunters. In *Urbana at Felisa* the voices allowed to speak came from two young women—articulate, authoritative, and gifted with intelligence.

In retrospect, *Urbana at Felisa* was popular for at least one hundred years—starting in the second half of the nineteenth century and peaking in the first few decades of American rule—for at least five generations of readers. At present, the work is alive in various textbooks in Philippine literature as a significant nineteenth-century text that promoted good manners and right conduct among its readers. But as a cultural artifact, except in some critical essays, the book is treated fondly as a quaint anachronism from a bygone era, and is to be studied as part of a long forgotten past with its system of values and beliefs.

However, as late as 1938, when the last edition of the book was published, a number of critics still looked at the text as a document worthy of being read for the words of advice that could be extracted from it. As these critics averred, the book was relevant not only to the reader of the nineteenth century. Because of its power, it was significant to the twentieth century reader desirous of leading a morally purposeful life.

Urbana at Felisa was a guidebook that presented models of exemplary conduct and behavior worthy of emulation by everybody. Encarnacion Alzona (1939, 4), a foremost historian and social critic, typified the scholar who looked favorably at the text:

Ang aklat na ito ay ukol sa pagsusulat ng dalawang binibini na nagngangalang Urbana at Felisa; at sa pamamagitan ng mga sulat na nasabi ay ipinabatid ni Padre de Castro ang maiinam na asal ng tao na dapat sundin ng lahat, bata at matanda, babae at lalake, sa kanilang pakikipagkapwa-tao. Ipinalalagay ng marami na ang mga ugaling nasasaysay dito ay maringal na kailangang maging huwaran ng tunay na mga Pilipino at di dapat na ikahiya kahit na sa mga araw na ito. Ang mga Pilipino ay hindi na nangangailangan ng isang Emily Post upang magturo sa kanila ng ukol sa pakikipagkapwa-tao, sapagkat mayroon na tayong isang Padre de Castro na nag-iwan sa atin ng mga gintong aral na dapat ugaliin ng mga Pilipino hindi lamang sa mga nakaraang araw kundi sa ngayon man at sa hinaharap.

(This book is about the exchange of letters between two ladies named Urbana and Felisa; and through these letters Fr. Modesto de Castro made known the desirable behavior that everyone—young and old, women and men—should observe in dealing with other people well. It is thought by many that the ideal conduct described in this book should be emulated by Filipinos and should not be cause for embarrassment even in these days. Filipinos do not need an Emily Post to teach them good manners because we already have Father de Castro who left behind golden rules which Filipinos ought to follow not only then but even now and in the time to come.)

For Alzona, de Castro's discourse contained all that was praiseworthy about the Filipinos' character and personality—respect for elders, their penchant for cleanliness, their fidelity to their vows, their circumspection and innate modesty. She argued that the behavior of the present generation of Filipinos—vulgar, loud, hypocritical—had been a reprehensible influence of American culture and did not therefore have roots in the indigenous way of life.

Writing when the process of Americanization had made inroads into the Filipino's psyche and behavior, Alzona saw *Urbana at Felisa* as a text to heighten the radical differences between the past, powerfully constructed in the book, and the present, shaped by American materialism. After close to four decades of American influence, the world of Urbana and Felisa was almost unrecognizable (see, for example Lardizabal 1959, 105–6; Robb 1963, 32–46).

A similar view was put forward by Julian Cruz Balmaseda (1938, I–II; all subsequent quotations from the text will be taken from this edition), a noted poet, fictionist and dramatist of the period, who in the Preface to the 1938 edition of *Urbana at Felisa* flatly stated:

Sa panahong ito ang ating mga lipunan ay pinamamayanihan ng mga bagong ugali at pati ng mga batas sa loob ng tahanan ay nabago na rin at natatangay ng hagibis ng bagong kabihasnang hatid sa ating dalampasigan ng bagong panahon, ngayon, higit kailan man ay kinakailangang pagbalikan natin ang lumang kahapon sa manakanaka; di upang tayo'y maghubad pa ng panibagong bihis na dulot sa atin ng mga bagong uri ng pagsasamahan, kundi upang salaminin man lamang ang tubig na hubog ng isang kaayaya at kabigha-bighaning kahapon. Ang pinagdanasan ang nagsulat sa aklat ng buhay ng ganitong mga Talata—"Ang hindi luminingon sa pinanggalingan/Di makararating sa paroroonan."

(In these times when our societies are dominated by new patterns of behavior and when even laws governing the home have changed and been swept away by the winds buffeting our shores brought about by Western values, now, more than at any other time, there is a need to return to the past periodically. This is not to strip ourselves bare of new ways which we have donned in entering into new relationships, but to see mirrored in the waters glimpses of a beautiful and glorious past. What we experienced is inscribed in the book of life thus: "Those who fail to look back at the past/will never arrive at their destination.")

Like Alzona, Balmaseda appeared to mourn the death of what was perceived as good manners, especially among the youth who were enamoured of Western values which older Filipinos viewed as inimical to the people's interest and well-being. In both authors, *Urbana at Felisa* became a means to foster the indigenous and in the process infuse the book with an aura of nationalism.¹

It is clear that a nineteenth-century text, canonized over the years, was being invoked to stem the systematic onslaught against traditional beliefs. Its importance must be stressed because the present, mesmerized by the mind-boggling influences from the West, was starting to ignore it. In a gesture, both evocative and defiant, the two voices of authority had set up *Urbana at Felisa* as a foil to the present with all its vagaries, confusion and unceasing and sometimes contradictory movements and processes. At this historical juncture, deep into American colonization, the text was a weapon, a tool for those who wished to see the return to traditional values by those who had turned their backs on the past. In 1938, *Urbana at Felisa* was not merely a book of etiquette but a whole way of life presented as an alternative to the chaos and turmoil of a colonial society.

The Context of *Urbana at Felisa*

Almost a century after its initial publication, de Castro's *Urbana at Felisa* was, in the view of an influential sector in society, a text that possessed the power to shape the consciousness of the people. From it could be extracted guidelines for daily living and to help correct the gross materialism society had fallen into. Offered to the reading public in 1938, the book was intended to be read/consumed by an audience several times removed from the moment and milieu in which it had originally emerged. As an object of formal study in

the 1990s, *Urbana at Felisa* has now become much further removed from the original moment of production and consumption. The question is: how does a contemporary reading approximate the rich meanings the text has generated through the years?²

In this article, I would like to discuss the context and circumstances which determined the book's production, not to attempt to recuperate the text's intended meaning (the author as the source of meaning) nor to locate the meaning in the reader. This is an almost impossible feat. What I wish to do is to pinpoint the possible ideological underpinnings which shaped de Castro's work by examining the wide range of contexts which could have influenced the author.

The following questions will be asked: Who was the producer of the text? Who was the text's intended/ideal reader? What were the historically specific and culturally rooted experiences explored in the text? What were the recurring strands that constituted certain structures of meaning in the text? What tentative conclusions can be derived regarding the relationship between de Castro's work and history?

The Priest as Producer of the Text

Modesto de Castro was a Filipino priest from Binyang in Laguna which was one of the richest provinces in Luzon. It is said that he studied at Colegio de San Jose run by the Jesuits (Javellana 1994, 576). He became a parish priest in several places such as the Manila Cathedral and in Naic, Cavite. Considered a master of prose work, he wrote a number of books such as *Plásticas Doctrinales* (1855, 1864, 1878), *Exposición de las Sietes Palabras*, *Collecciones de Sermones en Tagalog*, *Novena de San Isidro en Tagalog*, and *Novena de San Pedro*. It has been conceded, however, that *Urbana at Felisa* was his most popular and enduring work.

Modesto de Castro was first and foremost a priest and his writing was determined by his calling as God's minister. He was primarily a writer who dealt with ideas that constituted Christian beliefs. He was an individual who explored a language, bereft of power and prestige in a colonial society, in order to create a discourse that sought to reinforce and systematically strengthen the gains the Church had made by the second half of the nineteenth century (see, for example, Corpuz 1989, 502-14; Constantino 1975, 140-45). He was a man nurtured in a traditional society where the law was made and enforced by men. The institution to which he belonged was certainly

a male-dominated structure where women were generally perceived as followers, never as leaders.³ Modesto de Castro was clearly a writer motivated by the demands of his faith and institution.

Furthermore, de Castro was a representative of a particular class, perhaps few in number, but nonetheless in possession of influence and power. This power must be consolidated and protected from various threats from within and without located in other ideologies—both suppressed and emergent—that could challenge the primacy of the Church and Spanish hegemony. Indeed, this author/priest should be seen as an influential voice not only within the structure of the Church but as importantly, within the structure of the lay community to whom his numerous texts were addressed. Modesto de Castro was unarguably vested with tremendous power and authority by virtue of his priesthood and his writing, the dissemination of which would further increase his power and influence.

The Reader of the Text

The primary audience of *Urbana at Felisa* in the second half of the nineteenth century would have been the middle class, literate and able to buy copies of the book (Constantino 1975, 64–80, 139–40; see also de la Costa 1965, 182–90). There is, of course, no quantitative basis for such a statement, for there are no existing records of those who actually bought copies of the various editions. However, an analysis of the text is bound to show that its very composition could not have been possible if no distinct middle class had been formed, perhaps not as numerous nor as powerful as they would have wanted to be, but nonetheless, a concrete aggrupation of people with similar interests and goals.

Specifically, the intended audience of the book were female readers who by this time would have constituted a large literate group whose various roles had already been defined by society.

In the Preface, de Castro (1864, 2) says:

Kayong mga ina naman, na may katungkulang magturo sa anak ng mga dakilang katotohanang pahayag ng Santo Evangelio, dapat ang kayo'y magsakit—tumupad nitong mabigat na katungkulan na ipagsusulit sa Diyos.

(Those of you who are mothers who have the duty to teach your children those great truths announced in the Sacred Scripture, you should

strive to fulfill these weighty responsibilities for which you have to account before God.)

The book's central thesis revolves around the various experiences—the values, behavior, attitudes—of a specific kind of people whose homes were located in the pueblo, not in the barrio or the mountains, and who could afford to send a child to study in Manila, and whose desired goals were respectability and acceptance by the powers that be that determined what was proper and what was improper.

The characters themselves including the sisters, their brother Honesto, their parents, their neighbors, among others, came from distinctly middle class backgrounds. Urbana was the older of the two who was sent to a convent school in Manila in order to learn various skills to prepare her for a life of domesticity. What she learned in school was dutifully relayed to Felisa, left behind in their house in Paombong, Bulacan which the readers can rightfully assume was the residence of a middle class family. In *Urbana at Felisa* a whole range of experiences and activities of a family was explored and delineated even as prescriptions were laid down in the series of letters between Urbana and Felisa.

The Social Context: The Rise of the Middle Class

The historical moment and milieu which gave rise to de Castro's prose work was one that witnessed the rise of the middle class composed of landowners, businessmen and traders. The changes in the country's economy augured well for the rapidly increasing number of Filipinos who were benefiting from the cash crop economy. The country had been opened to international trade which event brought about a greater demand for such products as sugar, coffee, rice, tobacco, hemp, among other goods. Land that had long lain idle was used to plant profitable crops which eventually led to greater harvest (see, for example, De la Costa 1965, 182–90; and Constantino 1975, 128–30).

At about this time several education decrees were promulgated which enabled more Filipinos, especially those who could afford the high cost of higher education to enroll in Manila's colleges and universities (Alzona 1930, 30–31). With greater wealth and more material possessions came the desire to know more, to explore hitherto unexplored worlds, and to be, in the minds of the indio and the more

privileged mestizo class, like the Spaniards, the ultimate ideals of gentlemen and gentle ladies.

The 1850s was a period of urbanization—the exodus to the city and the wilful accumulation of the accoutrements of a comfortable and prosperous life. Society was undergoing profound changes not only in its external facade (infrastructure), in the arts (visual and literary), in the fashion and manners of the period (see, for example Camagay 1992, 91–144). More importantly, the class structure was being transformed and the balance of power was starting to shift from one class to another.

Indeed, the period appeared to be a heady time for a newly emerging middle class, not yet powerful but consolidating its gains by acquiring power in other areas. This, however, was not yet the crucial year which witnessed the execution of the three priests (1872) which would unleash certain movements in history. But the native clergy's resentment, simmering but unable to surface, was clearly being exacerbated by other events.⁴ At this point, the middle class was still growing and their children (the ilustrados that would lead the Propaganda Movement) were not yet old enough to mount any overt or covert attacks against the repressive regime.

Urbana at Felisa should be viewed against the context characterized by massive movements and historical changes. Situated against this crisscrossing series of movements, de Castro's work cannot be viewed as a completely harmless, transcendental narrative that escaped its own historicity. The text must be viewed as deeply implicated in the historical movements of the period, its complicity betrayed by its very structure and intent. This piece of writing, traditionally viewed as a mere guidebook for the edification of the faithful, is really tasked with creating a world dominated by the middle class but one still subject to the control of the Church (imaged in the book in the character of the sacerdote) and the state. Modesto de Castro himself was not a disembodied spirit dispensing words of advice from some aery sphere, but an individual shaped by numerous forces. He prescribed what ought to be done from a definite perspective, from a specific ideologically determined point of view. Admittedly, the treatise had its own good intention—to help people cope with their lives as Christians in Vanity Fair—and yet, an analysis of both the manifest and latent contents of this book should help the reader see how the narrative was a site for furious struggles of ideas.

What the Text Said: The Presence

On the surface, *Urbana at Felisa* is a straightforward account of the stages a person must undergo on earth—from birth, through childhood, adolescence, maturity, to death. In the Preface, de Castro underscores the relationship between *pag-ibig sa Diyos* (love of God) and *pag-ibig sa kapwa-tao* (love of neighbor), Christianity's central message:

Ang dunong na pagtuturo sa tao sa pagharap sa kanyang kapwa, ay bunga ng pag-ibig sa kapwa-tao, ang bunga ng pag-ibig sa kapwa-tao ay bunga ng pag-ibig sa Diyos. Kaya ang umibig sa Diyos, ay marunong makipagkapwa-tao, at sakali't di marunong ay magsasakit na matuto; sapagkat, batid na ang dunong na ito ay puno at mula ng magandang kaasalang kinalulugdan ng Diyos.⁵

Ang marunong makipagkapwa-tao ay maganda ang kaasalan; palibhasa'y nag-iingat, na ang kanyang kilos, asal at pangungusap ay matuntong sa guhit na di kapopootan ng Diyos, at kalugdan ng tao. Kaya ang karunungan ito ay hiyas sa isang dalaga, dangal sa isang ginoo, pamuti sa isang binata, dilag at kariktang kakambal ng magandang asal na ninihag sa puso (pp. 1-2).

(The knowledge that teaches a person how to deal with his/her neighbor comes from love of one's neighbor; love of neighbor comes from love of God. Thus, one who loves God knows how to deal with his/her neighbor well, and anyone who does not know should strive to learn, because this knowledge springs from good action which God delights in.

Those who know how to deal with their neighbor possess good manners, for they are careful that their action, behavior, and speech are within certain boundaries pleasing to God and to their fellowmen. Thus, this knowledge is a precious gem to a woman, honor to a gentleman, ornament to a young man, beauty and loveliness associated with good behavior that captures the heart.)

De Castro thus frames the whole text against the ideal notion that love of neighbors, expressed variously in *kagandahang-asal* or proper behavior, is in fact the result of a person's deep love of God. Having manifested love for the other, the individual can be assured of the others' respect and admiration for him/her.

Addressing the parents, de Castro warns them of the dire consequences of their failure to teach good manners to their children, thus stressing the parents' crucial role in their children's education:

Ngunit kung inyong bayaan, palakhing salat sa aral, hubad sa magandang asal, at sapilitang ipagsusulit ninyo sa Diyos, at pagdating ng panahon na sila'y pagitna sa mundo, sa masamang aning sa kanila's mamasdan, dalamhati ang inyong pupulutin; kayo ang sisisihin ng tao, at palibhasa'y bunga ng inyong kapabayaan (pp. 2-3).

(But if you neglect your responsibilities, allow them to grow lacking in guidance, stripped of good manners, and forced to account for themselves before God, and when the time comes for them to live their lives, and you see only bad harvest, woe to you; you will be blamed because you have been neglectful parents.)

On the other hand, parents who dutifully impart good lessons to their children will experience great joy at the sight of their offspring becoming good husbands and wives. In the final reckoning, continues de Castro, the parents will reap what they sow.

The book's didactic thrust—the text as a source of values and norms—is made specific when the author describes the main characters. From Urbana, the name and the person, the reader is expected to learn a lot of things:

Sa pangalang "Urbana" mababasa ang magaling na pakikipagkapwatao. Sa kanyang mga sulat sa kapatid na Felisa, ay makapupulot ang dalaga, makapag-aaral ang bata, makaaaninaw ang may-asawa, makatataho ang binata ng aral na bagay sa kalagayan ng isa't isa (p. 4).

(The name "Urbana" connotes good manners. In her letters to her sister Felisa, a young woman, a child, a married couple, a young man can learn some lessons to suit their various conditions.)

On the other hand, the reader is also assumed to learn many insights into life from Felisa, the girl left in Paombong:

Kay Felisa mag-aaral ang dalaga ng pag-ilag sa panganib na ikinasisira ng kalinisan; at ang kaniyang magandang asal ay magagawang uliran ng ibig mag-ingat ng kabaitan at loob na matimtiman (p. 4).

(From Felisa a young woman can learn how to avoid dangers to her purity; and Felisa's proper behavior can guide anyone who wants to preserve her goodness and modesty.)

The priest-author then turns to himself and the purpose in writing the book:

At kung sa handog kong halimbawa, kayong mga ina ay magdalitang dumampot ng magandang aral, itanim sa loob at alinsunurin, at mapanood ko ang pakinabang ng inyong mga anak, sa inyong

paghihirap sa aking pagsisikap, ay mahuhulaan kaya ninyo ang aking wiwikain?

Ang wiwikain ko'y pinapalad ako, at ang kahalimbawa ko'y nagsabog ng binhi, at ang tinamaan ko'y mabuting lupa (pp. 5-6).

(And if from the examples I proffered, you mothers would deign to pick up some lessons, internalize and observe them, and I witness how your children have profited from your labor to make the lessons bear fruit, can you guess what I will say?

I will say that I have come across good fortune, for I am like the sower and the seeds I scattered fell on good soil.)

Likening himself to a sower who goes out into the field, de Castro uses the parable to illustrate the ideal way in which his message should be received by his readers. Continuing his use of the *taling-haga*, de Castro then compares himself to a farmer, full of joy and expectation of a good harvest as he lovingly watches over the ripening grains in his field.

The motives underlying the book were thus laid bare, quite unequivocally, in the lengthy Preface. Modesto de Castro has written a book to mould the Christian through a series of exhortations and injunctions that touch on almost all aspects of life. That de Castro decided to use Tagalog rather than the more privileged Spanish seemed a masterful gesture for the mission of reaching out to as many readers as possible.

There was no tentativeness nor ambivalence in the manner in which the author not merely described, but actually prescribed the proper behavior that all should observe. De Castro spoke from a privileged position of a knowledgeable person (by reason of superior education) and of a trustworthy pastor of his flock who had behind him the authority to promulgate decrees in a God-fearing society. There were no *ifs* and *buts* riddling the text, only *dos* and *don'ts*. He spoke in a voice ringing with power and authority despite the contrivances that he resorted to in order to downplay his pervasive presence in the book and imbue it with some degree of fictionality and thus distance himself from the female voices.

Fictional Devices

One of the techniques employed is the use of a linear narrative—a definite storyline that encompasses the characters' lives from early childhood, through adulthood, into old age. Time does move in the

text, pushing the narrative forward in a chronological sequence that follows an individual's cycle of life and death. The titles of the book's thirty-four chapters focus on the milestones in a person's journey through life.

Thus, the early chapters deal with the activities in the life of a young person—going to school, learning to do housework, cultivating friendships, attending feasts and parties. All these constitute the socialization process where a person is slowly assimilated into the various institutions in society. The second section features a primary concern of adult life—finding the right spouse to insure a successful marriage. This part is followed by a series of chapters on the different ways of bringing up children to make sure that they will not be led astray. The last chapters invariably focus on the person's final years with lengthy exhortations made by the parent to the children on the need to lead a moral life.

The second device is the use of specific characters as the text's fictional constructs through whom the narrative is unfolded and the message is communicated, by using such characters as Urbana, Felisa, Honesto (all of whom are texts to be deciphered), and the ubiquitous priest, de Castro who distances himself partially from the narrative. In making this calculated move, the author infuses his work with some degree of objectivity. On the surface, the voices heard in the text, and not the author's voice, are the sources of various norms and values that pertain to everyday behavior and action.

Thirdly, de Castro employs a great deal of descriptive details to make the activities engaged in by the members of the community as graphic as possible. The details are important, not only for their rhetorical effectiveness, but for lulling the reader into identifying with familiar impressions and patterns that constitute real life. The selection of pertinent details (mostly those referring to middle class lifestyles and activities) and the rejection of other details (for example, those that refer to the lives of the poor *kasama*) suggest a systematic attempt to construct a world where experiences have been methodically chosen. In specific ways, this process of selection and rejection underlies the privileged position of the writer as the source of authority and power of his discourse.

All these techniques contribute to make an engaging narrative and an engaging reading. At the same time, this strategy helps to position the reader in an unproblematic relationship with the text. Because the narrative is presented in the guise of fiction, it is not expected to tell the "truth" for fiction, which by its very nature is the

opposite of "truth."⁶ In thus reading the text, the reader accepts what the text is saying as a part of the constructed world which appears so similar to real life. In further immersing himself/herself in the narrative, the reader draws on taken-for granted realities of his/her life in order to make sense of the story being unfolded on the pages. The result is the view of *Urbana at Felisa* a spontaneous re-statement of established and widely-accepted norms and beliefs on a variety of issues. No difficulty arose, for the nineteenth century readers who shared the author's views, responded favorably to this well-meaning work which, from the beginning, was predicated on its being a source of inspired guidelines to Christian living.

Nineteenth-Century Filipinos

Indeed, the whole book is filled with exceedingly astute and insightful observations on the mores and actuations, actual and desired, of nineteenth century Filipinos. Moreover, certain sections of the text offer pleasurable reading because of the innate and infectious humor the writer displays almost unself-consciously. In some cases, the reader is impressed by the earnestness with which incisive comments on pervasive and objectionable practices are delivered. For example, the proper art of talking is described thus:

Bago bigkasin ang bibig, ang sasabihin ay iisipin muna, at sundin yaong hatol ni San Agustin ang minsang bibitauan ng dila ay pararaaning makalawa sa kilil, samakatuwid ay sa bait. Katiingat ang sabihing masama sa minsang mabitiwan, ay di na madarampot.

Sa pagsasalita'y huwag kukumpas-kumpas, ilagan ang ingay, at nang di nakabibingi; masama rin naman ang totoong marahan, sapagkat ang mapagmapuring tao'y bukod sa di pinaniniwalaan, ay nagiging katatawanan at pampayamot sa kinakausap (p. 30).

(Before you say anything, reflect on it first, and follow St. Augustine's advice, that any utterance must be measured, and weighed by the mind. Be careful, for an evil word once spoken can never be taken back again.)

When speaking, avoid gesticulating excessively, speak quietly so as not to shatter the listener's eardrums; neither is it proper to speak too deliberately because a person who is too full of himself, apart from having little credibility, becomes a butt of joke and a source of irritation to the listener.)

As in other passages, moderation is the desired norm.

The series of advice on a young man's proper behavior is also a source of illuminating insights. The key concepts are "order," "decorum" and "moderation" in all things—playing, eating, speaking, among others.

Kung madurumhan ang kamay, mukha o damit, ay maglinis muna bago pasa-eskuwela. . . . Kung makikipagusap sa kapwa-tao ay huwag magpapakita ng kadunguan, ang pangungusap ay tutuwirin, huwag hahaluhan ng lamyos o lambing, huwag kakamotkamot o hihilurin kaya ang kamay o babasain ng laway ang daliri at ihihilod. . . . Sa kapwa bata ay huwag magbibigay nang kakanin na may kagat o marumi (p. 23).

(When the hand, the face or the clothes become dirty, clean up first before going to school. . . . When talking to another, avoid showing timidity, speak forthrightly, do not speak with too much sweetness or affectation, do not scratch or scrub the hand nor wet the finger with saliva to scrub Do not give half-eaten or dirty food to another.)

Some remarks are quite precise directives—the way one uses one's hands, the manner of walking in the street, or the way a girl uses her eyes—and these comments certainly indicate an intense preoccupation with the body, as if through prescription, the body and its parts could be contained within set rules.

It is not only manners and mannerisms that the book tackles with much seriousness. In several chapters, pernicious and widespread vices such as gambling and drunkenness occasion much passionate diatribes. A stern warning is issued to individuals who indulge in these vices and an almost clinical description of the physical and spiritual effects of excessive drinking is put forward:

Ang lalong matibay na katawan ay nanghihina, nagkakasakit at kahit batang bata ay tumatanda't dumadali ang buhay pag nag-iinom nang alak. Ang lalong marikit na kulay ay kumukupas, ang mukha ay namumutla, . . . nanlulupaypay ang liksi ng kabataan, ang sigla ng buhay sa katanghalian, ang ningning ng kagandahan, inaaglahing lahat ng alak (p. 91).

(Even a strong body weakens, gets sick and even though still young, it ages prematurely and dies due to excessive drinking. The most sanguine color fades, and the face becomes pale, . . . the agility of youth, the excitement of middle life, the splendor of beauty wither away; all these wine makes a mockery of.)

The perceived counterpart of men's vice is found in women who have gone astray and become prey to lust. These characters incur the ire of the *sacerdote*, a character used as the author's alter ego in the book. The deadly effects of a woman's indiscretions and her playful attitude toward love are described in the following terms:

Sa karamihan ng nangingibig sa kalaunan ng panahon ang ginayon-gayon, napapahamak ang puri, nagiging kasiraan ng kamag-anakan, puno ng bulung-bulungan ang bayan, at ang lalong kasakit-sakit ay ang pagkapahamak ng kaluluwa nitong kaawa-awang mga dalaga, at ang maraming tao na nagkasala sa masamang halimbawang nakita sa kanila. Sino kaya бага ang sisihihin ng Diyos sa mga bagay na ito kundi ang masamang magulang? (pp. 154-55).

(In time, after numerous dalliances, her honor is shattered, her family's reputation is tarnished while the townsfolk tattle, but the most painful is the loss of the souls of these unfortunate women, and the many people who sinned because of these women's bad examples. Who will God blame for these sins but the negligent parents?)

The sinful woman, perceived as such because she failed to control her desires, is thus viewed as causing others to commit similar sins because she has set a bad example. The community is now the victim of her own personal transgression.

Urbana at Felisa predictably devotes a great deal of time discussing the ideal relationship in marriage. In "Kahatulan sa Paglalagay sa Estado," the sacerdote writes a long letter to Urbana detailing the specific ideals of married life:

Ang unang-una'y kailangan, na ang mag-asawa'y magkapisan ang uri at kaugalian. Ang ikalawa'y ang pag-iibigan. Ang ikatlo, ang pag-ibig ay malagay sa katamtaman. Ang ikaapat ay ang pagkakatiwalaan ng loob. Ang ikalima, ang babae ay huwag mapakalubha ang yaman sa lalaki. Ang ikaanim, ang gulang hanggang maaari ay dapat magkapisan. Ang ikapito, ang kagandahan ng babae na hahanapin ay kaighan lamang at huwag lumabis. Ang ikawalo, kapwa mawilihin sa katahimikan at malagin sa masamang pagsasaya. Ang ikasiyam ay huwag maibigin sa sugal na bawal at malakas. Ang ikasampu ay huwag maramot at huwag namang sambulat. Ang ikalabingisa'y masipag at kapwa kaaway ng katamaran. Ang ikalabingdalawa'y matanggihin sa pagmamarikit. Ang ikalabingtatlo ay loob na timtiman at mapagtiis sa hirap (pp. 121-22).

(First, the couple must be alike in class and character. Second, love must exist. Third, love must be in moderation. Fourth, they should trust each other. Fifth, the woman must not be much richer than the man. Sixth, the couple must be of the same age, or almost the same age. Seventh, the woman's beauty must not be extraordinary. Eighth, both must be peace-loving and despise sinful merrymaking. Ninth, neither must be fond of incessant gambling. Tenth, they should neither be miserly nor prodigal. Eleventh, both should be industrious and despise laziness. Twelfth, both should avoid ostentatious display. Thirteenth, both should possess inner strength and endurance.)

Modesto de Castro's book touches on other aspects of relationships among the members of the family and in the context of a larger community. This brief discussion is meant to high-light only certain salient features of the text to show that de Castro's concerns ranged from etiquette to ethics. Although ultimately a guidebook for the Christian, *Urbana at Felisa* is nonetheless a rich source of insights into nineteenth-century mores and lifestyles where the ideal is systematically juxtaposed against the actual. Providing a counterpoint to all forms of excess, chaos, confusion and uncontrolled passion and desire are ideals of order, moderation, balance, harmony, and control.

In a society where sins are committed by individual transgressors, whether against filial piety or chastity, or where men and women commit unpardonable lapses in polite and dignified behavior and pose, de Castro's text is the lodestar, the source of lessons. Like most guidebooks, *Urbana at Felisa* metes out punishment to sinners and in doing so, banishes from the center anything that hints of mystery, terror, and raging desire. To conform to the expressed norm is to turn one's back on all forms of aberrant and irrational behavior not sanctioned by society struggling to maintain its hegemonic hold on a community getting increasingly complex. *Urbana at Felisa* should be perceived as an important text of *reduccion*, the process through which the periphery is forcibly brought into the center for more efficient governance. After all, the text is not only an instrument for the perpetuation of power. *Urbana at Felisa* is itself an embodiment of power as a discourse that constituted generations of God-fearing subjects.

The Text as Containment

Examined as a discourse that wielded tremendous power, *Urbana at Felisa* appears as basically affirmative in its attempt to stabilize and impose order in society. Moreover, it is clear that as a compendium

of values, it has appropriated Western concepts and categories which, by the nineteenth century, had become institutionalized. Concepts relating to the institution of marriage (monogamous, heterosexual, and entered into for procreation), parent-children relationship (absolute demands of filial piety and control), gender (woman as subservient and dutiful and defined in relation to men), role of the priest (authoritative and source of wisdom), to name a few, shape the text systematically.

No longer articulated verbally in church sermons, these concepts now committed to writing and permanence became precepts organized as narrative. The author is himself an awesome figure of authority and immense charisma. Ideas that constituted not only religion but such areas as civics, etiquette and deportment were presented as norms against which an individual's behavior and attitude, personal and social, would be measured.

What kind of a world did Urbana and Felisa seek to establish? In the process of selection, what entities had to be contained or excluded? Modesto de Castro's work sought to create an ideal world, a universe from which all forms of disorder and chaos should be exorcised. It was the ideal/idyllic world to which the readers must aspire, if they wanted to lead fruitful lives on earth, and by implication be rewarded with the Beatific Vision. Although the book was predicated on the thesis that God's love was palpable, as manifested in an individual's love for another, God did not really make his presence felt in this book in the way He showed himself in the great spiritual books of St. John of the Cross or St. Theresa of Avila.

The more fundamental concern in this narrative was the constitution of reality envisioned as the ideal world. The preoccupation was with an intensely human world, localized and culture specific, and what should be done to lessen its perceived weaknesses and flaws. The center of the discourse was a site where order was made to reign supreme and where dissonance had to be eliminated, and its echoes finally silenced. In retrospect, it is fair to assume that a crucial project of de Castro's work was the expulsion, or at least the containment, of various forms of aberrant and irrational behavior as strictly defined in the text, and which signified threats to reason and the law, not to mention Christian faith. In the process of strengthening and consolidating what had been achieved after almost three hundred years of colonization and Christianization, *Urbana at Felisa* set out to further draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable values.

There were two groups of individuals which the text appeared to try to control and suppress; to deny them was to deprive them of power. This was a necessary project if the text wanted to realize its goal of paving the way toward order and harmony. In this view, *Urbana at Felisa* should no longer be regarded as a harmless, innocuous guidebook, as a celebration of traditional beliefs and values, as a canonical text of purely religious meaning. On the contrary, this work should probably be seen as a polemical text written to address certain problematic issues confronting not only the Church in its mission of evangelization, but society at large undergoing the beginnings of social ferment.

The task now is not to rely any longer on what the text is saying ostensibly. This has been done in an earlier section. The project is to explore the gaps and fissures that determine the presence in the text, the dissonances that shape the narrative, and expose the presuppositions on which this work had been grounded.⁷

The Taong-labas

In history, the *tulisan*, the *taong-labas*, the *taong-bundok*, among the many terms used to refer to the outsider, was an enigmatic figure, the existence of whom has been explained in various ways. For historian Isagani Medina, the numerous forms of banditry or *tulisanismo* must be perceived as a revolt against the policy of reduccion, as protest against the imposition of Spanish laws and authority (Medina 1994, 61). For Reynaldo Ileto (1988, 147), another historian, banditry was

the hidden "other side" of the developing pueblo centre. The bandit was one of the signs of the fundamental disorder in colonial polity, of the gap between pueblo center and periphery. In combatting the bandits, the colonial state and its local principalia allies were extending the state's authority and legal apparatus beyond the pueblo centre, literally attempting to put the countryside in order.

If, as an earlier section of this study has argued, Modesto de Castro's *Urbana at Felisa* can better be understood by showing how deeply steeped the text was in history, then it would be fair to assume that the antithesis of the idealized images of *Urbana and Felisa* could be found outside the carefully constructed world of urbane

behavior. History provided the author with precisely such a loaded construct—the taong-labas—a generic term for those who situated themselves, whether deliberately or by force of circumstance, outside the center. He was the outsider who in the text was made to represent all the traits and weaknesses which must be expelled from the ideal world of the propertied and the educated. As parish priest of Naic, Cavite, Modesto de Castro must have seen the effects of banditry during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸

The taong-labas could be the taong-bundok or the unhispanized Filipinos who steadfastly clung to their own beliefs and traditions (Scott 1982, 127–29). He could be the tulisan who was forced to flee into the mountains because he was victimized by an oppressive system.⁹ He could be the outlaw who stole from the rich in order to give the money to the poor, as popularized in the image of Robin Hood. Whatever he was and whatever his motives were, the tulisan or the taong-labas personified the individual situated in the periphery, and most certainly, a threat to the order and harmony of society. His very existence was an affirmation of the “underside” and a negation of what the center stood for. He was, moreover, the site for various degrees of resistance.

By bestowing on the Hispanized Filipinos an aura of respectability, de Castro privileged this group. The aura would glow more brightly if the construct could be juxtaposed against the darkness shrouding the outsider. By describing in minute particularities the rituals observed during parties, feasts, wakes, fiestas, home visitations, and on other public occasions, and by making explicit the correctness and desirability of such behavior, de Castro denigrated contrary behavior which in the text was associated, almost exclusively, with the *taga-barrio*.

Thus, a series of practical advice ranging from personal neatness and grooming to observance of etiquette constituted a powerful section of *Urbana at Felisa*. Sporting long hair and having long nails were not to be tolerated because these were done only by the wicked tulisan or the uncouth taga-bundok.

Similarly, scratching the front part of the body in public, spitting in the street, or holding the glass of water with five fingers were commonly associated with the taga-barrio and were thus definitely improper.

It is instructive to point out that the taga-labas was consistently mentioned, if at all referred to in the text, except in crudely disparaging terms. He and what he represented must be exorcised from

daily intercourse. He was the absence constantly invoked to stress what ought to be. Such practices long associated with the barrio folk such as eating at the *dulang*, using one's hands instead of forks and spoons, sharing the same bowl of food, all traditional rituals of a community, were presented as undesirable. In the place of folk rituals were behavior patterns that were shaped by a set of ideas derived from the West, specifically those that have been incorporated into the rituals of the colonizers.

Thus the text repeatedly manifested its obsession with the family who could afford to give lavish parties and use lace tablecloth, embroidered linens, expensive silver, and who could buy expensive clothes. This was the Filipino who could distinguish the different types of writing paper and who could pay careful attention to the varieties of handwriting taught in the *colegio*.

Indeed, the barrio folk or anybody outside the mainstream of Hispanized communities appeared as the Other—a loose aggragation of the unkempt taga-barrio, the unlettered folk, the thief and the brigand, undifferentiated but all located in the periphery. In a society where power had to be further consolidated, the threatening and mysterious outsider must be contained. In the nineteenth century, the poor and the oppressed (some of whom were forced to join the taong-labas), the exploited tenants, the indio who refused to be colonized constituted a powerful sector that could not be given voice in the text. That was why they never appeared as an "I" but always in the third person as if by doing so, the text could actually domesticate and control these people marginalized by class and power.

They were named merely as the foil to the ideal image. Once named, their complexities were reduced into pure negativity. It was as the amorphous mass, indistinct and undifferentiated, that these individuals appeared in *Urbana at Felisa*.¹⁰

Urbana at Felisa was a discourse written to affirm the middle class's growing strength as potential power brokers. The lower class, including the enigmatic and mysterious Filipinos driven to remain in the periphery, who still clung to native ways and mores, must not be allowed to roam freely in the text except as the reprehensible Other of the ideal image of the morally good and happy individual. These taong-labas were an excess, identified with chaos and disorder, and hence must be suppressed explicitly. Thus the reader sees pointed references to the ill-mannered taga-bukid, and worse, to evil tulisan with the long hair and long fingernails. They were lumped together to image the non-subjugated foes in Philippine society. Indeed, much

energy was lodged within these classes which could destroy the foundation on which the middle class was built. This highly dangerous lot, numerically superior to the colonizers and the middle class, and seething with anger at their own exploitation, must be prevented from appearing in the text except as objects of scorn. The text achieved what in real life was an impossibility: ignore the powerful presence of the poor, the lowly and the unlettered in the middle class's quest for respectability and acceptance by the country's colonizers.

Colonizing Woman: Virgin and Martyr

Ostensibly a woman's text featuring female characters, but written by a man, *Urbana at Felisa* did allow the woman's voice to emerge with some force and authority. Thus, the two sisters took center stage as they wrote each other numerous letters which bore their names as the rightful owners and sources of insights into various aspects of lived life. The fact that these characters were given such prominence suggests that Modesto de Castro considered the female gender not only worth featuring but also worth addressing as the audience of a discourse on ideal social, religious, and familial values. The female readers were to be the ideal readers, systematically talked to and made recipients of sound advice on sundry matters, especially on sensitive issues regarding a woman's experiences before, during and after marriage.

However, like the taong-labas who managed to appear in the text as a threatening Other, the woman constructed in *Urbana at Felisa* was a figure suffering from excess, and must therefore also be contained within the system of rules devised in the text. In this book where woman is described, the ideal aspired to was marriage, where the woman's primary responsibility was to her husband and her children. The self almost disappeared without any trace in the series of admonitions and advice given to the daughter/bride/wife/mother, even as she was forced to conform to what society expected of her in her various roles. The wilful, the spirited, and the rebellious women were almost always denigrated and presented as guilty of some moral transgression.

In a chapter, de Castro showed his awareness of the strong sexual attraction between a man and a woman, a fact that manifested itself in the letters' almost obsessive interest in what the woman ought to

do and what she should avoid in dealing with the opposite sex. The burden was placed on the young girl warned against throwing glances at men or walking in a provocative way that could attract men's attention:

Sa mga dalaga naman ay di nababagay ang paglakad na pinag-aaralan, ang magpakinding-kinding at tumingin nang pasulyap sa nakikitang binata, sapagkat ikapupula sa kanyang asal (p. 67).

(Walking in a studied manner is not appropriate, nor is provocatively swaying the hips nor coyly glancing at a young man proper, because a woman will be faulted for breach of decorum.)

In another section, the girl was described as deserving of men's sneer and insult for the way she used her body interpreted as running counter to what was proper:

Kung ang isang dalaga ay magpakita sa lakad, sa kilos at pagtingin nang laban sa kabaitan, ay parang anyaya sa lalaki na siya ay aglahiin nang masama (p. 67).

(When a young woman, through the way she walks, acts and uses her eyes, displays anything that runs counter to proper behavior, she in effect is inviting a man to treat her scornfully.)

During courtship, the parents were warned to be vigilant for even wet pieces of wood were flammable when hit by flying sparks. At all times, the parents were supposed to intervene so that raging desire could not be expressed by young people who were deeply in love with each other.

A great premium was invariably placed on a woman's virginity compared to a fragile glass which when touched retained some ugly blemish. The woman's body must be preserved from the evil eye and the lustful touch at all cost. This was the duty not only of the woman concerned, but as importantly, by the parents themselves whose task it was to make sure that she could offer her pure, untainted body when she finally surrendered it to her husband. Pleasure derived from the body was to be had, if at all possible, only within the strict confines of a married life. Even this earthy delight in each other's bodies must be experienced in moderation.

A lot of references to man-woman relationship testify to the view, strongly held in the text, that sexuality was a force to be subjugated,

not allowed expression outside marriage, and its power put into a closure, even in marriage. When allowed free play, this irrational force could become fatal and could lead to the destruction of a lot of people who indulged in it. Women who went astray—unmarried mothers, disobedient daughters, prostitutes and mistresses—were more sinful than sinned against. They bore the stigma brought about by uncontrolled desire which forced them to turn their backs on their religious and moral values. When banished from society because they dared commit sins against purity, their doom was sealed. In this view, women who loved without moderation were unequivocally condemned for veering away from the straight and narrow path. By stressing her inability to rein in her desire and thus be the cause of a man's fall, Urbana and Felisa repeatedly affirmed the conventional view of the woman as the fatal creature embodied in Eve, Pandora, Lorelei, and Delilah.

Primarily addressed to female readers, the text was silent on the responsibility of the male gender in the fall of numerous women. It was as if any disaster that happened to women, especially in love, was caused by these unfortunate women. The deceptive, honeyed words of Don Juans and Casanovas were never an issue in this treatise on love and marriage, and neither were their duplicity and oppressive view of women referred to at all.

In retrospect, it is easy to say that de Castro was merely articulating a pervasive belief regarding woman and the need to protect her maidenly virtues until she was properly married. His being a priest with an avowed duty to preach the need for certain virtues such as chastity and purity could also have determined this narrow perspective on sexuality where the latter was constructed in highly negative terms.¹¹ Indeed, Modesto de Castro was a man of his times formed by the period's system of ideas and values.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the text not merely mirrored these values. Its role in the formalization of beliefs regarding love, marriage, gender, and sexuality cannot be underestimated. Rooted in the notion of man's supremacy, these ideas reinforced the view that emerged within a strongly patriarchal society where a woman was deemed precious not because she was a person but because she had not been touched and defiled as evidenced in an intact maidenhood. She was an object to be possessed exclusively by a man and only within the institution of marriage. This was the reason why women who transgressed the law by exploring their own desires must be banished and their dignity further reduced to shreds.

They dared commit the unpardonable sin for which they must be punished.¹²

This insidious act of containing woman as a source of uninhibited sexual energy was paralleled in the text by the attempt to construct the image of a wife as thoroughly subjugated in marriage—a passive, submissive female who bore her sufferings with fortitude and endurance. These ideas came from both Urbana and the sacerdote in a cacophony of voices—strident, insistent, and never ambiguous. As the sacerdote says:

Ang mundo ay bayan ng dalita, na may hirap na titiisin sa magulang, sa asawa't sa anak at dilang kasambahay. Kung ang babae ay walang loob na timtiman na pagtiis ng hirap, ay walang kaginhawahang kakamtan sa pag-aasawa (p. 129).

(The world is a place of suffering, where pain comes from the parent, the spouse and child, and from other members of the family. If a woman's threshold of suffering is low, marriage will offer no fulfillment.)

In the same section, Urbana's advice to Felisa who was about to get married was:

Kung ikaw, Felisa, ay makapagtitiis nang hirap, makayayakap sa mabigat na kurus na pinapasan ng isang babaeng may asawa; wika ko'y tanggapin mo itong mabigat na pasan. Kung ang lahat ng kabutiha't kabanalang hiyas ng isang babaeng timtiman naihananap ni Solomon at pinupuri ng Diyos Espiritu Santo, . . . ay pasasakitan mong sundin; wika ko sa iyo'y tanggapin ang banal na sakramento ng matrimonyo (p. 130).

(If you, Felisa, can endure the pain, embrace the heavy cross invariably placed on the shoulders of a married woman, I say accept this weighty burden. If you strive . . . to follow the path of goodness and holiness that are a woman's treasures, and which Solomon searched for and that the Holy Spirit praised, then I say to you, accept the sacrament of matrimony.)

The woman as a homemaker, as a person invariably tied to the hearth, was a stereotype that Urbana and Felisa systematically presented as the ideal. The text enjoined its readers to follow the same roles and the same activities of the "angel in the house" as if these

were absolute decrees. In this ideal state to which women should aspire, there was no room for experiences that a woman should explore and undergo for personal happiness. She was a character ordained to fulfill several functions to bring up a stable and God-fearing family by being a dutiful wife and mother. In constituting the ideal wife/mother, *Urbana at Felisa* relied heavily on taken-for-granted beliefs where service to the others, as the end-all and be-all of a woman's existence, revolved around her family. In marriage, the Filipino woman entered a world where her voice was effectively stilled and her potentials as a distinct individual in all her uniqueness and specificities were largely ignored. In the colonial empire, woman was a creature doubly colonized by her race and her gender.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that, contextualized against the pervasive beliefs and value systems of the nineteenth century, Modesto de Castro's *Urbana at Felisa* was being true to itself as a period piece. In its history, it has produced and reproduced, even as it formalized and institutionalized, a large number of beliefs and behavior patterns, attitudes towards life which, in various degrees, ran counter to indigenous ways and world views. Reproduction of a particular ideology was made possible not only through the material duplication of the text, but in the complex ways in which countless generations of readers responded to and probably appropriated the lessons being imparted by the book.

Urbana at Felisa first came out accompanied with the force of moral authority and personal charisma emanating from its author, Modesto de Castro, a priest of the powerful Church. He was an individual, not an ordinary indio but a highly respected authority, who wrote at a time when the country's middle class was still consolidating its powers and when threats of dissension and conflict could be addressed forcefully and in the text, contained.

No text is transparent and its very constitution and subsequent consumption are complex processes. Embedded in the text are layers of meanings which neither the text nor the writer was fully aware of. As this brief study has shown, perhaps not exhaustively, the presence in the text, the very words constituting the discourse, has its own spaces, and interstices which a careful analysis could reveal to enable the reader to see through the text's veneer. The end of that

critical project should allow the text's mask to be ripped off and the ideological roots fully explored and revealed.

Urbana at Felisa was a significant discourse that has remained in its numerous traces in the consciousness of our people. As an immensely rich text, it beckons to other readers who might wish to further decipher, or perhaps even constitute, the work's other meanings. Modesto de Castro's book spoke to the nineteenth century and there is no reason why the text should not be allowed to speak to the present generation of Filipinos.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the connection between cultural texts and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 12-40.

2. For a discussion of the different hermeneutic approaches, see Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981), pp. 105-110.

3. The structure and values of the Catholic Church have remained essentially the same despite calls for change, especially in European countries where its influence has continued to decline.

4. The turmoil in the countryside has been well-chronicled in Constantino (1975); a further reading has been advanced in Reynaldo C. Ileto (1980).

5. *Urbana at Felisa*, p. 1. Page numbers indicated at the end of each subsequent passage quoted here refer to this edition.

6. The notion of "fictionality" vis-a-vis "truth" has been a central issue in literary theory since the time of Aristotle, but has gained greater importance in the contemporary debates on such terms as "realism," "verisimilitude" and "mediation", among others. See, for example, Williams (1983); Lentricchia and McLaughlin (1990).

7. Poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Pierre Macherey, to name a few, have systematically studied the notion of discourse and its relationship with power. Ferdinand de Saussure and Sigmund Freud are two of those individuals who have shaped the works of poststructuralists.

8. According to Isagani Medina, the "tulanismo" phenomenon took significant form in the nineteenth century, particularly in Cavite." For a thorough account, see his *Cavite Before the Revolution*, pp. 59-105.

9. For an interesting account of three famous "tulan," see Jose P. Santos (1936).

10. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) whose masterful discussion of Orientalism as discourse has particular relevance to our attempt to understand colonial literature.

11. It is this negative view of female sexuality that gave rise to a powerful feminist critique seen, for example, in the works of Virginia Woolf, Kate Millet, Toril Moi, Gayatri Spivak, among others.

12. The legacy of *Urbana at Felisa* continues to manifest itself in such popular texts as the novels, short stories, dramas, the komiks, in films, radio and television soap operas all of which were lapped up by millions of readers/listeners. See Reyes (1990).

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