

## The Woman of Virtue in Lina Espina Moore's Novels

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In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir describes a conflicting binary that has defined woman since as:

[A]t once Eve and the Virgin Mary. She is an idol, the servant, the source of life, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip, and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything that he is not. (143)

This contradictory vision that elevates her to the sacred as Virgin Mary and disdains her as Eve, the fall of Adam, has been faithfully reproduced in literature. The perpetuation of this image is testament to its effectivity in establishing patriarchal dominance and controlling women's behavior.

Eve embodies the "bad" woman who upset the framework of patriarchal control. In the book of Genesis, she is man's friend and joy. But she is also given to forbidden desires and tempted by Satan, source of all evil. Eve's story manifests male fear about woman's power to disobey, to rebel and to desire more than what patriarchy allows. But this devaluation of Eve attributes to her the power to escape investigation. The long, critical history of Eve and women like her who are punished for excessive desires have been studied by feminist scholars like Simone de Beauvoir, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

Mary and women like her, often perceived as virtuous, act as patriarchal ideals and role models for all good women. But for all the contradictions in the binary of good and bad woman, what this ultimately ends up to is

offering patriarchal culture a convenient means with which to disempower woman and categorize her as "Other." The role of the Other in defining subjectivity has been explored in works like Hegel's. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel asserts that "[s]elf-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (111). De Beauvoir explores this relationship between self and other in terms of gender. She states that the role of Other is necessary to the male subject who seeks to assert himself: "the Other, who limits and denies him, is none the less a necessity to him: he attains himself only through that reality which he is not, which is something other than himself" (139). In the Lacanian system, woman's position involves an otherness that situates itself in the foundations and formations of language. Woman is a marginalized entity within systems of both gender and language—the feminine still functions as an essential and necessary object in the creation of male subjectivity.

Toril Moi describes male dependence on the feminine that functions specifically in the Symbolic realm:

[I]f patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position within the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the *limit* or borderline of that order. From a phallogentric point of view, women will then come to represent the necessary frontier between man and chaos, but because of their very marginality, they will also seem to recede into and merge with the chaos of the outside . . . It is this position that has enabled male culture sometimes to villify woman as representing darkness and chaos, to view them as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon, and sometimes to elevate them as the representatives of a higher and purer nature to venerate them as Virgins and Mothers of God. (166)

Woman's role of Other in the Symbolic contributes to the good/bad representation of femininity. Woman is simultaneously deified and disdained, depended on and feared—a position of power that contributes to male feelings of hostility and vulnerability and therefore to their desire to control femininity.

In "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine," Luce Irigaray discusses the difficulty of disrupting the phallogentric order.

But she envisions a way so that the order can be modified. Irigaray states that it is necessary to embrace the speak of the masculine subject which in itself perpetuates the oppression of women because it asserts man's sexual indifference. Women "must assume the feminine role deliberately" (76) assigned to them. Through mimicry of female behavior, women can "try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (76). Woman must "resubmit herself . . . in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/ by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible,' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible" (76).

Moi calls attention to Irigaray's risky method because of its potential to reinscribe women in the role they are precisely trying to debunk. Irigaray's idea of mimicry and its effectiveness would be subject for another study. In this paper though, I am interested in her notion of mimicry and its implications for the study of women particularly in literature. The "disruptive excess" that Irigaray proposes is a playful "repeating / interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject," (78) engagement with patriarchal determinations of femininity. My study though also allied with the disruptive power of a deliberate assumption of prescribed gender roles, concerns itself with an exploration of how Irigaray's exuberant, playful mimicry and excess can work in the opposite way.

Hegel's assertion of a subject's dependence on another for recognition is very significant considering the traditional Christian patriarchal dictum where the female role is one of obedience, submissiveness and chastity. A way of confirming our reality is through our effect on someone. If this person does not recognize our act or if our act has no effect on them we are powerless. The Other has to be affected. When a woman's submission and obedience is exaggerated, then, this has disturbing implications for men.

Our ideas of female virtue are not only connected to chastity and obedience but to suffering as well. For women, the connection between virtue and suffering are implicit. One is the Virgin Mary who shows her goodness by accepting God's will for her to become mother of God. She also endures the pain of losing her son. It is through suffering that a good woman can prove her virtue. In *Rizal and the Woman Question*, Albina Fernandez cites an excellent point about chastity that is applicable to a

larger discussion of female virtue. The heroine is defined by what she does not do. Morality consists of refraining from, of proving herself being able to resist her desires and impulses that are not sanctioned by patriarchal rule:

Maria Clara is a beautiful mestiza, who chooses celibate life in a nunnery over a forced marriage to the peninsular, Linares. In the nunnery, the convent of Santa Clara, she does not realize her objective of living a celibate life because she is raped by Padre Salvi. . . stays in the convent as a prisoner and dies broken-hearted. (159)

Woman, then, cannot be given trust if she remains untested. The best demonstration of innocence, as Maria Clara's story illustrates, is the willingness to suffer for the sake of a patriarchal moral code. If virtue consists in accepting suffering, then to take this discourse, it is also possible to say that the greatest virtue is in looking for ways to suffer. This definition though, works against patriarchal control because as the Virgin Mary and the saints show, suffering brings some kind of power.

Fernandez's discussion of Maria Clara's appropriation of the Mother of the Son of God as her own argues for the subversive possibilities in Maria's complete submission to patriarchal oppression. By Maria's embracing of "woman's virtue" and singing "Gounod's *Ave Maria* in so sad a manner when the song ought to be sang in joy" (167), Maria Clara lays bare the operation of male oppressive force. Maria Clara achieves a certain kind of power by embracing powerlessness. She is strong because she is so weak.

Through Beauvoir's description of the subject's need for the Other, Maria Clara's type of complete and perfect obedience prevents her father, her rapist and Ibarra from obtaining the recognition they each need. Through the excessiveness of her submission, Maria Clara ceases to function in her role as Other. And through performing to perfection the role patriarchal culture assigned to her, Maria Clara also disturbs the stability of rigid gender differences that help to define and reinforce "masculine" power—exposing the oppressive structure on which patriarchy depends to ease their dependence and fear of women.

The potential of power in passive obedience and submission is an interesting and exciting facet that lends depth to a character type often seen as having only one dimension to herself and has significant implications for texts that take as their subject the virtuous woman. Taking the figure of Maria Clara as the starting point for this study, I will discuss her form of power as exemplified by the other women in four other texts: Josie in *A Lion in the House*, Pilar Mercedes in *Heart of the Lotus*, Emmy in *Diin May Punoan sa Arbol* and Teresa in *Ang Inahan ni Mila*.

These women are all characters, who like Maria Clara, are stereotypes of female virtue. Such virtue which is contained within patriarchal dictum of women's behavior is also potentially subversive to such rule. Lina Espina-Moore's novels published more than a hundred years than Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, share the concerns and issues of obedience, suffering, and virtue. That the heroines of these novels have been received without question demonstrates the power and ambiguity of the suffering woman—some critics are either sympathetic of a heroine's virtue or critical of her self-assertion.

Even with their disruptive potential, the power of Maria Clara or Josie or Pilar Mercedes, is always weakened. While a reader may appreciate the potential threat that a suffering woman represents to the patriarchal order, he or she must also be shaken and disturbed by the terrible cost of these women's silences. They endure mental and physical abuse and as a reward for their patience, they either are reunited with their abusive husbands or end in death. "Mimicry" exercised by the heroines in these texts run the risk of reinscribing the stereotypical patriarchal definition of femininity, and is ultimately damaging to the women who practise it as a means of gaining power – it cannot be viewed as a healthy method for addressing oppression. With this view, the question I explore revolves around the implications of representation of the virtuous woman for feminist readers. That I focus on the particular representation of Eve / Mary is because this binary has endured and continues to resonate to many readers at this point in time.

### **Maria Clara: The Submissive Woman**

Traditional attitudes towards women were specifically extreme—with Eve contrasted sharply against Mary, the earthy temptress against the pure

mother. Fernandez states that in "patriarchal societies like Hispanized Philippines" a woman's virtue was her most important quality, and that virtue was not only defined through the way a woman behaved, but as "the best gift she can offer to the man she marries" (260).

Until recently, the rituals of exchange brought a woman from her father to her husband as property. Woman's duty was to obey her male protector. The roles, duties and relations between man and woman, between husband and wife, were issues discussed and defined since olden times and Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* contains the story of two or more examples of traditional womanhood including Maria Clara.

The entry of the character of Maria Clara in the novel introduces us immediately to the issue of female obedience and male authority that will be explored in this study:

Maria Clara, the idol of everyone, grew up amidst smiles and love. The friars themselves paid her all manner of attention when in the processions she was dressed in white . . . the girl of thirteen or fourteen years becomes a woman as the bud of the night becomes a flower the following morning. At this period of transition, full of mystery and romance, she was placed, upon the advice of the curate of Binondo, in the nunnery of St. Catherine to receive from the Sisters strict religious education. With tears she bade good-bye from Fray Damaso and from the only friend with whom she played in childhood, Crisostomo Ibarra, who afterward departed also for Europe. (*Noli* 53-54)

The narrator also establishes a connection between Maria Clara, her father—Capitan Tiago—and Don Rafael Ibarra, which prefigures the relationships of dominance and subservience:

[W]ith his own particular ends to serve and understanding the mutual inclinations of the two young people, Don Rafael and Capitan Tiago agreed upon the union of their children and formed a business partnership. (54)

According to Fernandez, Maria Clara's story is that of a woman who:

[L]eads the privileged life of the native elite: she is sent to a convent school for girls, Santa Isabel; gets dressed in finery; is bejeweled; is introduced to the high and the mighty in colonial society, e.g. the Governor General, the friars and visiting peninsulars; and is engaged to be married to the scion of a wealthy family, Ibarra, who is not only rich but also well traveled and highly educated. Her fiancée earns the enmity of Padre Damaso, who cuckolds Capitan Tiago by impregnating Doña Pia Alba, Maria's mother. Padre Salvi, a friar with sexual intentions on Maria, shows Doña Pia Alba's incriminating letters which tell of her despicable sin with Padre Damaso and her intention to commit abortion, and tells Maria that her mother's letters will be given only to her in exchange for a letter of Ibarra to her. (159-160)

All of these Maria Clara endures without complaint or recrimination and she continues to behave with submissive devotion to her father and to the friars.

Included in the *Noli Me Tangere* are other traditional women like Sisa who present a reflection of Maria Clara and Doña Consolacion, the intriguing opposite for the patient Sisa, in fact, these two characters quite faithfully represent the Eve / Mary polarities of behavior that delimit the archetypal Other. Though Doña Consolacion is frequently regarded as a more positive presentation of female power and agency, Maria Clara / Sisa and Doña Consolacion are in fact two sides of the same coin because they are only able to see themselves and speak for themselves in terms provided by the dominant order. Sisa and Doña Consolacion are strong female characters who are constrained by a patriarchal culture which demands that they be submissive and silent. Doña Consolacion, literally and figuratively, fights back and attempts to re-interpret and challenge the oppressive patriarchal authorities but to no avail. She unfortunately has little with which to fight with. The weapon of her choice is speech, a weapon perceived as traditionally female. But this verbal skill links her right away to Eve who seduced and tempted Adam to partake of the apple. The language she employs is masculine and so this makes her unable to claim it as her own or move beyond it. All Doña Consolacion's virtues like speaking in Spanish, her physicality, her perceived assertiveness have already been categorized by anti-feminist satire. Doña Consolacion's efforts are self-defeating as she tries to mount a direct challenge to her husband, the *alferez*,

the oppressor. The patriarchal culture that has created her and the language she uses is too powerful and pervasive.

Maria Clara, Sisa and Doña Consolacion are parodies of women: Doña Consolacion functions to fulfill the boisterous, irreverent, uncultured stereotype of unchecked female desires and passions and Maria Clara / Sisa functions to fulfill the perfect, selfless, submissive ideal of female behavior. Patriarchal structures are threatened by both of these representations of the female Other and both these are excessive mimickings of femininity. Doña Consolacion may be undermining male authority through fighting though it is difficult to maintain a battle stance in the face of constant oppression. Doña Consolacion is ultimately reduced to a battered heap. However, Maria Clara poses a more basic and dangerous challenge. She embraces patriarchal dictum. She plays by the rules. Maria Clara's virtue and submissiveness bring about her own oppression.

The etymology of the term "virtue" comes from the Latin *virtus* meaning "manliness." There is a contradiction in terms—a virtuous woman—is a threat to the stability of gender difference because she will be perceived as having masculine characteristics. Perhaps the more threatening aspect of the virtuous woman can be grounded in femininity which according to Toril Moi represents the unknowable and "excessive" Other who begins to merge with the chaos and instability of the "outside."

Maria's virtue, in patriarchal society demands some kind of test, a trial by fire, so to speak, for such virtue to be validated. In the face of her trial by Padre Salvi, who blackmails her into giving him Ibarra's letters in exchange for her mother's letters, Maria Clara's continued patience and submission simply invite more trials, tests that portray a longing for some reaction because Maria Clara fails to maintain the integrity that Padre Salvi needs for the recognition of his subjectivity. Maria Clara, in negating her own will and acceding to Padre Salvi, also fails to demonstrate the feminine difference and inferior position that can allow Padre Salvi to define his masculinity, his superiority. Maria Clara's acceptance, her assumption of the feminine role, her mimicry of the submission that patriarchy demands from her, frustrates Padre Salvi's desire to obtain acknowledgment of his control and power while at the same time showing his tyranny and weakness.



Another type of trial that Maria Clara goes through is giving Ibarra up:

My father exacts of me this sacrifice—. He has loved me and nourished me and it was not his duty to do so, I pay him this debt of gratitude to assure his peace. (*Noli* 534)

Maria Clara's excessive response draws attention to Padre Damaso's moral decrepitude as well as his exploitation of her vulnerability. Throughout her trial, Maria Clara is completely submissive and selfless and does not betray any rebellious feelings that either Padre Salvi or Padre Damaso can hold her accountable for.

Readers of Maria Clara negatively react to her character and this is understandable. She allows herself to be repeatedly abused and consents to what her father(s) want, out of the desire to be obedient.

I find Maria Clara's acceptance of her fate disturbing. Because of her obedience, she retains her position as daughter. I cannot help but think that Maria Clara was shrewder than she seemed. Knowing her father(s) natures, she refused to be provoked.

She is an example of non-resistance to give authority and credence to prower. The power that Maria Clara wields by remaining unprovoked is a result of paternal power relations that place women in a hierarchy that situates her first as daughter. Fathers, in this set-up, come before husbands.

Through Maria Clara's total submissiveness to her cruel father(s) and tormentor, she performs the mimicry—the deliberately exaggerated gender behavior Irigaray suggests—which subverts and also empowers. Maria Clara, like other suffering women in this study, is to be distrusted specifically because of the power she acquires through selfless, submissive virtue. A woman's patient suffering elevates her to a level of sainthood, of martyrdom. Maria Clara pays a terrible price for her absolute submission. It is self-destructive.

Maria Clara presents a sad commentary on the plight of the oppressed woman—whatever position that can be thought of in a patriarchal society seems to undermine in one way or another, a woman's power. Doña

Consolacion and Sisa disempower themselves by fulfilling anti-feminist stereotypes while Maria Clara may have conquered her father(s) by enacting the type of mimicry and excess advocated by Irigaray.

### Moore's Women in the Novel in English

The heroines of Lina Espina-Moore's novels: Josie in *A Lion in the House*, and Pilar Mercedes in *Heart of the Lotus*, strongly parallel Maria Clara and the form of power she exercises. These women embrace the discursive modes of a patriarchy that oppresses them, presenting and performing the notion of femininity, which in its submissiveness, is disturbing and abhorrent. Paradoxically however, these heroines demonstrate the type of mimicry posited by Irigaray that has to disturb the patriarchal control. Maria Clara functions and finds power primarily in her role as daughter and sweetheart; she defines and is defined herself through these roles. Her trials portray her position as feminine Other. Fe, Josie and Pilar Mercedes also perform as the Others of their patriarchal societal set-ups. But their otherness and their power emerges from their positions as "pure" or "virginal" objects of sexual desire. They pose a threat to the men who desire them. Likewise, they also pose a threat to the society that seeks to control them. Because of these differences and because of the broader scope of Moore's narrative, these women who are constrained by gender roles as daughters, wives, mothers, and lovers, among many other roles, portray a more active kind of threat through their submissiveness.

Moore's first novel, *Heart of the Lotus*, shows Pilar Mercedes, a quiet married woman as the love interest of the protagonist, Lorenzo. Pilar Mercedes undergoes humiliation at the hands of her husband, Jose, and after enduring her trials with virtue and success, is finally laid to rest. Like Maria Clara, Pilar Mercedes has little protection or defense against her husband. She was a stranger, "a Manileña who came to Cebu City as an employee of the Singer Sewing Machine Company" (60), was of dubious background: if she "werē of good family... she['d] come so far away from her home in Binondo to work for a living" (60), and a woman. Despite what seems to be a huge inequality there is with her husband, Don Jose Armando Rodriguez y Rivera, Pilar Mercedes does exert considerable power in the narrative. Her virtue and the material gains she obtains raises skepticism and suspicion of her morality. This kind of skepticism can be broadened to include all women. Because of the male fear that defines

woman as Other, she is always subject to suspicion. Not only does Jose's actions reflect gender and class insecurities, they also point to the capacity of the submissive, virtuous woman to thwart oppression. Paradoxically, in the case of Pilar Mercedes' virtue, the translation of Jose's and subsequently Lorenzo's suspicions and fears into testing her, only works to empower her who suffers without failing in any way.

Irigaray posits that in the beginning, women can resist exploitation and marginalization in patriarchy. Women "must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and this begin to thwart it" (76). Pilar Mercedes is one of the most successful of the women in the study of the performance of this kind of mimicry. In a patriarchal society, the discourse of authority is usually not given to the interests of women. But, Pilar Mercedes' understanding of the hierarchy of power relations that operate within patriarchal culture give her advantage in the narrative. Even though her society privileges men and money, by embracing the social conventions that work to disempower her, Pilar Mercedes is able to use her subordination, her lower class position, against Jose and circumvent the subservience to him that her poverty and gender would usually ask for. She is able to do this by showing a high sense of social propriety and decorum and by warding off the advances of Lorenzo.

Like Padre Damaso/Padre Salvi/Ibarra, Jose is empowered by his rich social standing. But he is also elevated through his role as husband. Jose has plenty of women for "it was the mark of the male to have extraneous love affairs" (63). But Pilar Mercedes insists on being "an exemplary wife, administer[ing] his home very ably" (63). Jose humiliates her:

I give you everything—clothes, jewelry, servants, money. Deny and fry in the boiling fat of a dirty lie. Yes, I give you everything. Things which you never had before. For where did I pick you up? From behind a sewing machine, kicking away at a foot pedal, teaching stupid housewives how to embroider God Bless Our Home, when their husbands could hardly provide them with dried fish to down with their *linugao*. And your American master, just biding his time to defile a woman of the East. His Whisky Stinking Majesty . . . I saw his lecherous eyes and his beak of a nose turned on you. No,

no, don't tell me otherwise. I saved you from that bearded gorilla.  
(93)

But Pilar responds with wifely duty throughout her ordeal as an excuse for the resistance she directs at Jose: "There would be nothing on her face. Not defiance. Not hurt. Certainly, not pain" (94).

In a reversal of roles, Pilar Mercedes' position as low class woman is her defense—there are rules that inform higher and lower class relations and when Jose ignores his higher class, cultured discourse, Pilar Mercedes is able to justify her discourse of silence.

Pilar Mercedes' able mimicry and manipulation of patriarchal discourse saves her especially in moments of temptation. In Lorenzo's attempt to seduce her, she resists by documenting a succession of reasons: "I am your uncle's wife," "It is April heat. Nothing more," "Leave my home immediately." These reasons prove effective against Lorenzo who is unwilling to take advantage of a woman.

Pilar Mercedes' attempts to thwart Lorenzo seem more effective resistance to patriarchal oppression than Maria Clara's enduring suffering, though both ways eventually give reprieve to these women's suffering. Maria Clara submits the feminine way, with meekness while Pilar Mercedes resists the masculine way, with heroics. These are parallels that somehow balance the points of resistance and submission that a virtuous woman negotiates to remain a virtuous woman.

Moore's third novel, *A Lion in the House*, centers on the figure of Josie, mother of three, wife to a rich furniture merchant, Alberto de Leon, who openly conducts a love affair with Diana Corey. Female submission to patriarchal ideals is carried out to the extreme in this narrative. Josie is defined by her endless capacity to forgive her oppressor. She comes from a middle-class background and worked as an elementary teacher when her husband urged her to quit teaching. Josie, unlike Pilar Mercedes, is immediately accepted as:

comely and easily the favorite of the male teachers. The principal, a product of the Philippine Normal School of the 1920's, did not find in this newest addition the arrogance and the posturings of

youth, nor the irritating indifference of the ones who take teaching as a job that separates one from penury. The women found little to frown upon this newcomer, who had no coquetish ways. (53)

There is no class difference between Josie and Alberto, however, Josie's identity is explored in the narrative as a complex character. Like Pilar Mercedes, Josie and her virtues are presented by Moore as typifying the best of women. Her virtue will be put on trial. Josie's virtue though, distinguished from Pilar Mercedes' rural system of values, is a product of sophisticated and educated morality. Josie is religious, charming, elegant and prudent. These qualities, however, work against her and her serious trials reflect the power of her oppressor and her inferior stature as woman. There is Alberto's resentment of her choice of a new house: "It was a modern version of what they were living in now. Her choice had to do with the natural wariness of things too different... he despised her for this timidity" (61). After Josie had listed down what she would need in her new home, she finds Miss Aguilar, an interior decorator commissioned by her husband to do a professional job: "I don't want anything awkward or out of line" (65) is the reason he gives her. Even worse, an anonymous caller phones her to say "Your husband has a *querida*" (73) and her sister-in-law, Meding, simply responds "The wife is always the last to know" (77) when Josie relates this incident to her.

Josie's trial is from the beginning even more complicated than Pilar Mercedes'. Her family seeks to control and appropriate her by discouraging her from separating with Alberto:

Her parents said, bear it, it is only one trial in life. Pete Gomez said that legal separation was feasible, but think of the effect it would have on the children. She could have laughed into his face—he, the incurable Lothario whose family preferred living away from him, or he—away from his family (that segment of this family friend's life was never clear). She listened to him consistently polite. Her father confessor said in effect: Whom God put together, let no man... Patring Flores, quoting, because elementary school teachers often quote: This too shall pass away. (81)

Her husband also seeks to define and delimit her virtue but the focus of his attention is on her wifely/motherly duty. In Alberto's treatment of

Josie, he is out to prove she is just a woman: a wife and a mother. To be a woman in a patriarchal culture is to function as a fantasy of desire meant for male consumption—but this fantasy can become threatening if it refuses to perform its assigned role of Other. Josie, by thwarting all of Alberto's attempts to master her, exposes the lack which defines his maleness.

Josie, even after having proof of Alberto's infidelity to her will not abandon her role as virtuous wife. The frustrated Alberto is unable to incorporate his wife's body into his control. Josie documents a woman's relationship with, and submission to, a primarily marital patriarchal power. She is distinguished from Pilar Mercedes by the complexity of her psychological evaluation of self. She struggles with her conscience, seeks out those aspects of her personality that she finds unacceptable and attempts to vanquish them:

Advices brought her to beauty parlors; made her read the most outlandish articles in what until that time were entirely unknown publications to her; drove her literally stumbling on her knees before main altars, side altars of as many churches and chapels as there were in the Greater Manila Catholic Church directory. (82)

The struggle is an essential aspect of Moore's novel for Josie, unlike Maria Clara or Pilar Mercedes, has one evident flaw. Maria Clara and Pilar Mercedes do not disobey or openly question the actions of men, and while Maria Clara defies the proposed marriage to Linares, her obedience to her father is always complete. Josie, though, introduced us to a chaotic time in her family; shadowing Alberto and confronting him at Diana Corey's apartment. While a wife's chief duty and virtue during modern times remained obedience to her husband, the issue of women's rebellion was still frowned upon especially when children were dragged into the dirty business of revealing a spouse's extramarital affair. The struggle created in the de Leon family due to the opposition between a wife's desire to lay bare her husband's infidelities and the husband's right as a father to protect his children from this knowledge leads to the emotional instability of one of the children, Jake. For the remainder of the novel, though Josie is engaged in a deep struggle to preserve herself against the oppression of Alberto, her primary concern is to protect her children, specifically Jake.

Like Maria Clara and Pilar Mercedes, Josie's power is generated through the extremeness of her submission. It infuses her actions with subversiveness and disruption that characterize the mimicry advocated by Irigaray. It is Josie's total adherence to patriarchal codes regarding wifely duty and her desire to be validated by her husband that provides her with the means to defeat Alberto. But it is after she has overcome Alberto that she turns her full attention to her family that Josie becomes most powerful. Josie's humiliation acts as an effective symbol of her martyrdom. It becomes a type of punishment for her husband, whose authoritarian and sexual values forced her into this situation.

### Moore's Women in the *Novelas Cebuana*<sup>1</sup>

Emmy of *Diin May Punoan sa Arbol* (Where a Fire Tree Grows) and Teresa of *Ang Inahan ni Mila* (Mila's Mother), are no doubt the most popularly read and enjoyed among Moore's *novelas cebuana*. Like the narratives of Josie and Pilar Mercedes, these heroines espouse the patriarchal codes that oppress them. They submit to the same concept of femininity and virtue but in doing so, compel Irigaray's disruption of patriarchal control.

Emmy performs completely as the perfect wife; her unnecessary trial displays her as Other, while Teresa establishes the weakness and vulnerability men are subjected to within marriage. These women share the power of Maria Clara's representation. Their impact is strong because, similar to Maria Clara's, the symbolic realm they occupy is one of suffering and virtue as well as that of love and betrayal.

*Diin May Punoan sa Arbol* reflects the plot elements of a love triangle: a young, intelligent, socially acceptable Emmy marries a young, intelligent, socially acceptable Jaime who was engaged to a young, intelligent, socially acceptable Estrella. Because Emmy gets pregnant and the rules of propriety dictated Jaime into marrying her, she undergoes quiet torment at his hands and after experiencing her trials, both as a cripple and as a long-suffering wife, she is reunited with her husband in the end.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the term coined by Lina Espina-Moore as appended to the titles of her manuscripts at the Cebuano Studies Center. Such manuscripts were serialized in the *Bisaya* magazine.

In this study, Emmy is no doubt the most interesting woman in analyzing Irigaray's mimicry and therefore the most unrestricted to the interrogation of her trustworthiness. The discourse of authority is usually available only to men in a patriarchal society but Emmy's grasp of how the relations of power work is advantageous in the narrative. The society she grows up in privileges men, money and intelligence. She accepts this without question by enacting proper behavior and through this behavior employ her physical illness, femininity and subordination against her husband. Emmy's leverage is connected to her knowledge of social conventions and this assists her in the ultimate victory over Jaime through her mimicry of them, the interpretations of social obligations and situations specifically given by Jaime.

Jaime is socially well-off, having been educated in the United States where they first meet. Emmy's respect for what seemed like liberal-mindedness in Jaime is what reinforces her critique of him. In a discussion with Luz, her nurse, Emmy relates how in the United States there was no stain to their union and happiness but when they returned to the Philippines, the days became hell:

*Sa pagabut niya, giarway ko siya ug ang iya lang tubag mao kadtong usa ka tinanawan nga hangtud karon dili ko hikalimtan. Kadtong tinanawan nga sama sa namulong—'Bayri ang imong utang. Mihilom ako, ug sukad niadto wala na akoy tingog bisan siya madugay, bisan pag dili mauli.*

When he arrived, I quarreled with him and his only answer was a look that to this day, I can't forget. A look that seemed to say 'Pay what you owe.' I didn't say anything, and since then I had nothing to say even if he was late, even if he wouldn't come home.

This rebuff is replayed by Emmy throughout her ordeal as pretense for the silence and seeming ignorance she directs toward Jaime in a reversal of roles that inform power relations, her position as ignorant wife becomes her defense.

Emmy's skillful manipulation and mimicry of the discourse of patriarchy rescues her from moments of psychological violence. In all of Jaime's attempts to dismiss Emmy's questioning, his inability and failure



to dupe or fool her can be explained by his unavoidable confidence. In one instance, Emmy inquires of him, in a scene that is typical of their interactions, prior to his improvement:

*"Wa ako makamatngon sa pagsulod mo kagabii, darling."*

*"Nahinanok ka diay. Maayo hinoon. Apan mitomar ka bag pildoras para sa pagkatulog?"*

*"O-o, dear. Sa pagabut sa alas once, unya wa ka pa moabut, mitomar akog usa kay dili man gayud ko makatulog."*

*"Di ba giingnan ka man sa doctor nga dili ka magsalig sa pildoras sa pagpakatulog? Sama sa iyang giingon, tomar lang kon kinahanglanon na kaayo."*

*"Sa ingon niana wala diay ako masayop kay gikinahanglan man nako kaayo. Nahibalo man ako nga kon dili ako motomar, dili man gayud ako makapahulay."*

*"Kay nganong dili man, sa kabalaka kon sa pagduda?" Ni Jaime pa nga nagkatawa.*

*Misudong una pagayo si Emmy sa nawong sa iyang bana, dayong pamulong, "Kon gusto mong hisayran ang tinuod, ang duha—kabalaka ug pagduda."*

*"Darling, I'd no idea when you came in last night."*

*"You must have been sound asleep. That's good. But did you take sleeping pills?"*

*"Yes, dear. At eleven and you weren't home yet, I took one because I couldn't really sleep."*

*"Didn't the doctor tell you not to depend on sleeping pills? Like he said, you take it only when you really need it."*

"If that's the case then I wasn't wrong because I needed it badly. I knew that if I didn't take one, I wouldn't be able to rest."

"And why not, is it worry or doubt?" said Jaime laughing.

Emmy looked at her husband's face closely, then said, "If you want to know the truth, both—worry and doubt."

In scenes where Emmy is unable to move Jaime to the truth, he silences her through the discourse of being provider and protector. Even in these instances, though, Emmy's silence is not capitulation. Instead, she plays dumb, and she documents these instances to the nurse. Emmy's performance of "helpless" femininity is her defensive recourse. She must always convince everyone surrounding her that she continues to be an essentially obedient woman as well as a good wife. But Emmy's use of the patriarchal codes that demand her submissiveness empower her only while Jaime offers her the opportunity to suffer in her defense. Once her predicament no longer provides her with that opportunity, once her "trial" is over, Emmy's disruptive behavior is also abbreviated. The end of Emmy's narrative, like Josie's, is disturbing in that it shows that the tyrannical abusive man or husband, need only end the trial he submits her to, in order to regain lost power or like Jaime, to be reinstated as moral/social authority figure.

Teresa Graham is a character who exists in complex relation to the themes of subversion and submission discussed earlier. Teresa demonstrates a passivity that connects her to Emmy while effecting a revenge against her male persecutors that exceeds, in its directness, Josie's maneuvers and stratagems. In this way, *Ang Inahan ni Mila*, works to expose the danger and harm that the Eve / Mary binary represents for women with Teresa functioning in one or both roles at different moments and with different men in the narrative. Also, within the context of this study, Teresa's performance as feminine Other, her submission—while always evident and always acting to expose the destructive power of her patriarchal culture—do not reveal the degree of subversive force shown by Emmy or Pilar Mercedes until that point when she is married to Ken.

Each of the heroines in this study encounters a host of patriarchal authority figures or trials, whether marital or familial. However, with this particular narrative, the connections between these loci of power and

between their ideological/male agents and the woman on relations with, becomes more manifold. Emmy, Pilar Mercedes and Josie's narratives focus primarily on their relationships with their husbands. *Noli Me Tangere* though focusing on a pre-marital couple, Maria Clara and Ibarra, is also concerned with the relationship between subservient daughter and father. The tragedy of *Noli Me Tangere* and *Heart of the Lotus* strengthens the oppressive force of familial patriarchal power, pitting the heroine against both father and lover in the former and husband and suitor in the latter. In *Ang Inahan ni Mila*, Moore further complicates presentations of patriarchy and individuates the forces that work against its protagonist. Most importantly for Teresa, the roles of lover and husband are played by different men. This dichotomy means that together with presenting an perceptive study of lower class origins as it functions within a patriarchal system, *Ang Inahan ni Mila*, is able to explore the themes and implications of a woman's obedience to society.

Like Pilar Mercedes, Teresa comes from a class lacking in social distinction. The descriptions of lower class families in this narrative are stereotypical portraits of hungry, vulgar and ignoble poverty. Though Rizal and Moore point to the exploitation of that poverty by the upper class, the lower class families remain relatively corrupted by the system that embodies and oppresses them. The family is seen as the root of the daughter's virtue. Teresa's virtues, unlike Maria Clara's, are not easily traceable to aristocracy. Teresa's parents are of dubious origins; her mother being a dancer and her father could not afford to educate her. Beyond this, Teresa could not create the bonds between men that cement a society:

*"Nakita mo? Karon sa imo lang panulti namatikdan ko nga si Teresa wala gayud nimo madala sa Casino Espanol. Aber, ngano man?"*

*"Dili tungod sa kakabus, kon dili tungod kay masakitan lang siya. Hunahunaa baya nga ang mga libok sa mga tarwo kaniadto dili pareho karon. Sa katabom, matahom si Teresa. Kana dili malalis. Apan ang mga tarwo dili man lang kay motanaw sa hitsura kon dili motukib man sa gigikanan. Mao kanay nakasubo. Ug ngano man gayud nga isulod ko ang usa ko ka kauban sa usa ka lugar kon higayon nga seguro akong masakitan lang siya?"*

"Don't you see? From what you've just said, I've noticed that you've never taken Teresa to Casino Español. So, why is this so?"

"It's not because of poverty, but because she'd just get hurt. Just consider the actions of people then aren't the same as now. Speaking of beauty, Teresa's beautiful. That cannot be argued. But people will not only look at the features but will also trace the roots. That's what's sad. And why should I take in a companion to a place or occasion that I'm sure will just hurt her?"

The complexity of Teresa's story is partly a product of her character and situation but it is also a product of her relationship with and Moore's characterization of, her society. *Ang Inahan ni Mila* offers a similar commodification of the young Maria Clara by Capitan Tiago but the search for social power as performed by Teresa is infused with a survival mechanism that is absent in Capitan Tiago. In *Ang Inahan ni Mila*, Teresa's low social position transforms her maneuvers, making it as much a sign of her exploitation by the systems of social class and gender as a comment on her victimization as well. Majority of Teresa's actions and decisions throughout the narrative revolve around this.

At the time of Teresa's relationship with Johnny Eleazar, she can be read as a victim of his social advantage and sexual experience or she can be perceived as cunningly, even perhaps radically, exercising her own desire and sexuality. In the same way, when they break up, she can be seen as emerging from the bewilderment that his power exercised over her. However way she is characterized in the narrative, Teresa demonstrates strength at many instances. For example, the scene where Lourdes, Johnny's wife, humiliates Teresa when she tells her she knows the difference between Filipino and American weddings:

*"Nahibalo ako nga nahibalo ikaw, Teresa. Taganon ko lang nga niining mga tuiga, mipalit ka gayud ug mga libro sa etiketa haron ka masayod sa hustong mga libok sa sosiyedad.*

*Apan ang hangyo ko lang karon mao nga, kay tungod kining kalibutan dili man magagad lang sa mando sa mga libro kon dili sa mga tawo man usab nga maoy molihok niining mga mandoa, imo unang pangutanon ang imong bana sa iyang desisyon."*

"I know that you know, Teresa. I'll just guess that these years, you've bought books on etiquette so that you'll be conversant with the proper behavior in society. But my request this time is, because this world does not depend on the dictates of books but on people who'll execute these orders, you have to ask your husband what his decision is."

Teresa decides to respond actively to this put-down. Her self-control and independence can be seen through her decision to function as an equal member of the community. The familiar plot of the fallen woman is allowed empowerment although the narrative does not go reach the traditional conclusion of happy endings. Teresa will move on with her life alone and unconstrained. She will separate with her husband, Ken, and push conventions further. She will meet other men, who like her, are divorced and are trying to find love. However, as with her experience with Johnny and Ken, Teresa's powers of self-definition lack the force that social and literary history lend to her masculine counterparts. In her love relationship with Johnny, she appropriates the sole power it seems possible for her to grasp and allows herself, with an excessive passivity, to be defined by a powerful figure—a white, American male—in a relationship that resonates with Josie's plot. In the face of Ken's discursive power, Teresa can try to refuse, but as Irigaray notes about any direct confrontation with patriarchal power, it is difficult to triumph when the very language we use enforces women's marginality.

Teresa is a victimizer as well as a victim and the temptation to reverse the usual description that depict how she is the one who destroys married life is great. Instead, the tragedy of the situation is allowed to grow and Teresa's status as a sufferer expands. A certain pride characterized her from the beginning of the narrative and even to the end, it prevents her from asking anyone for assistance. All of her actions, while they perform and mimic regulations regarding female behavior, inculcate Ken and the patriarchal values he represents.

Josie, though, like Maria Clara, Pilar Mercedes, Emmy and Teresa does not escape without criticism. Moore's novels serve a didactic goal. She hopes that Teresa, Emmy, Pilar Mercedes and Josie will instruct and convince readers. These women's purpose are also didactic. Pilar Mercedes will convince both Jose and Lorenzo of her virtue and strength. Josie and

Teresa will tell their stories and vindicate them in the eyes of their family and warn women of situations like theirs. Like Pilar Mercedes, Josie defines and asserts herself through an act of rebellion that Emmy does not exact. In *A Lion in the House*, Josie is still with Alberto although it does not seem like a reinstatement of Alberto as Josie's superior. Like Josie, Emmy is reunited with her husband and the happy ending is clear. Pilar Mercedes, though, avoids the ultimate subjugation to male power by dying. This elevates her to the status of martyr. Pilar Mercedes and Teresa never stop suffering and are never coopted by the patriarchal structures that oppress them. Their oppressors continue to be thwarted.

The close study and probing of femininity can function to reinscribe gender difference to further the otherness of woman. The masochistic elements of a woman's suffering also is a disturbing aspect of a reading. But what is most disturbing to me is that I find the suffering of these women compelling. The desire to know the feminine Other can perhaps account for the resonance of these works to the readers.

That the text is enjoyable is perhaps due to a reader's identification with the heroine. It may also be due to the acknowledgement of how disruptive a woman's submissiveness can be. Or how a patriarchal culture can create duplicitous women who are fascinating yet frightening in the excessive lengths they will go to escape or submit to the patriarchal order.

The mimicry that Irigaray imagines as enacting a powerful disruption of patriarchal discourse is geared to developing alternative spaces where woman can exist and be recognized so it cannot be seen as a purely defensive strategy. A form of agency, it disrupts conventional beliefs regarding how one can disrupt the status quo. Women play different roles and even if the suffering woman is starting to become less predominant in Philippine culture and literature, she remains a powerful feminine trope with the romance forms that enable this. It is necessary to try to explore and understand the appeal of the submissive woman figure and what she signifies for both men and women in today's culture.

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