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## The “Urian” Lectures

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## The Urian Lectures

"Urian" is an old Tagalog word corresponding to the English "touch-stone." In the middle of the eighteenth century, the following riddle about the *urian* appeared in a Tagalog-Spanish dictionary:

Itim aco itim aco  
Ibig aco nang guinoo.  
(I am black, I am black,  
But high-born men covet me.)

A piece of black stone, the *urian* was used by Tagalog artisans to test the purity of gold or silver which was rubbed on it. The Urian Lecture Series has been set up as an annual touch-stone on which critics and scholars may test the value of Philippine writing for the community to which it is addressed.

The first series dwelt on the theme of "Literature and Society." Artists and men of letters whose careers were an affirmation of the vitality that nationalism brings to art were chosen as the first lecturers. Amado V. Hernandez, Efren R. Abueg, Petronilo Bn. Daroy and Felipe Padilla de Leon reviewed the works of our poets and fictionists and came up with information and insights that help us understand our culture better. The goldsmith's *urian* revealed the amount of wealth a man had. Perhaps the Urian Lectures could help us discover how much literary wealth we have always had and taken for granted.

BIENVENIDO LUMBERA