

FEMINIST CRITICISM

Nascent Feminism in Sugbuanon Literature

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I LOOKING FOR THAT FEMINIST SUGBUANON TEXT

With an idea that a feminist text should contain an egalitarian perspective that would generate some amount of self-liberation in the reader, I started looking for it in the pages of *Bisaya* magazine, the only regular literary outlet for Sugbuanon literature today. I expected to find it among the very few recent stories by women, but I was bound to be disappointed. One short story by Ismaelita Ybañez entitled “Ang Abat sa Tikgahon” (The Ogre of Tikgahon, Aug. 19, 1992) might as well have been written by a man, with its focus on a tricycle driver. Rosita Cañete’s “Ang Mister Kong Magsusulat” (My Husband the Writer, Sept. 2, 1991) seemed more promising because of the point of view, but it was more interested in the humor of the situation than in presenting experience from “the female angle.”

Actually, I was looking for a novel, knowing that this longer form gives more room for character and plot development. I knew of course that two nationally known Cebuanos have written in the vernacular, the friends Lina Moore and Estrella Alfon, although I’m not sure that the latter had any long fiction. But what I wanted was to discover “a marginalized woman writer” worth introducing to *RWS* readers.

So there was this novel on my shelf by Hilda Montaire called *Ikaduhang Sugo* (Second Commandment, 1972) about a prostitute with a golden heart. After reviewing the first few pages, I decided

there was nothing there but a perpetuation of the martyr-type spurned lover. It reminded me of the novel *Landong sa Kagahapon* (Yesterday's Shadow) by a certain "Mary" that was serialized in *Bag-ong Kusog* before the war. Much earlier I had discovered that this account of the life of a prostitute (yes, with a golden heart) was written by a well-known male writer who had purportedly based it on the story as told by "Mary." Then I remembered that aside from this story there was one other novel serialized in the same publication that was written by a woman. Out of the thirty-one novelists in the *BK* index, only the writer of *Lourdes* emerged as woman writing.

That struck me. I abandoned the more laborious project that would need going through years and years of writing in search of the elusive feminist text. I decided then to focus on the "emerging or nascent" feminist text.

Curious now, I looked in the index for the short-story and counted forty-one women writers out of four hundred and sixty-one contributors between 1915-1941, *BK*'s lifespan. Roughly, 8.8%. Only eight of the women had more than one story: five had only two stories each, one had six, another had seven (and these were fairy tale adaptations), but Gardeopatra Quijano, the writer of *Lourdes* whom we shall call Gardie or GQ, had twenty. Surely this was a breakthrough!

A similar fate awaited the women poets. Out of two thousand and eighty-one (2,081) poems indexed, only one hundred and six (106) were written by women, and one of them was Flora Burgos, Quijano's penname in poetry (there was a little problem here, though, because some women might have used men's names). That is 50%. Anyway, I would have done the same for *Bisaya* to get a clearer picture, but our library doesn't have an index, nor do we have complete issues for the pre-war period.

So who is Gardie Quijano?

My search was to end in a nomination of this singular writer to the 1993 Gawad ng Sining of the CCP, sent last Oct. 13. So far the honor has eluded the Sugbuanon writer or artist and I thought, why not GQ? But since a nominee had to be alive so s/he could receive the prospective award, I had to look for the living GQ first. I finally located her with the help of a high-schoolmate now residing with her family in Cagayan de Oro City. GQ was still "alive and

kicking,” according to my classmate, Gingging Pelaez, and surprisingly still single. GQ herself called me up by phone around the tenth of October. No, she said, she hasn’t been writing again. She has been too busy with church (she’s Aglipayan) and clinic work (she’s a dentist) to find the time to write.

I had some other sources on her in the office where I work. GQ had written my boss, Resil Mojares, in May of 1973 in response to his query in connection with a guide he was preparing on Cebuano Literature (I would use “Sugboanon” because it’s native and it’s not sexist). From her letter I learned that she had written *Lourdes* when she was a twenty-year old student in Manila. GQ wrote that Lourdes was the name of her dead sister, and that “the continuous night preparing that story weakened me and after finishing it I fainted. That was in 1939 when I was second year college.” *Lourdes* she believes is her best work, along with the short-story “Kasingkasing sa Babaye” which I still have to locate.

D.M. Estabaya, the indefatigable cultural researcher known as DM to Cebu’s writers, wrote an article on GQ dated March 1, 1967, as part of his regular column on vernacular writers in *Bisaya*. It was entitled “Dagang nga Mahuyang, Dagang nga Mabaskog” that translates into the paradoxical Weak Art, Strong Art. There he describes Gardie as small and gentle-eyed (was that the “weak” part then?) but her gift he calls strong. DM writes that she was already writing before she reached twenty.

I just had to see for myself. The earliest date I found (in an as-yet incomplete search, given little time) was Nov. 29, 1930. *Babaye* then carried her essay “Ang Babaye Larawan sa Kalumo ug Katam-is” (Woman as Image of Softness and Sweetness), in which she likens woman’s compassion to an umbrella sheltering the miserable and to a salve soothing hurt. In 1930 Gardie would have been only twelve, if we are to believe DM, who puts down 1918 as her year of birth. In a second essay, in the issue of Dec. 13, 1930, she writes that a wife who isn’t a mother is like a flower without fragrance, a well without water.

A year later, I saw, she started writing about writing. In the Feb. 21, 1931 issue of *Babaye* (a magazine designed for women readers published by men although twice it had short-lived women associate editors), for example, GQ says that a novel cannot end without having first painted the soul of a woman. Years

later, as the poet Flora Burgos, she was asked to introduce to *BK* readers two books of poetry by the Aglipayan bishop Fernando Buysler: *Basahon sa mga Balak* (A Poetry Reader, 1936) and *Kasingkasing sa Magbabalak* (Heart of a Poet, 1938). Buysler was at the center of what we may now consider the metaphysical school in Sugbuanon poetry before the war that included Flora Burgos as (possibly) its only woman member.

However, what interests us in GQ as feminist is her writing on women's suffrage (granted only in 1937). DM had cited an informal debate between her and Maria Kabigon in the pages of *Babaye*. Maria Kabigon is the most prolific female short story writer before and after the war as well as the most popular love-column adviser known as Manding Karya (yes, subject for another paper), who had a good number of grandchildren when she died in 1962. At one time Kabigon was associate editor of *Babaye* (the other was Adela del Rosario whose thesis on Cebuano Literature is in the UP library). Nevertheless, she had no novel to her name as far as I know, and although she was less sentimental (as Gardie was) than some of her contemporary male writers, she is not necessarily feminist. The issue of women's suffrage alone would bear me out.

I consider GQ's defense of women remarkable especially in the context of a patriarchal society like pre-war Cebu. Take a look at the following. From the Feb. 17, 1930 issue of *Star*, for example, I read this sexist comment by former assemblyman Natalio Bacalso on Annie Osmeña's letter to the judge in an adultery case involving her: "So well-written one wouldn't think it was written by a woman." (This was in the Bisayan section called *Bitoon*, a translation.) I also came across *Star's* Jan. 27 issue of that year carrying an essay by Andres Camasura entitled "He-Women Sharpshooters v. Ladies Home-Makers." Camasura accuses the Women Rifle Team of guilt on two counts: first, "of the crime of revolting against the authority of sex;" and second, "of the crime of violating the moral law and forms of conduct, fixed by established customs and behavior." He addresses these women and challenges them to try writing literature instead.

It was GQ (what, at 13? I should check that with her, because Resil Mojares gives the same year of birth) who wrote against sexism in writing and in life at large. I saw that she wrote, in reac-

tion to G. Noel's article against suffrage, that men shouldn't feel threatened in "Ngano Tuod nga Hikawan ang mga Babaye" (Why Deprive Women at all, March 7, 1931 in *Babaye*). In the Nov. 21 issue that year, *Babaye* ran GQ's reply to an open letter by a certain Ricamora to Rep. Raffiñañ (6th district, Cebu) entitled "Ang Pag-adto sa 'Colegio Electoral' Dili Makalangan Kanila: Ang Kalibutan alang sa Gugma ug Kagawasan" (Women's World is for Love and Freedom). To the claim that the women's groups in the southern towns of Dumanhug, Barili, Ronda, Sibonga and Argao are only good for social affairs, GQ points out that there are also suffragettes in those towns. To Ricamora's statement that woman's place is only in the home, she replies that women should help men in political matters. She also hints of female bonding when she writes that woman should not vote for the sake of kinship but for the common good and for this purpose, mother and daughter cannot conflict although they may both not follow the choice of the man of the house.

I thought of this second strain in GQ's feminism, that of bonding. It is indeed there in the short stories I sampled, just as it is evident in her novel. In fact I had noticed it too in the stories of Maria Kabigon and Estrella Alfon (the ones in Sugbuanon in the case of the latter). But that would be matter for another paper.

I hoped that GQ would have touched some kindred female spirits through her writing. At least I found a poem dedicated to Flora Burgos, "Tingusbawan" (Progress) in the *BK* of Sept. 15, 1939 by one Felisa Adolfo. Its theme was commonplace though, since it encouraged efforts to move ahead, with the help of God who rewards struggle. More striking is the fact that male poets themselves would dedicate their works to Flora Burgos, not in the traditional courtly manner, but in tribute to the writer in her. Such works include those of Buyser, e.g., "Ang Langgam nga Masulubon" (Grieving Bird) and "Sa Adlaw sa Katahum" (On a Day of Beauty) in 1936, "Ang Kahoy sa Krus" (Wood of the Cross) and "Ako Mao ang Gugma" (I Am Love); as well as "Ang Higala" (The Friend) by Flor de Lagrimas (penname of Felipe B. de Leon) in 1938. A series of poems answering one another written by Flora Burgos and Floripinas (penname of Buyser) appeared in the latter's miscellany called *Basahon sa mga Balak* (Poetry Reader, 1936).

It was fun going through Buyser's books, which gathered together the works of his intimate circle of poets. I think the collections illustrate the lively goings-on in the Sugbuanon literary scene before the war. The group seems to have dispersed naturally afterwards. GQ herself moved in 1940 to Iloilo, then finally to Mindanao (Oroquieta, today she visits her sister in Cagayan de Oro on weekends regularly). Each time her father was assigned bishop of the Philippine Independent Church in those cities.

I was glad to find that at least two of GQ's stories won prizes from *Bisaya*: "Maayong Ngalan" (Good Name, 1937) and "Ang Asawa nga Dala sa Akong Uyoan" (The Wife My Uncle Brought Home, 1937), which is nothing like Arguilla's story and which is written from a man's point of view. GQ's short stories alone would total 150 before and after the war but, unfortunately, the pre-war ones were lost in the war and the file of stories she kept afterwards was stolen together with some important documents in 1967. In her letter to Mojares, she says: "Many stories I cannot remember them now, but if they are to be read or published again without title I can recognize them as mine."

I guess GQ started withdrawing from the literary field since she noted the "low level to which *Bisaya* short-stories have gone down" and writers publishing 'green' stories, perhaps influenced (she says) by *bomba* pictures, which "pollute the mind of the youth." I looked in vain for poem or story that would tell her pen was still alive in the 60s.

More spadework in the library uncovered her name as figuring prominently in the souvenir programs of a writers' club called PLUMA (Pundok sa mga Lumad Magsusulat, or Group of Native Writers), a local chapter of the LUDABI (largest writers' group in the country) based in Misamis Occidental. GQ told me over the phone that she was active president of this group for 10 years (around mid-60s and mid-70s), initiating a series of writers' workshops in that part of the Philippines and herself giving the lectures on fiction-writing, as the printed programs show. I noted then a growing number of women writers there, doubtless inspired by her example: Honoria Lapura, Rizalita Bomediano, Cecilia Madula, Feliza Dano Gacrama, Evangelina Santos Paza, Ruth Pangan. Unfortunately, their works aren't carried by larger-circulating publications and don't reach us.

II

GARDEOPATRA QUIJANO'S *LOURDES* (1939): NASCENT FEMINIST SUGBUANON NOVEL

The pre-war period in the Philippines is sometimes referred to as the Golden Age of Vernacular Literature, with the 1930s marking a boundary between two kinds of popular writing: the predominantly propagandistic and the more commercialized escapist literature that proliferated since the Commonwealth.

1936 seemed an especially good year for Sugbuanon writers, when some of them started publishing anthologies, readers themselves showed a greater interest in criticism, and complaints of plagiarism livened up the weekly news. Periodicals that featured creative writing mushroomed, although many of these were short-lived. Within the pages the most popular pre-war publication, the *Bag-ong Kusog* (meaning New Force, *BK* in subsequent references), three novels would be serialized simultaneously.

In studying the emergence of what might pass for a feminist Sugbuanon novel one expects, first, to find it during this period, when the times seemed right for a more realistic treatment of woman. Second, although male writers sometimes sympathized with their female characters, one naturally looks for the new perspective among stories written by women themselves. There is in fact no choice at all, since only one pre-war novel written by a woman has surfaced: *Lourdes* by Gardeopatra Quijano as serialized in *BK* from May 26 to Sept. 23, 1939.¹ It belongs to the numerous love stories that made up the popular entertainment fare of pre-war readers, along with fantasies, detective stories, and adventures.

Being conservative in nature, popular literature stands opposite the literary masterpiece; in the former the conventional and

1 The research base, the Cebuano Studies Center of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, has incomplete collections of the other pre-war publications. But even if these were completed, one doubts the presence of other women writing long fiction at the time. No secondary source has cited it.

communal are stronger while in the latter individual form and content are stressed. Still, within the genre of popular literature, works may stand out which change previous notions of the genre. This paper, using a sociological approach, hopes to show that *Lourdes* occupies a unique position in the growth of the Sugbuanon novel not just because it is the only one by a woman during its time, but also because it has made a difference.

The love theme is perhaps the most enduring in popular fiction, often combining with war, history, fantasy, mystery and adventure. The longer fiction, especially, can more thoroughly explore the gamut of feelings involved in falling in and out of love; surmounting obstacles economic, parental or circumstantial; reconciling with a loved one; and, in the case of a sad ending, grieving over lost love. Part of the popularity of these love stories must have been due to the didactic function that is rarely divorced from the motive to entertain. Throughout the serial are scattered comments on virtue and the dangers of modern city life that the Westernized reader will condemn as so much verbiage. But the writer took seriously his role of social critic and moral guide. It may be said that the pre-war Sugbuanon writers generally shunned subtlety and used direct statement as a consequence of the audience's level and of the lack of more "refined" local models.

Four typical novels on the love theme written by popular writers before *Lourdes* would represent the pre-war writers' subconscious but collective efforts at creating a common core of meanings and values in the face of the new American culture. These are *Felicitas* by Uldarico Alviola in 1912, *Mahinuklugong Paglubong kang Alicia* (The Sad Burial of Alicia) by Vicente Garces in 1924, *Apdo sa Kagul-anan* (Bitterness of Sorrow) by Vicente Rama in 1933-34. While *Felicitas* and *Paglubong* assert the value of marital fidelity and *Apdo* that of feminine chastity, *Tinagoan* challenges the emergent value that tolerates divorce. Such novels we see as fictionalized renditions of their writers' stand on traditions and practices that were subjected to debate on school stage and within the pages of the periodicals.

One might read these novels for what they say regarding roles of and attitudes toward women, but since these were written by male authors, the image of woman in them was bound to remain stereotyped. The heroine Felicitas in the first novel, for example,

resembles a character in a medieval morality play; her returning of jewelry, money, and clothes to the pimp illustrates the contempt for worldly possessions usual to such a character. To the whiteness of her soul is contrasted the blackness of that of her foil, the physically beautiful Martina, who is punished in the end with VD.

In the second story, Alicia is much like Felicitas in virtue and in her marriage difficulties, but is more unfortunate in that she is a battered wife. We see her watering the azucena plants in her garden with her tears, an action commonly offered as the only outlet of woman in her helplessness under parental pressure and inside a loveless, faithless marriage. Like *Paglubong*, *Apdo* is a melodramatic work. Aside from pathetic fallacy, instances of sentimentalism include the farewell scene between Rosas Pangdan (a name borrowed from folk poetry that has gained the connotation of the ideal Cebuano but different from Maria Clara) and her sweetheart Rafael, Rafael's second thoughts about beating the villain at his recollection of his mother's admonition to love one's enemy, Rafael's attempted suicide upon learning of Rosas' engagement to another, and Rosas' farewell letter to Rafael. These stylistic devices are not meant to reflect actual practices but are employed to underline values like constancy in love and obedience to parents.

In *Apdo*, the assertion of the values of blind obedience to parents and physical purity is not complete. While Rosas does not blatantly refuse the preferred bridegroom, she cleverly evades and postpones the issue until it resolves itself because the man got tired waiting. The ironic ending of the story, which leaves Rosas without the will to live after her supposed rape while she was unconscious, invites the reader to ask how important virginity is. The remaining novel, *Tinagoan*, shows a more conventional attitude toward two forms considered negative of love between the sexes: adultery and incest. All the erring lovers get their just deserts, according to the readers' expectations.

Coming to *Lourdes* then is refreshing not only because the writer is a woman but also because it represents the Sugbuanon novel's advance in several ways. On its own terms, it records woman's responses to the questions of womanly virtue and development.

Its author was born in Alcantara, Cebu in 1918, and was educated at various schools in Cebu, Oroquieta, Lanao and Manila. She has taught in college, was a guerilla member in World War II, has a degree in law, holds a dental clinic, and was a prolific fictionist, poet (pseud. Flora Burgos) and essayist (pseud. Gerardo Largavista). She has written more than 150 stories before and after the war, some of them when she was less than 20. For a time, she ran a column for the *Bisaya* called "Sa Akong Talad" (From My Desk). At another time the *Manila Daily Bulletin* published a Bisayan section with her weekly column "Panahom sa Usa ka Babaye" (Opinions of a Woman).²

The shorter works of Gardeopatra Quijano in *BK* show a consistency of attitude and interest. Three short stories anticipate characters and situations in *Lourdes*: "Anak Kol" (1932) on a mother-and-child's suffering due to man's irresponsibility, "Himaya nga Nabanhaw" (Resurrected Glory, 1935) on a girl's helping to restore a man's faith in woman, and "Palad ni Coring" (Coring's Fate, 1936) on the fate of an orphan. Themes in the novel are also explored in the short stories, like sexual discrimination and its corollaries of the double-standard morality and woman's occasional superiority to man in "Katungdanan ng Kasingkasing" and "Sa Atubangan sa Iyang Kaaway" (Duty and the Heart, and In Front of the Enemy, respectively, both in 1936); and "Social Justice" (1940) on the marriage of an ex-playboy lawyer who fears his wife's getting to know his past.

In the two works that the author herself considers her best, which are the novel *Lourdes* and the short story "Kasingkasing sa Babaye" (Woman's Heart), the central interest is love.

Here is a summary of *Lourdes*:

In Pasig, Rizal, twelve-year-old Lourdes Lopez is orphaned when her sick mother dies after her irresponsible father has deserted them. A wealthy stranger, Felipe Antipaz, takes her in and sends her to school. Felipe, who operates a

2 Sources for biodata are Resil Mojares's *Cebuano Literature: A Survey and Bio-Bibliography with Finding List* (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, 1975) and the novelist's correspondence with Mojares, May 1973. Information on other authors cited are taken from the former.

cabaret-cum-casino and brothel, proposes marriage to the grown-up Lourdes in order to protect her from the future which he and his business partner had originally planned for her in their operation. Repulsed by Lourdes, and threatened by the partner, he revives the plan. Lourdes is brought by Alberto Rosales, a young doctor she meets in her escape from the badhouse, to his girl cousin's dormitory where Lourdes eventually remains. Felipe soon discovers her whereabouts but fails to take her back after Alberto threatens him with exposure to the police. The shamed man commits suicide. Alberto helps Lourdes get a job to allow her to finish college. She works the whole day and studies late afternoon and evening, still finding time to write articles for various papers. Alberto's sweetheart Rosita, who becomes jealous of Lourdes, stops seeing Alberto and finds solace in her suitor Oscar. Lourdes' efforts to bring the lovers back together prove futile. Heartbroken, Alberto leaves for Mindanao. He finally settles in Dansalan where he sets up a clinic after two years. In an encounter with Muslims who hinder a friend from buying some land, he meets Emilio, an old man who is wounded by a bullet meant for himself. Alberto treats Emilio and later keeps him as clinic assistant. Alberto packs up when he learns of his own father's illness, taking Emilio with him to Manila and boarding him with another cousin. Father and daughter are eventually reunited. Alberto discovers he loves Lourdes when she is about to accept a suitor. All's well when he confesses love to her and she realizes she loves him too. They get married.

The road to success in love for Lourdes serves also as the road to personal success. Along the way, she proves herself a capable and independent-minded woman. The plot is typical of contemporary popular novels of the Mills and Boon variety where virtuous, diligent, courageous and generous women eventually win the love of their seemingly indifferent prospective mates. More than any of the love stories cited earlier, *Lourdes* provides the readers with authentic vicarious experience of falling in love and winning the loved one.

Although sentimentality is not avoided, it is less offensive to readers who even at that time were already critical of sentimental

fiction. The brief love scene in the conclusion would have pleased those *BK* writers and readers who had complained of the stereotyped situations and characters in love stories.³ Curiously, unlike many other novels of the period, the tender scenes are not between lovers, but only those between parent and child. Love is not given an exaggerated role; unlike in the other stories, which were written by male authors, there is no "love at first sight" in *Lourdes*. Lourdes knows that she feels more than a friend should for Alberto, but she is not consciously jealous of Rosita, whom she thinks of using as model for a character in a story. Alberto misses Lourdes while he is in Mindanao, but does not realize the depth of his feelings until she presents a suitor for his approval.

A more credible story than the previous novels, *Lourdes* has a central character,⁴ with the man as alternate focus, but without villain or villainess. Don Felipe may remind one of the seducer Don Alejo in *Felicitas*, but for the better part of the story, he plays the role of foster father seriously. Neither does Rosita nor Oscar qualify as antagonist. Each has faults — rashness in the former and overdependence on parents in the latter — but in the brief space given to them, they are more recognizable persons, particularly Rosita, than the ex-suitors, rivals, or mistresses of the earlier novels.

Quijano writes for a female audience. By her personal example as well as the central character's, she shows what women can do. Lourdes works her way through college, even writing parttime and thereby sharing her opinions with others. There is no question

3 Examples of such complaints are "Kanang mga Balak sa Mahay ug Gugma," Dec. 13, 1922; Canuta, "Usa ka Tunghaan sa mga Magsusulat," Oct. 5, 1921; Hugo Librando, "Unsaon Pagsulat ug Sugilanon," (editorial), Jan. 3, 1930; and "Ang mga Magsusugilanong Batan-on" (Editorial), Nov. 6, 1936.

4 "Central character" fits better than "heroine," whose endurance was that of a martyr of love and home.

that she is presented as a model: she is modest and chaste (repulsing her benefactor-suitor), loving and generous (forgiving her irresponsible father and supporting him in his old age), diligent (working by day, studying and writing by night), thrifty (renting a house and managing the household well), faithful and understanding (helping Alberto patch up with Rosita), excels in school (transferring from PWU to UP on a scholarship), and of course beautiful (a Miss Philippines candidate although this isn't made much of). The religious piety of former heroines manifested in churchgoing does not count here maybe because the author, who comes from an Aglipayan family, chooses to ignore it.

Quijano was addressing women since more and more women, by 1939, had better opportunities for education⁵ due to the rising middle class, at the same time that they could afford the leisure to read novels. Wives and daughters of the middle class had servants to do housework, and they did not have to attend to old household duties that needed attention even with servants present like weaving, making candles and soap, and baking, since most necessities could be bought from market or store and electricity made candlelight superfluous.

Such factors as education, literacy and suffrage helped to elevate women's status, but where marriage is concerned, it is the man's, not the woman's, status that is raised in the fiction. There is no way of ascertaining by statistics how faithful the idea was to social reality, but the idea of marriage resulting in the rise in social and economic status of a person, or hypergamy, has seemingly opposite directions in English and Philippine, or at least in Sugbuanon, novels. In the English novel, it is the status of the bride, who usually marries a lord or a rich man, that is raised;⁶ however, in the novels on love before *Lourdes* the woman is better off so-

5 BK articles of June 11 and May 21, 1928 report the putting up of a women's dormitory and the offering by the Visayan Institute (now the University of the Visayas) of the following courses: Education-Law (comb.), Farm High School, Business Adm.-Law (comb.), Household Economics, and a course combining Bookkeeping, Stenography, Typewriting, and Spanish.

6 Ian Watt, *The Rise of The Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 154.

cially and economically than the man. This is so in the four examples cited, in *Felicitas*, *Paglubong*, *Apdo*, and *Tinagoan*, where the women come from landed families. Considering that the pre-war novels were written by males, we can surmise that the idea of marrying into wealth by the male betrays wish fulfillment on the part of *the male writer*. The reverse is true in English fiction by male writers; in a society where the female by convention provides a dowry, hypergamy, which would put a waiver to the convention, would be wish fulfillment for *the female audience*. Social class origins of the Sugbuanon male writer does not seem to matter, since the authors of *Paglubong* and *Tinagoan* are from the upper class while those of *Felicitas* and *Apdo* come from the middle and lower classes, respectively.

In *Lourdes* the woman comes from an urban-poor family, although she rises gradually and becomes self-supporting. By 1939, after four decades of American rule, the emergent Protestant work ethic must have gradually seeped into the public consciousness. Even a minor character like Oscar in *Lourdes* is criticized by Rosita's parents for not working, whereas the traditional accepted image of the rich son is that of an idle señorito.

Perhaps inspired by the American-borne Horatio Alger type of success story, *Lourdes* too is an orphan. The image of an orphan previously figured in melodramatic stories but here it probably expresses a subconscious acceptance of the idea of a child's early independence from the family, an American phenomenon that the Filipino cannot consciously accept because of his cultural values. *Lourdes'* father is returned to her, a reminder of filial duty; earlier, *Lourdes'* inability to tell on her foster father shows a similar value.

From *Felicitas* to *Lourdes* is a distance marked by a gradually realistic or credible treatment of the central character. While *Felicitas*, Alicia and Rosas Pangdan are all heroines of Filipina virtue, Alicia and Rosas Pangdan have been exposed during their schooling in the city to a more Westernized society, without being overly influenced by the experience. Their parallel is found in the minor character of Angela in *Tinagoan*, but in this novel are the adulterous characters Petra and Unyang who give an opposite picture of the "overly-Westernized" woman. Through these two, who die after great suffering, the female audience is warned of the dangers of breaking up the family through marital infidelity.

In *Lourdes* the central character does her best in everything and easily adjusts to the needs of the moment. Lourdes in the early part of the novel reminds the reader of the virtuous Felicitas in her non-surrender to a demanding benefactor. As the novel progresses, however, the character of Lourdes emerges not just as a virtuous type but as an individual with her own ideas and opinions. This gradual rounding up of the central character in the Sugbuanon novel would be a natural consequence of development in aesthetic values, which ultimately relate to a corresponding development in society.

In general, the pre-war era saw greater physical and socio-economic mobility brought about by such factors as education and literacy, international trade, laws, women's suffrage, better transportation and communication facilities including cinema, and the rise of local industry. This new mobility was reflected in topics dealt with in the novels, like migration to Hawaii and Mindanao, heroes and heroines who have been schooled and/or engaged in worthwhile jobs, as well as advantageous marriages. Except in the fantasy and detective novels, economic life of women is represented in traditional jobs like storekeeping (*Felicitas*, *Apdo*) domestic service (*Tinagoan*), and sewing (*Felicitas*); as well as in new ones like trading (*Felicitas*), fishing (*Tinagoan*), writing and working while studying (*Lourdes*). No longer is there a central character like Maria in *Wala'y Igsoon*,⁷ who is engaged chiefly in farming.

Whatever change in sensibility or consciousness is perceivable in the literature when society itself goes through alteration. We find the slow changes in aesthetic orientation to derive from a general liberating atmosphere found in a more democratic form of society.

Within the Sugbuanon novel, there is a shift in dealing with experience, less as "life-by-values" and more as "life-by-time." The previous orientation resulted in exempla-type of fiction or in an illustrative mode, while the later outlook is found in more empirical works that translate or dramatize ideas. The social correlates for

7 Published in the same year as *Felicitas*, 1912, by Juan Villagonzalo (Sugbo: Imprenta Falek).

such a shift may be found in more pragmatic attitudes regarding religion, school, and women's role in the family. Just as the person felt liberated, his reading reflected this feeling by emphasizing the experience of living itself, and less "the right way" of living. The happy endings of the later novel show a shift from the concept of virtue being its own reward to that of virtue rewarded by financial success, usually accompanied by success in a love-suit.

Thus we find that *Lourdes* occupies the doubly unique status of being an only novel written by a woman before the war, and of being more natural in its treatment of woman than previous or contemporary works. The latter is true not through conscious effort "to charter new (feminist) seas" but as an inevitable result of social change.