



*Romance and Revolution: A Look into the Lives and Times of Jose Rizal and Josephine Bracken* by Luis Lisa and Javier de Pedro. University of Asia and the Pacific, Pasig City. c 2010, 386 pages, 17x23 cm.

Among the many works published for the sesquicentennial of the birth of Jose' Rizal, the book of Luis Lisa and Javier de Pedro is appealing: its purpose is "an attempt to document as completely as possible the relationship between Jose' Rizal and Josephine Bracken, so as to provide a perspective of things" (p vii). Its aim is to reestablish the truth, by looking at a number of misconceptions about Josephine. She has been described either as an incarnation of the Maria Clara "the ideal, the poetical, the pure and virgin dream" or as almost a "whore". None of them of course is the reality. A more objective biography is presented using a rigorous historical analysis utilizing abundant primary documents, specifically the manuscripts of Josephine that the authors referred to as Description, as well as the interview she granted to China Mail, letters from Rizal and from Jesuit fathers, in particular, the letters of Fr Antonio Obach, SJ, and Fr Vicente Balaguer, SJ.



The authors are relentlessly contesting the positions of two previous historians, Austin Craig and Austin Coates, claiming that they either intentionally or unintentionally ignored or distorted some sources.

The use of the word “Romance” in the title is a clear indication that the authors wanted to go away from any fictitious aspects of the love affair between Jose and Josephine, and to give a more down to earth report of a relationship that was facing numerous hardships and was not romantic at all.

The book is divided into three parts: *Birth and Childhood of Josephine; Together until Death; and Widow of Doctor Rizal*. It is followed by 70 pages of annexes that deals with the position of the authors on Rizal’s retraction and his position on Philippine Independence based on the controversial *Data for My Defense*; several letters in Spanish with their translation, excerpts of a Spanish newspapers La Vanguardia to present the perspective of some Spaniards on the uprising in the Philippines. The original version and the authors’ translation are given. The last annex reproduces the baptismal certificate of Josephine, the first and last page of the Description, allowing the readers to have a glimpse of her penmanship, the certificate of her second marriage, a letter to Trinidad and two letters of Fr Obach.

*Romance and Revolution* offers a biography of Josephine, especially before her encounter with Rizal that has rarely been done before with so many details and clarification of some contested issues such as her family. It pictures a young sensitive woman, intellectually not at par with Rizal as shown by her numerous English mistakes, often uncertain of what to do. The Josephine-Jose relationship is seen more as existing out of convenience and necessity rather than out of passion. The two actors are lonely, searching themselves and their encounter is an opportunity of a companionship in misery.

The book is interesting for a diverse audience, anyone concerned in the Philippine past as well as scholars and academicians as one can read it at his own convenience choosing to include or not the lengthy footnotes.

As Fr John N Schumacher, SJ, in the cover page, “Utilizing new sources uncovered in the course of their many years of research, the authors, Luis Lisa and Javier de Pedro, provide new insights, clarify issues, and belie popular impressions on Josephine, thereby presenting her in a clearer and better picture.”

It is left to the reader to choose the old truth according to Craig or Coates, to adopt the position of Luis Lisa and Javier de Pedro or their own concerning the short and rather unhappy life of Josephine, the few months they spent together in Dapitan from their encounter, their life as a couple, their separation, last days of Rizal and her few years after Rizal’s martyrdom.

*Elizabeth Enerio*