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Values of Love and Marriage in the Tagalog Novel

SOLEDAD S. REYES

Studies on Filipino values and the people's perceptions of their roles in society have been done with some thoroughness.¹ But there are certainly other values that may yet be examined from another perspective. For example, how does the Filipino look at love and marriage? What are their assumed goals? What patterns of familial relationships have evolved because of certain key Filipino values?

Because the novel has been used most often as a reflector of social realities, it may be viewed as a potential source of insights into some aspects of an individual's life in relation to society. Like the epic of the past, the novel mirrors the ideal, the needs and distinct values of a group of people. In this essay, a number of Tagalog novels will be studied, not primarily as literary texts, but as social documents, in order to extract certain concepts regarding love and marriage. Literary materials are thus to be explored to help clarify the different ways in which certain values have been embodied by the novelists in their attempt to re-create facets of experiences.

The study is limited to a discussion of twenty Tagalog novels, published at various times between 1905 and 1937, which period corresponds roughly to the first four decades of the American era. On one hand, these decades had as their immediate past the nineteenth century, and as such were closer to the well-springs of traditional values than were the succeeding years. Most of the novelists

1. Many of the studies have been done by social scientists and theologians. See, for example, Mary Hollnsteiner et al., *Society, Culture and the Filipino* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1975); Frank Lynch, S.J., *Four Readings on Philippine Values* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1962); and Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD, *Filipino Thought on Man and Society* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1980).

themselves were born in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Their consciousness of the past was still strong even as they themselves were witnessing the influx of Western values. On the other hand, these four decades signalled the gradual but inexorable transformation of many of society's mores and lifestyles.

It is partly to stem the tide of change, by holding up traditional values as a kind of ideal for the generation born during the American regime, that compelled a number of Tagalog novelists to write.² Taking on the roles of teachers and moral guides, Valeriano Hernandez Peña, Roman Reyes, Lazaro Francisco, among others, fashioned their literary works which served as *salamin ng buhay* or mirror of life for countless readers. The novelists conveyed their chosen materials, based on their apprehensions of reality, to the readers who allowed the insights to filter into their consciousness, to be summoned forth later to help the readers make sense of their lives.

It is only when the intimate relationship between the novelist and the reading public is acknowledged that the phrase *salamin ng buhay* becomes comprehensible. Reading the novels in *Liwayway* or *Hiwaga*, the public perceived in these works something (given flesh and blood through characters and situations) with which they could identify. The novels chosen were the more popular works of the period as evidenced by the number of editions they had, or by the fact that they were later made into films.³ Thus a careful study of the texts, more specifically the values which functioned as the works' matrix, might help reveal the structure of meaning that shaped the people's ideas, feelings and attitudes concerning love and marriage.

SOURCES FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:

URBANA AT FELIZA AND FLORANTE AT LAURA

Two lengthy works of the nineteenth century stood out as possible sources of influence on the values the novelists delineated in

2. This insight, which was arrived at by situating the novelists against history, is discussed in Soledad S. Reyes, "Ang Kasaysayan at Kontekstong Panlipunan ng Nobelang Tagalog, 1905-1975," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of the Philippines, 1979).

3. There has not been a definitive study on the relationship between the novel and the reading public. For this paper, however, data regarding the works' popularity were taken mostly from critics' accounts, notably those of Inigo Ed. Regalado and Pedrito Reyes.

the first decades of the twentieth century. The popularity of *Urbana at Feliza* (1853)⁴ and *Florante at Laura* (1838)⁵ is attested to by the number of editions they had, the readiness with which many writers have quoted extensively from these two works and the many variations on their theses that have found their way into later pieces. The first work was conceived primarily as a book of manners and right conduct, written in the epistolary style. *Florante at Laura*, on the other hand, is a long narrative poem revolving around the related themes of love, filial piety, fidelity, and using the conventions of the medieval romance. Both the prose work and the poem have a great deal to say about love and its various ramifications.

In *Urbana at Feliza*, there is constant reference to the importance of virginity, for it is considered so fragile that it needs to be watched over constantly and protected from scheming scoundrels. Parents are enjoined to teach their daughters the supreme importance of purity; they must not even allow their daughter to sit or stand by the window because then she would seem like a bunch of grapes, waiting to be picked by a passer-by. A potential life partner should exhibit basic traits such as abhorrence of worldly pleasures, trustworthiness, fidelity, and the ability to endure and prevail in this "vale of tears."

Love in marriage is looked at as basically rendering the self open to the other's needs. It is the task of the married couple to preserve peace and harmony in the home for the sake of the children. The couple should at all times be ruled by moderation, which virtue must govern all kinds of relationships. Any act that exceeds the accepted limits is considered a breach; even love should suffer from no excess, for if it does, then it is not real. In this treatise where sex is glossed over, where there is a prevailing belief that "kalinisan" is to be preserved, a section elucidates the proper bounds to be observed. The expression of love is compared to the movement of the sun and the moon, to the raging waves that never dare to leave the sea, "hindi lalampas sa guhit na dapat tuntunin, at nang di masira ang kalinisan."

An altogether different picture emerges in Balagtas' poem, where all the trappings of the courtly love tradition surface — high

4. Modesto de Castro, *Urbana at Feliza* (Manila: Libreria Martinez, 1902).

5. Francisco Balagtas, *Florante at Laura* (Manila: 1921).

romance and adventure, beautiful women and daring men, and the ubiquitous theme of unrequited love. Whereas *Urbana at Feliza* stresses the importance of love in marriage and pays little attention to the vicissitudes of love before marriage, *Florante at Laura* seems to revel in prolonged descriptions of the travails, anguish and woe, on one hand, and the delight, ecstasy and joyous wonder that the lovers experience, on the other. It is not mainly because Adolfo has banished Florante from the kingdom that the latter finds himself disconsolate as he is tied to a tree in the forest. More significantly, it is the thought that Laura has given herself to Adolfo that wreaks such havoc on Florante's feelings.

Modesto de Castro's *Urbana at Feliza* is, in the tradition of renaissance guidebooks, explicitly didactic. In this work, the reader is advised to reach out for the ideal; consequently, the kind of love presented is idealized, having as its assumed goal a stable and peaceful marriage. Love is perceived as essentially oriented toward the other — the spouse and the children. On the other hand, although still concerned with ideal love, *Florante at Laura* manages to touch on some deep emotions traditionally associated with the mystique of love. It is here where the poetic imagination is given free rein to run wild in an overwhelming profusion of details that resemble medieval tapestry.

In perspective, the two works complement each other — one with its serious and often stark preoccupation with love as service to the other (love in marriage); the other with its deliberate attempt at shrouding love in mystery (love before marriage). For Fr. Modesto de Castro, love is sacred, for the purpose of procreation; for the poet Balagtas, love is mysterious, desired for its own sake, even if it plunges the lovers into some abyss. By virtue of their literary preeminence and by reason of their having crystallized certain values and concepts, *Urbana at Feliza* and *Florante at Laura* appeared to the Tagalog writers of the twentieth century not only as models of fine writing but as convenient sources of insights regarding traditional values.

VALUES IN FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The universe in the novel, as it is in life, is informed by a delicate balance among the forces making up society. A sense of order pre-

vails, and any attempt to sow disorder and confusion easily leads to chaos and consequent suffering for both the perpetrator and his victim. There is a strict hierarchy composed of the different members of the family; each member is expected to know his proper place and role. Certain fundamental values bind them together, compelling them to act with definite goals in mind.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

The family, being the basic unit of society, is a perfect example of design and harmony in the macrocosm. A kind of structure inheres in the system which allows the parents to occupy the highest rung since they are God's representative on earth, and as such must be obeyed and respected. The children, placed on the lower rungs, should always feel indebted to their parents, for without the latter, they would not even exist.

In general, the novel plots the following major incidents. The order in the fictional universe is initially destroyed by an impulsive action or an act of disobedience. Chaos thus ensues and suffering overtakes the characters — the lovers, the parents and their other children. In the end, however, the peace that was shattered is restored, concretized in an ending predictably characterized by sweetness and light. In particular, the pattern shows a character defying a socially accepted norm — running away with a married man, eloping with a good-for-nothing drunkard. This naturally precipitates a crisis in the family — death, separation, anguish, untold pain, and frequently humiliation. A solution has to be found to bring an end to this unnatural situation. Very often, the erring wife, husband, parent or daughter is overwhelmed with strong pangs of guilt and shame, and oftentimes pressure from society. The character realizes his folly, asks forgiveness and either dies or is taken once more into the family, finds a better partner or is banished forever from his family.

The didactic strain is extremely obvious, for inevitably, the transgressor is punished while the victim is invariably rewarded. This structure is to be observed if the novelist wants to be an effective moral guide. This view of the world — the universe as a battleground between good and evil — recurs in most traditional novels. Evil is objectified in terms of the destructive energy un-

leashed by the character's temporary aberration and loss of control. The benevolent forces are concretized in the sense of order and stability which is what ought to prevail in society.

Of interest is the crucial role played by the neighbors and relatives — they act as the impersonal voice of society. They are the group against which the individual's action is evaluated and judged. Society is all-embracing, a real power to reckon with; the character appears insignificant when compared to it. Any character who commits an indiscretion should prepare himself for society's punitive measures. Deviant behavior is shown when the character willfully disregards society's injunctions, or violates tacitly held beliefs concerning what is commonly accepted as right and proper.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATION

Among the values, those related to parent-child relationships and those that deal with the correct and accepted norms of behavior of two brothers or two sisters, appeared to have fascinated a number of novelists. In Juan Ars-ci-wals' *Babaeng Martir* (1918) and *Dakiling Pag-ibig* (1921), Teofilo Saucó's *Ang Magmamani* (1924), and Roman Reyes' *Pusong Walang Pag-ibig* (1909), one major strand explored stems from the complex relationship between the mother and her daughter. The mother is perceived in these novels as a wise and experienced woman who should be listened to by an obedient and dutiful daughter, for the former has only the daughter's interest in mind. This concern comes out most clearly especially in affairs of the heart. Having undergone similar experiences and having achieved maturity in the process of falling in love and marrying, the mother is in a position to guide her daughter in the delicate task of choosing a partner. The daughter demonstrates her respect and obedience by following her mother's advice, for if she does not heed them, trouble will come her way.

Babaeng Martir depicts the story of Angelina, the daughter of Donya Concha.⁶ The novel's theme relates to the disastrous consequences of the daughter's ill-fated love affair, into which she plunges headlong despite Donya Concha's repeated warnings. Early in the novel, the older woman tells her daughter:

6. *Babaeng Martir* (Manila: Limbagan ni P. Sayo, 1918).

Ngunit palibhasa'y tungkulin kong mahigpit sa harap ng Dios at ng kapisanan na ituro sa anak ang mabuting landasin na dapat pagdaanan sa buhay na ito, at sapagkat kayong mga anak, sa kabataang taglay ay di nakakikilala pa sa uri ng kabuhayan, at siyang nagbubunsod sa akin upang ikaw na katangi-tanging anak ko ay aking paalalahanan.⁷

(But since it is my strict duty to God and to society to teach a child the right path that should be followed in this life, I am compelled to give you some advice, my child, since in your youth, you do not really understand life.)

More than anything else, it is love for her daughter that has prompted the mother to warn Angelina against life's pitfalls.

Angelina ignores Donya Concha's advice, and elopes with an irresponsible character named Rogelio. As predicted by Donya Concha, Rogelio becomes Angelina's source of sufferings as he leaves her for Fany, a seductive cabaret dancer. Despite her husband's betrayal, Angelina remains steadfast in her love for him. Operative is the belief that a married woman has to be loyal to her husband and to endure her pain in silence. Everything comes to a head when Rogelio, consumed with jealousy because Fany has decided to leave him for another man, kills the dancer and then commits suicide. Angelina eventually recovers and marries Serafin, a rich lawyer and former suitor. The respectability she lost when she married Rogelio is restored to her through Serafin, a respectable member of society.

The same pattern is delineated in Arsciwals' *Dakilang Pag-ibig*.⁸ Despite her mother's advice, Carmen allows herself to succumb to the honeyed words of Virgilio, who she discovers later is a very much married man with three children. Carmen is prevailed upon to return to her mother who, in a fit of rage over her daughter's loss of face in the community, beats her up. Virgilio is asked to explain to the outraged family why he cannot marry Carmen. Although she realizes the scorn society will heap on her, the fallen woman who has lost her virginity, Carmen decides to suffer in silence. When asked how she would face her friends and relatives, she retorts:

Walang kabuluhan sa akin ang lahat ng masasabi ng mga tao. Ang lahat ay aking ipinagpapaubaya sa kapalaran. Kung ako'y sadyang laan sa paghihi-

7. Ibid., p. 7.

8. *Dakilang Pag-ibig* (Manila: Limbagan ni P. Sayo, 1921).

rap ng puso dahil sa aking dalisay na pag-ibig, ay dumating akong maligaya ang lahat ng sakit na iyon at nalaan akong magbata.⁹

(What other people will say does not matter to me. I leave everything to fate. If I am destined to suffer because of my pure love, I will welcome all the pain and I'm willing to suffer.)

Carmen and her mother return to their barrio. Lamberto Timawa, a rich middle-aged bachelor, falls in love with her, but she refuses his marriage proposal. The mother's crucial role becomes more pronounced as she explains to Carmen why the latter should marry Lamberto. This marriage will insure Carmen's future; moreover, here is the chance for Carmen to show her mother that she is a dutiful child. Persuaded by the systematic appeals to her heart and mind, Carmen capitulates and marries Lamberto. She does not love him and yet she feels that it is her solemn duty not to disappoint her mother again.

In the protracted battle of wills, it is the mother's stronger will that triumphs. The mother's role is given a fitting culmination as she talks to her daughter the night before the wedding, and offers to Carmen (repeating what she must have heard from her mother) some nuggets of wisdom appropriate for somebody on the brink of a new life:

. . . ang lahat ng mga bagay na hindi niya minamagaling ay iyong dapat tandaan upang huwag nang magawang muli lalo't makikilala mong subyang na subyang sa kanyang puso. . . . Ang pag-aasawa ng isang babae ay nangangahulugan ng pagpasan ng mabigat na tungkulin. . . . Tungkulin mo ang maging masipag na asawa; ang lahat ng bagay sa tahanan at kinakailangang isayos at ang iyong asawa'y hahandugan mong lagi ng ikakasiyang loob upang maging matamis at kalugod-lugod sa kaniya ang inyong tahanan. . . .¹⁰

(Remember to take note of everything that he dislikes so that you will not do the same thing, especially those that he abhors. . . . Marriage for a girl means carrying heavy responsibility. . . . It's your duty to be an industrious wife; everything in the home has to be set in order, and you have to give him reason to be pleased so that your home will be a sweet and pleasurable place. . . .)

What is thus insisted upon in these novels is the need for the children to heed their parents' advice. A stubborn, impulsive girl who throws caution to the wind is bound to pay for her error.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Tale in *Bulaklak ng Kalumpang* (1907) marries Bindoy, a jobless, scheming character, and realizes too late the trouble she has gotten herself into.¹¹ In *Nena at Neneng* by Valeriano Hernandez Peña, Chayong flirts with the notorious Miguel, becomes pregnant and gives birth to an illegitimate child.¹²

Clearly, therefore, the parents ought to be treated not only with respect but with absolute obedience as well, for their task is to make sure that their offspring are in good hands before their own deaths. Goaded by such deep-seated beliefs, the parents have arrogated to themselves the responsibility assigned ordinarily to a judge, the right to impose punishment. The treatment very often accorded a runaway daughter is inhuman — physical violence and endless denunciations to which everybody in the neighborhood becomes privy; hence, a private transgression becomes public property.

PARENTAL ACTIONS CRITICIZED

It is thus not surprising that some novelists have taken to task certain accepted norms and behavior. Some novels question the right of the parents to inflict physical and psychological harm upon their children, and thus become, ironically enough, active agents for the destruction of their children's chances to be happy. Three novels — *Pinaglahuan* (1907), *Bulaklak ng Kalumpang*, and *Wakas ng Pagtitiis* (1907) — exemplify the negative attitude toward this overly protective and inevitably disastrous hold parents have on their offspring.

Faustino Aguilar's *Pinaglahuan* features the story of Danding, the daughter of Don Nicanor and Donya Titay, both ambitious and domineering parents.¹³ The girl is the sweetheart of Luis, an ordinary employee in an American firm. Indebted to the rich Rojalde because of his huge gambling losses, Don Nicanor decides to marry off Danding to the rich man, who has earlier caused Luis to lose his job. Luis is later implicated in a crime on a trumped-up

11. Roman Reyes, *Bulaklak ng Kalumpang* (Manila: Limbagang Santos at Bernal, 1907).

12. Valeriano Hernandez Peña, *Nena at Neneng* (Manila: Limbagan ng "La Vanguardia" at "Taliba," 1904).

13. *Pinaglahuan* (Manila: Limbagang Manila Filatelica, 1907).

charge, and is sentenced to four years imprisonment. Danding has no choice but to marry Rojalde, but unknown to him is the fact that Danding is carrying Luis' child in her womb. The novel ends as the dying Luis exults at the sight of the fire engulfing Manila.

Like Don Nicanor and Donya Titay, who are described as ruthless, insensitive exploiters of their child, the parents in Roman Reyes' novels are depicted in equally negative ways. Reyes' works comment on two questionable practises subscribed to by many parents: the first is the use of corporal punishment on a grown-up daughter; the second deals with the parents' unwarranted interference with the daughter's right to select a mate.

Bulaklak ng Kalumpang recounts the ordeals of Geleng, the heroine, who for every slight offense committed (such as talking to her suitor) is slapped, kicked and ordered not to leave the house. The tense situation is mercifully put to a stop when Geleng promises not to see the man she loves. In one section, the omniscient narrator indicts the parents as vicious and heartless individuals bent on destroying their child. *Wakas ng Pagtitiis* uses Yeyeng, later to be Geleng's sister-in-law, to articulate the need for the parents to be more sensitive to their children's emotions.¹⁴ She questions the right of the parents to promise their child to somebody without even bothering to find out what the girl's wishes are. Although the daughter should always be aware of the fact that the parents are "pinagkakautangan ng buhay," nonetheless, she should assert her *karapatan* or right to abide by her pledge to another man. What Yeyeng wants modified if not totally changed is the persistent value which equates parental right with absolute authoritarianism.

PARENTAL SACRIFICE

Besides those works which define the relationships between parents in areas dealing with love and marriage, there are a number of novels which depict the parents, more specifically the mother, as capable of making supreme sacrifice — either by giving up someone she loves, or by leading a prostitute's life for the sake of the children. Love in marriage is one of service; love in illicit relation-

14. *Wakas ng Pagtitiis* (Manila: Limbagang Almeda at mga Kapatid, 1908).

ships is also other-centered. Two heroines — Tentay in Teofilo Sauco's *Ang Magmamani* and Matilde in Arsciwal's *Luha ng Makasalanan* — are deviant individuals. Yet their roles as mother seem to outweigh their other role — as a mistress and as a prostitute, respectively.

Luha ng Makasalanan recounts the story of Matilde, the daughter of a well-to-do family in Tondo.¹⁵ She falls in love with a widower, but he refuses to marry her. He eventually leaves Matilde and their two children, Feny and Luz. Finding herself with no visible means of support, she is induced to become a dancer in "Nayong Mapula," a cabaret more popularly known as the "Pamilihan." Matilde becomes well-known as Florencia, and easily gains notoriety as a good entertainer. For eight years, she passes herself off to her daughters and neighbors as a telephone operator on the night shift. Felix, the rich and respectable sweetheart of her daughter, sees her one night in the cabaret. The novel ends after the dying Matilde has exacted a promise from Felix that he will never divulge her secret to her children.

Ang Magmamani deals with a *Kalunya* or mistress.¹⁶ She is a recurring character in many novels that deal with domestic situations. Through a series of flashbacks, the reader is informed about Tentay's past — how she left her daughter with an old man, and how the old man raised her up as a good, decent girl selling peanuts. Luis, Tentay's handsome and rich lover, sees Ninay, the girl, and is immediately smitten by her charms. Upon realizing that it is her own daughter who has become her rival, Tentay finds herself in a dilemma: should she fight for her love and be an obstacle to her daughter's happiness, or should she leave Luis so as not to jeopardize Ninay's future?

The mother in her, concerned with the child's security, wins over the woman in love. Tentay leaves Luis and enters a convent where, after a series of improbable coincidences, the whole truth is revealed to all the parties concerned. The emotional climax which witnesses the unfolding of the characters' dark secrets has remained a classic denouement in the novel. Order is once more imposed and the long suffering Tentay can die peacefully.

In general, the parents in the novel are depicted as a concerned

15. *Luha ng Makasalanan* (Manila: Limbagan ni P. Sayo, 1919).

16. *Ang Magmamani*, serialized in *Liwayway*, 1924.

and compassionate lot, deeply aware of the difficulties of loving and living, and prepared to give up everything to insure their children's happiness. Despite some negative attitudes toward some parents expressed in a number of novels, the pattern shows that the ideal parent-child relationship should consider the feelings and attitudes of both parties. A child who errs ought to be welcomed back for this is still the best possible world that can give the child support and love. Nowhere in the novels studied is there a complete, irrevocable rift between the two generations.¹⁷ As the novel ends, the characters are shown facing life with more assurance, now that the worst is over, at least in this fictional world.

PAIRS OF SISTERS/BROTHERS

Two other novels — Fausto Galauran's *Ang Monghita* and Lazaro Francisco's *Sa Paanan ng Krus* — explore another aspect of familial relationship, that which exists between two sisters and two brothers. The individuals in the novels are never situated in a vacuum; their acts, beliefs and attitudes and even the uniquely particularized ways of responding to the various elements of their private and public selves, seem to be determined by society's codes. That man most clearly realizes himself when he interacts with his fellowmen is often objectified in the novels. Seldom is the individual depicted as an anti-social being who at the slightest provocation retreats into a private sanctuary where he remains inviolate and unsullied.

Sa Paanan ng Krus details the story of two brothers, both family men, and how the initial act of the older brother triggers off a chain of reactions so powerful that everyone is swept away into some kind of whirlpool.¹⁸ In a typical home, it is the oldest child who assumes the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the other children. This position is heightened in situations when the parents have died or have become infirm. The oldest brother is the

17. Values that reinforce family solidarity and unity have served as materials for the novel throughout its history. It would be interesting to compare illustrative Tagalog novels and some Western novels such as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Faulkner's *A Fable*, or the works of Kafka, Hemingway or Saul Bellow, where the father either remains a vague, unrealized figure, or an enemy that the son symbolically castrates.

18. *Sa Paanan ng Krus* (Manila: Ramon Rocas Publications, 1937).

kuya, and his being the *kuya* does not cease even when the children are all married. He makes it his business to decide on what are deemed serious issues, especially those affecting the family's honor in the community.

As the novel begins, Siso, the older brother, is described as catching his brother Ninoy's wife and her alleged lover in adultery. The woman tearfully protests her innocence but dares not implicate the character who is really guilty of adultery. Siso orders his sister-in-law to leave the house, never to return again. The motive for this high handed treatment of a woman who is not his wife may be traced to the unique role assumed by the *kuya*. He is the protector and as such should exert maximum effort to avoid the scandal which threatens to break out once the neighbors discover that his brother's wife is an adulteress. Thus he has no choice but to mete out what he thinks is a just punishment. This initial act causes his brother to suffer and the latter's children to grow up motherless. As the novel ends, however, the wife is found to be innocent, and the harsh Siso discovers that it is his own wife who has had a lover for many years.

A popular novel which also became an acclaimed movie, Fausto Galauran's *Ang Monghita*, features the relationship between two sisters — Naty and Bebang.¹⁹ They fall in love with the same man, Roberto. Naty is really Roberto's girl, but when he hears that she is engaged to marry another man, he immediately turns his attention to Bebang, Naty's older sister. Naty, who is at a loss trying to explain Roberto's strange behavior, eventually finds out that he and her sister are already engaged. Naty wastes away because for her the world has lost its meaning. Since she has nobody to turn to, and since she feels indebted to her sister, she makes up her mind to enter the convent. She has faced and resolved her problem; she will give up her chance at personal happiness so as not to hurt her sister.

. . . ang katahimikan ng kanilang tahanan ay pagpapakasakit ng isa sa kanilang dalawang kaluluwang umiibig kapwa sa binata. Si Bebang ay nakatatanda sa kanya, at walang kamalaymalay sa kanyang paghihirap. . . At yamang siya ang bata sa lahat, anak na marunong maglihim ng kanyang sariling kasawian, ay itinalaga na ni Naty ang pagpapakasakit alang-alang sa ikaliligaya ng kanyang kapatid.²⁰

19. *Ang Monghita* (Manila: Limbagan ni P. Sayo, 1929).

20. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

(. . . the peace in their home depends on the willingness of one of them, both in love with the same man, to suffer. Bebang is older than she, and unaware of the extent of her pain. . . . And since she is the youngest, a daughter who knows how to hide her own agony, Naty prepared herself to bear the pain for the sake of her sister's happiness.)

Love of a man and the devastation it has wrought on her must be left behind as she devotes her life to the pursuit of divine love.

In the novels analyzed, equilibrium is restored in the family once final choices are made by the characters. The solutions might strike some readers as simplistic; here is where the knowledge of the novelist's didactic function comes in. By painstakingly seeking to relate literature and life, the writers have shown the need to perpetuate certain values affecting familial relationships, mostly those concerned with bringing about the happiness of the other members of the family. Individualism, which is a distinct characteristic of Western literature, hardly appears in these works which held up to the readers a mirror reflecting facets of private and public experiences.

LOVE BEFORE, DURING AND OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

In many novels, it is not only relationships within the family that are treated. More specifically, some explore the nuances of the man-woman relationship before, during, and outside marriage. In general, love before marriage is depicted in a highly idealized manner, intensely emotional, unthinking and oftentimes impulsive. In marriage the romantic excesses invariably give way to a more sober, objective, serious view of love. Love for the sake of loving is transformed into love as an answer to the other's needs.

LOVE AND BEAUTY

In the tradition of popular romances, love before marriage is almost always love at first sight, intuitive and dependent on physical beauty. Descriptive paragraphs deal largely with the charms of the beloved, who is predictably compared to images drawn from nature. The characteristic feeling seems to be one of disbelief at such a vision of loveliness that deigns to present itself to the eyes of the beholder; then comes the certainty that this is real, and

finally gratitude for the rare chance to feast one's eyes on such beauty. The question inevitably arises: is love no more than this marvelous, exhilarating feeling? The lover, through the help of the girl's friends or neighbors, is made aware of the beloved's other qualities. Rufo in Regalado's *Pagsinta'y Walang Puso* becomes enamoured of Sela after he has realized that she has other assets:

. . . kilos na mahinhin, mabini at maselan, ay nasabi sa sariling ang dalagang ito ang siyang larawang buo ng babaing kanyang hinahanap. Babaing Tagalog na matamis na magmahal, tapat gumiliw at matiisin sa dagok ng kapalaran.²¹

(. . . action that is demure, gentle and delicate, and he tells himself that this woman is the complete picture of the girl he has been looking for. She is the Tagalog maiden who loves sweetly, is faithful and knows how to endure life's vicissitudes.)

The heroines in the novels are invariably described in such terms, whether she is Geleng in *Bulaklak ng Kalumpang*, Yeyeng in *Wakas ng Pagtitiis*, or Neneng in *Nena at Neneng*, among others. She is the *dalagang Tagalog* — a delightful combination of the best qualities of Maria Clara, Ninay, Laura, and of Urbana and Feliza.

It is interesting to point out the bias manifested by the writers for the woman from the provinces; she is the perfect foil for the city girl who is therefore also the "modern" girl — spoiled, arrogant, lazy, materialistic, unfaithful, and brazen. She has turned her back on her people's traditional beliefs as she opens herself up, rather indiscriminately, to Western influences. Her Americanization has caused her to ignore those traits that she should have cultivated as a *dalagang Pilipina*. This pervasive distrust of the city or society girl is a basic theme articulated in a number of novels such as Patricio Mariano's *Tala sa Panghulo* (1913), Ruperto Cristobal's *Bulaklak ng Kabaret*, Engracio Valmonte's *Ang Mestisa* (1921), and Deogracias Rosario's *Bulaklak ng Bagong Panahon* (1926).

Thus it is not only physical beauty that ought to be taken into account, but emotional and spiritual qualities as well. Noticeable, too, is the marked preference for women who in their very simplicity prove that they have not allowed themselves to be tainted by the materialism and vulgarity of the alien culture. They have re-

21. Iñigo Ed. Regalado, *May Pagsinta'y Walang Puso* (Manila: Limbagan ni P. Sayo, 1921), p. 159.

mained gentle and faithful for they have escaped unscathed from the systematic attempt to turn them into dark-skinned "Americanas."

HONOR AND REPUTATION

Another value worth fighting for (and sometimes killing for) is a woman's honor and the man's reputation. In Rosauro Almarío's *Mga Taga-Bukid* (1913) and Santiago Flores' *Katalik-Laan* (1914), the heroes murder those who attempted to slight their women's honor. Purity must be preserved at all cost for once lost, it is irretrievable. The image of woman as vestal virgin seems to appear again and again in many novels as the ideal of womanhood; Urbana and Feliza of the nineteenth century will fit into the company of these heroines of the early twentieth century.

On the other hand, love in marriage does not come out as excitingly romantic as love before marriage. Saddled with more responsibilities, the couple cannot forever examine and chart the meanderings of love. The roles of the parents have become more varied, and their tasks more onerous. They are providers, guides and teachers, comforters, and in some marriage ventures, business managers. What the family needs is order and stability. Order is maintained as long as there is sacrifice, genuine understanding and compassion, the ability to forgive an erring spouse and other related traits.

The ability to pardon a spouse who has strayed away is a value insisted upon in a number of novels. Separation is frowned upon; thus the woman has no choice but to endure her fate and do it silently. Society itself seems to derive its stability from the belief that the wayward husbands and wives will eventually return to their folds. This notion runs through Roman Reyes' *Pusong Walang Pagibig* and Arsciwál's *Babaeng Martir*, among others. In spite of the insufferable and mean ways of their husbands, the wives refuse to say anything derogatory about the men, lest society misconstrue their attitude. For these characters, marriage is indeed a life-long commitment.

The novels oftentimes present dramatic contrasts between the ideal and less than ideal pairs of lovers, in order to heighten the differences between them. The bad pair is inevitably depicted as

getting their punishment at the end, while the good couple is rewarded, in heaven or on earth. *Nena at Neneng*, Roman Reyes' *Andrea Liwaswas*, and *Bulaklak ng Kalumpang*, offer variations on this theme. By painting the world of irresponsible and immature individuals in harsh and bleak terms, and by holding up the good couple as models to emulate, the novelists have tried to illumine the readers on the diverse problems of marriage. True to their role as teachers the writers have gone ahead and recreated certain situations and characters that will force the reader to face life's problems, with the hope that by juxtaposing light against darkness, the novelists may be able to make the readers' life more bearable.

If love before marriage proudly declares the romantic triumph, and love in marriage asserts the need for a more pragmatic view, how is relationship outside marriage discerned? In the context of a highly traditional society, adultery is deviant behavior and individuals who commit it, especially the women, are to be punished. By being unfaithful to her husband, the woman incurs society's wrath. For such an act, she is considered an outcast. Such is the fate of the woman in *Sa Paanan ng Krus*; of Margarita, Rosauero's wife who runs away with Menandro in Arsciwal's *Lalaking Uliran o Tulisan* (1914); of the adulteress in *Tala sa Panghulo*; and of Pakita Madrid in *Makiring Maynila*. The woman who gets involved with another man and is found out is seldom given another chance by society.

DOUBLE STANDARD

It is, however, instructive to point out that by and large, the man who leaves a trail of seduction goes relatively unpunished, and is even allowed to return to his family. There is apparently one set of rules for the fallen woman, another for the philandering husband. *May Pagsinta'y Walang Puso* chronicles the exploits of Fidel, a dashing and glib reporter, and his love affair with Sela, an innocent high school student who, loving him to distraction, risks society's scorn and lives with him as his mistress. Fidel eventually leaves the girl in order to marry a lady of finer pedigree. It is Sela who is shattered by the affair while the man enters into a more legitimate relationship. In *Dakilang Pag-ibig*, Virgilio opts for his family rather than for the girl he has promised to love and cherish.

He realizes that he cannot abandon his wife and children; society will forever hound him if he does this. In an attempt to assuage his guilt feelings, he rationalizes his behavior by conveniently falling back on his duty to his family:

. . . ang katahimikan ng aking tahanan at ang kaligayahan ng aking asawa at mga anak ang siyang una sa lahat. . . Kung sakali mang ako ay nakagawa ng mga "pakikipagsapalaran sa pag-ibig," ang gayon ay hindi umaabot ni dapat umabot hanggang sa mapasakitan ang sariling tunay na pamilya. Kinakailangan ang kapakanan ng sariling tahanan ang unang higit sa lahat.²² (. . . the peace of my home and the happiness of my wife and children is my foremost consideration. . . . Granted that I've allowed myself to have some "adventures in love," that should not be allowed to extend its effects to the family. The welfare of my home should come first.)

Values related to peace and stability in the home gain pre-eminence over those related to the sense of responsibility that should have been present at the outset of any relationship outside marriage. The endings of many novels seem to suggest the writers' preference for traditional marriage values rather than the fragile quality of affairs. The girl mesmerized by the married man's good looks and glib talk must then fend for herself and must learn to pick up the pieces of her life. As if to right the wrong, the writers dutifully marry off these girls to decent and honest men who learn to love these women without any reservations.

The philandering husband and the adulteress become the central characters in Regalado's masterful study of the theme of adultery in *Sampagitang Walang Bango*.²³ Dealing with the mores and lifestyles of the affluent class, the novel is a graphic revelation of the ugliness and hypocrisy that pervade the lives of the rich. Bandino is a successful businessman who has perfected the art of seduction by offering blandishments to women. He pays less and less attention to Nenita, his beautiful and love-starved wife. The sparks of rebellion finally flare up and she is led to have an affair with Pakito, a lawyer engaged to the simple Liling. The lovers are discovered by Bandino himself, who in a fit of rage and humiliation at having been a cuckold, leaves Nenita; he goes abroad, taking away with him their only child. As Nenita is overwhelmed with grief and loneliness, the omniscient narrator articulates quite dramatically the novel's thesis:

22. Arsciwai, *Dakilang Pag-ibig*, p. 93.

23. *Sampagitang Walang Bango* (Manila: Palimbagan ni P. Sayo, 1918).

Ibig magsisi ni Nenita! huli na! Wasak na ang katahimikan ng tahanan! May putik na ang dangal ng kanyang asawa. Durog na ang kabuuan ng kanyang pagkababae! oh babae! Kahalintulad mo ang magandang kristal na pag nabasag ay di na muli pang mabubuo.²⁴

(Nenita wanted to ask forgiveness! It's too late! The peace of her home has been shattered! Her husband's honor has been sullied! Her womanhood has been destroyed! Oh, woman! You are like a beautiful crystal which when broken won't ever be restored again.)

In the novels discussed, society is revealed as a source of stability, as the dominant system that sanctions behavior and condemns violators of the rules. Thus the individual is judged according to society's established norms that have, through the passage of time, become institutionalized. The individual is not the center of the universe; it is society and its inexorable laws that take the center stage. To be accepted, the person must conform, by blending and by absorbing its systems of beliefs and modes of behavior.

SOCIETY'S NORMS QUESTIONED

However, there are some novels which do not appear to subscribe to these prevalent views of society. In various ways, they question some of the shared beliefs and values by zeroing in on what is termed deviant behavior. A number of novels attempt to explain the reasons for such behavior, their consequences, and the attitudes these marginal creatures exhibit toward society. In some cases, the characters strike the readers as individuals who have steeled themselves against the possibility of being "rehabilitated" or "resocialized."

Of these types (non-traditional when compared to the host of characters who share some affinities with nineteenth century heroes and heroines), the most prevalent are the adulteress, the kept woman, and the prostitute. The more significant novelists of the first four decades showed an intense fascination for these women. For Regalado and Aguilar, for example, these women ought to be pitied instead of condemned. The premium placed on a woman's honor which *Urbana at Feliza* and most of the novels stressed, is no longer existent in such works as *Pinaglahuan*, *Busabos ng Palad*, among others.

24. Ibid., p. 245.

In some novels, it is love which prompts the heroines to defy society. Love is shown essentially as a beautiful emotion, and no one has the right to make a person feel guilty for having loved another with such intensity. This belief is objectified in Carmen who persists in loving a married man, in Sela who deludes herself into believing that a man who has cold-bloodedly abandoned her will eventually come back to her, and in other heroines.

Aguilar's *Busabos ng Palad* is perhaps one of the most lucid indictments of society's unfair treatment of the outsider.²⁵ Using the motif of the "prostitute with the golden heart," the novel proceeds to depict the passionate love affair between Celso, a newspaperman, and Rita, his sweetheart who has been forced into a life of prostitution. Through the help of Celso, whom she sees after so many years, Rita finally leaves the prostitution house. Celso has risked everything — his parents' wrath, his friends' condescension, his own tarnished reputation — for Rita's sake. Rita eventually dies but only after she has denounced society's hypocrisy. Celso loses his sanity and is admitted into an asylum.

By agreeing to live together without the blessings of the Church, Celso and Rita incur society's anger. Herself already an outsider by virtue of her situation as a prostitute, Rita brings down upon Celso society's censure when she allows him to redeem her. She has caused Celso's destruction; she is thus viewed as the Fatal Woman by Celso's family and friends. The novel's ending is utterly bleak and devoid of hope. Two puny selves have once more become the victims of the institutions that make up the *kapisanan* or society. Rita dies, defiant to the end, and her death heightens Celso's self-imposed isolation from society; his consequent insanity is the last objectification of total withdrawal from that ugly and harsh reality lorded over by society.

CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that the novels in general depict the rage for order that society insists upon as a necessary condition for harmonious relationships. Only in a few works is that society faulted and its weaknesses minutely examined. It is also quite evident that the

25. *Busabos ng Palad* (Manila: Limbagang Manila Filatelica, 1909).

world depicted in the novels mirrors qualitatively the realities familiar to the readers of the first half of the twentieth century. By juxtaposing the actual — what is troubled and confusing — against the possible — the idealized world that the novels' endings almost always affirm — the novelists have objectified the tension that exists between what is and what could be.

In more ways than one, the novels have become reflectors of disparate realities that a particular society — the country in the first decades of modernization — was undergoing. The study has shown the many variations in the treatment of love and marriage in the novels, the infinitely complex ways in which the writers have incorporated personal insights and taken for granted social realities. A common denominator among these works is their being rooted in the life of a community — a concrete proof that art has been utilized to articulate societal values that have been accepted and those that are still devoutly wished for.