

Facets of Machismo and Maternalism in Fictional Philippine Settings

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ABSTRACT

The legal implication of infidelity in Philippine law serves as an initial display of “machismo” that reflects the propensity and pervasiveness of its concept in Philippine society. As a response to society’s partiality to male’s gender role, the gender role of women called “maternalism” has surfaced. This gender role identifies itself as a manifestation of society’s concept of gender roles including double-standard machismo. This paper aims to disclose how desire is depicted as justification to the existence of machismo and maternalism in selected Philippine short stories like “Magnificence,” “Of Fish, Flies, Dogs and Women,” “The Chiefest Mourner,” “Thirsty is the Arid Land,” and “Wedding Dance.” This paper also supports the concept of desire with pleasure principle and tripartite model of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. The paper’s critical point focuses on how infidelity is reflected in said stories, thereby leading to understanding its concept as manifested by characters’ gender roles. This paper also employs the descriptive literary analysis anchored on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics. In addition, the paper also discusses the binary opposition of marriage and infidelity, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, along with its implication to the couple and the society in general. The paper identifies culture as an inherent factor in addressing the questions of gender roles in Philippine fiction.

Keywords - Literature, machismo, maternalism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, literary analysis, gender roles, descriptive design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Halo-halo is one of the favorite desserts of Filipinos. Its peculiar taste from different ingredients such as ice and milk topped with creamy leche flan and cheese and at the bottom part, the variety of flavors like sweetened beans, banana, jackfruit, colored gelatin and sugar makes it a popular choice of desserts especially during the summer. Its wonderful taste could be related to Filipino cliché, *habang lumalalim, lalong sumasarap*, which literally means the bottom gets more delicious when one eats from the top without mixing the ingredients at the bottom with those at the top. The cliché is actually a nice metaphor for life: more experiences good or bad means a better person

People love to feel ecstatic, they laugh, feel betrayed, they cry, forgive, and then they learn. As one grows older, he or she acquires a conglomeration of different experiences that come with varying emotions and reactions. There are laughter, betrayal, crying, forgiveness, and learning—and this mixture of situations result in a person accepting what he or she cannot control. Happiness is a choice. Such is the researcher's perception about choice-making in relation to gender roles in Philippine society as reflected in the prose narratives which this paper put under study.

A person's idea about marriage and infidelity is a result of his or her exposure to culture and his or her upbringing and experiences. In the Philippines, which is predominantly Catholic, a man and a woman deciding to be united in matrimony are expected to vow to remain faithful to each other; therefore, when infidelity comes into the picture, that marital vow is broken. According to Gonzales (1991)--quoting Medina in his discussion of *The Filipino Context of Infidelity and Resilience*, extra marital relationships range from casual relationships to the keeping of a *querida* or paramour. Given that most Filipinos are Catholic, one who strictly adheres to his or her faith actually considers marriage sacred, hence indissoluble.

In Philippine law, the infidelity of the husband differs from that of the wife in terminology and in punishment level:

“Concubinage is committed by any husband who shall keep a mistress in the conjugal dwelling or, shall have sexual intercourse, under scandalous circumstances, with a woman who is not his wife, or shall cohabit with her in any other place. (Article 334 of the Revised Penal Code or RPC). Adultery means the carnal relation between a married woman and a man

who is not her husband, the latter knowing her to be married, even if the marriage be subsequently declared void (RPC Article 333).”

Legally then, the Filipino married male who keeps another woman temporarily is committing the crime of infidelity called concubinage. The Philippine Law favors men committing infidelity considering the difference between a conviction for adultery and concubinage. The proof of sexual intercourse is enough in adultery, but in concubinage, the prosecution must prove that sexual intercourse is under a scandalous circumstance or that the husband keeps a mistress and cohabits with her. In addition, the penalty for adultery is the same for both woman and man (prison correctional medium and maximum); in concubinage, however, the penalty for a man is lower by one degree (prison correctional minimum and medium). The concubine is given a separate penalty called *destierro*. It is a penalty based on the proximity or distance to the scene of the crime. Indeed, the law is reflective of society’s concept of gender roles, along with the idea of double-standard machismo.

“Men by nature are polygamous,”—one often hears this cliché and *passé* to justify. This excuse relates to what is known as “machismo” complex which encourages some Filipino men to take on a highly sexual role, egged on and verified by the peer group to which he belongs. True machismo also tends to be measured in terms of the number of affairs a man maintains and the number of children he sires either with his legitimate wife or his mistress or mistresses.

This paper deals with the various types of machismo and maternalism in fictional Philippine settings as seen in selected short stories as materials under study. Lumbera (1997) points out that English writing in the Philippines began during the first decade of the 20th century; however, it was only in the 1950’s when it began to attain stature as literature. Accordingly, the short story as a literary form entered Philippine Literature through the agency of the English writers, the group of university-based writers such as Alfon, Bautista, Benitez, Arguilla to mention a few. These writers established the short story as a literary form par excellence for Filipino writers.

Furthermore, Lumbera (1997) mentions that by virtue of the writers’ easy access to models, the writers set the pace in employing the form to tell about Philippine conditions although most of the works depict the lives of the middle class. Thus, Philippine fiction shows a desire to create a national literature in the hopes of defining the national psyche or identity of the Filipino. The table below shows the title, name and the birthplace of the authors of the materials under study.

Table 1. The novel and authors' place of origin

Title	Author
"Magnificence "	Estrella D. Alfon San Nicolas, Cebu City
"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs and Women "	Timothy R. Montes Borongan, Eastern, Samar
"The Chieftest Mourner"	Aida Rivera- Ford Jolo, Sulu
"Thirsty is the Arid Land"	Liwayway Arceo- Bautista Manila
"The Wedding Dance"	Amador Daguio Laoag, Ilocos, Norte

It can be noted that the authors came from different regions of the country. Hence, although they are university-groomed writers, their genre still speak of their respective culture.

The phenomenology of human action lies on the worldview of human desire, yet to be satisfied by the idea of belongingness and acceptance in the community. The recognition of one's role is dependent of his/her culture. With that view, culture needs to be treated as an important factor in the shaping of society since it determines the expected behavior and norms of the people. This paper wants to discuss the underlying factors behind the concept of male and female societal roles in the Philippines as a result of cultural disparity among regions.

FRAMEWORK

Machismo is one of the most compelling reasons of infidelity as revealed in the 2001 study of Dr. Sandra Tempongko of the UP College of Public Health entitled "Determinants of Risky Behavior Related to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) Among Population Groups" as cited by Lee-Brago (2001). The study showed that infidelity happens during drinking sprees and through peer pressure. Drinking sprees are the common form of entertainment and 'bonding' among Filipino men which presumably proves their prowess and toughness as men.

What then is the counterpart role dictated by social norms for women? The above discussion of machismo signifies maternalism for Filipina women. Maternalism may be strengthened by another cliché, "Mother knows best," which refers to the mother's unquestionable instinct as a mother. Thus, maternalism

refers to such precious acts of a mother to show her love, care, and affection among others, for the sake of her child/children.

Apparently, gender roles of both men and women are based on what the society expects them to do. One of the drives of the human person is the capability of feeling or having emotions, with the desire as one of them. Desire is a sense of longing for a person or object; it also refers to a person's hoping for a favorable outcome. Desire is also manifested in human feelings like "craving" or "hankering". When a person desires something or someone, his or her sense of longing is excited by the enjoyment or the thought of an object or person; in consequence, he or she expresses the want to take actions to satisfy his or her desire. The motivational aspect of desire has long been noted by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, who asserts that human desire is the fundamental motivation of all human action.

Desire, as a literary theme, is at the core of literary genres all around the world particularly romantic novels such as *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. These works highlight how human desire is impeded by social conventions, class, or cultural barriers. The same theme is also manifested in gothic works such as *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo. In these works, desire is mingled with fear and dread. Poets like Homer and Edgar Allan Poe also deal with the themes of desire in their works.

Just as desire is central to the written fiction genre of romance, it is also the central theme in the contemporary Filipino films and soap operas such as *No Other Woman*, *Secret Affair*, *The Mistress*, and the recently-concluded telenovela, *The Legal Wife*. These works employ plots that appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience by showing "crises of human emotion, failed romance or friendship" in which desire is thwarted or unrequited

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper's point of contention focused on how infidelity is reflected and played in the works of fiction, particularly short stories. The author sought to loosen the tie that binds the origin of the act and understand fully the concept based on the gender roles played by the characters in selected works. Specifically, this paper aimed to study how the manifestation of culture and the inherent universal concept of desire are depicted as justification to the existence of

machismo and maternalism in the Philippines as depicted in the five selected short stories.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature adopting literary criticism as means of analysis. This paper employed Sigmund Freud's contention that the stuff of literature is the unresolved conflicts that give rise to any neurosis. Freud says of neurosis as the internal battle between the unconscious and the subconscious mind. Thus, he believes that a work of literature is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind. Accordingly, some Philippine short stories in English such as those used in this paper manifest Freud's concept of literature.

Another important consideration for this study was Hans-Georg Gadamer's viewpoint of hermeneutics. Gadamer believes that it is always important to consider descriptive phenomenology, in which he posits that understanding is related to the readers' encounter and the participation in a cultural tradition. Skinner (1985) explains further that, for Gadamer, understanding is not a matter of forgetting our own horizon of meanings but it is of merging or fusing our own horizon with the alien text or the alien society.

The analysis employed on the materials used in this study was both descriptive and contextual. Materials used were selected Philippine short stories in English which identify varying forms of machismo and maternalism. The authors' background as well as the development of Philippine literature in English was also considered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the stories used in this paper revealed that the facets of machismo and maternalism can be traced back to desire.

In Estrella Alfon's *Magnificence*, maternalism is seen in the mother of the two children. She is alert that she catches what Vicente is about to do to the innocent little girl. Had the mother not intervened, Vicente could have molested the little girl. Vicente's act exemplifies an extreme type of machismo.

Freud's tripartite model of the psyche has three parts such as id, ego and the superego. What Freud calls as pleasure principle drives one to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. The id is responsible for our basic drives such as food, sex and aggressive impulses, and demands immediate satisfaction. As for Vicente, his id

is obviously demonstrated when he is able to consume his desire for a girl of seven by kissing her during the tutorials; in addition, Vicente's id becomes strong towards the end of the story when he desires to do the molestation even more thinking that no one is around. He uses the pencils to lure the girl into his lap because he knows that she is fond of them. Children want to have pencils for their immediate satisfaction and be the envy of their peers.

The ego, which is the rational, logical, waking part of the mind, operates in harmony with the reality principle. Its main concern then is an individual's safety; the ego allows some of the id's desire to be expressed. The mother's superego shields her daughter from the pedophilic instincts that she thinks drives Vicente.

Phallic symbols refer to the male generative powers. In *Magnificence*, the phallic symbol used is the pencil. Children love pencils, and they are crazy about them, so Vicente uses this object to seek pleasure with the girl. The two children use their possession of these pencils to brag to other kids at school. The colors of the pencil that Vicente gives to the children also have significance in the story. The girl receives red and yellow small pencils and a white jumbo-sized one. Red represents power/passion and sexuality, yellow means intelligence and consciousness, and white, being the biggest among the three, means innocence and purity/cleanliness. This is symbolic of the little girl, innocent and yet uncorrupted. She does not have dirty thoughts inside her mind so she does not show any consternated look as Vicente gains pleasure from "tutoring" her. The little girl does not see malice or lust in Vicente's overtures, given her state of innocence.

When the mother finds out what Vicente has been doing to her daughter, she simply asks her to leave. After showing her "magnificent" behavior towards Vicente, hence driving the man away into the darkness, the mother asks her daughter to take a bath quickly. Reminded of what she has seen, she presides over the bath that the girl takes, scrubs her with soap, and washes her with the hope of preserving the little girl's purity. In addition, she clothes the girl with new clothes and burns the old ones the girl was wearing before she discovered Vicente's despicable act. This bath that the mother gives her daughter symbolizes cleanliness and purity, to wash away the "stains" of Vicente's corrupting desire.

In Timothy Montes', *Of Flies, Fish, Dogs and Women*, the narrator, Maria has no choice but to sell fish to accomplish her role as mother and, to feed her five children amid the miserable condition of being a battered wife. Her maternalism is obvious in the desire to support the family and make up for the husband's irresponsibility so as to be able to provide for the family's needs. Maternalism is

also shown by another woman in the story. Angelica has no chance to help Maria from the dogs because she holds her baby in her arms. Maria advises Angelica to be brave for the sake of her baby and in the same way she regains her wits not to allow her husband to beat her again. The said situation adheres to the idea of Carl Jung which states that people from all over the world respond to certain situations because lying deep in their collective unconscious are the racial memories of humanity's past.

The husband, despite being an irresponsible head of the family asserts his machismo when he beats up his wife after getting intoxicated and losing his money on tuba and cockfighting. To cover his irresponsibility, the husband deliberately shows machismo through his barbaric and savage actions, beating up his wife so he could let people see that though the wife supports the family he still has the power over her.

In *The Chieftest Mourner*, the legal wife shows a different level and form of maternalism. In the absence of her own child, Sophia demonstrates protective instincts when she never allows the niece to "taste her uncle's lemonade." She even washes the inside of her niece's mouth with soap and water and calls upon at least a dozen of the saints to witness the act. There is an obvious purpose of hiding "grown-up" stories from the niece when the conversation between Sophia and the narrator's mother suddenly switches to Spanish. Sophia might have considered that exposure of ideas about the other woman named Esa, is not healthy for an eleven-year-old girl.

The machismo on the part of the poet may be seen in his action when he is tied to a chair with a strong rope after going home drunk. He walks out of the door, leaves his wife, never comes back, and eventually finds contentment in the arms of another woman. In his study about "The Unfaithful Husband-What Made Him Do It," Toronto (1987) summarizes some of the cases of male infidelity from a marriage-and-family center and records of legal separation cases. Some of the reasons are the perception of lack of care and concern by the wife, pressures about providing for a domineering wife, all true in the case of the poet in the story.

In *Thirsty Is the Arid Land*, the daughter narrates how her mother suppresses her emotions. The aspect of maternalism in contrast with the machismo is presented by the mother when she does not express her pain and bitterness in front of her daughter even if the daughter knows the truth. This action intends to maintain the reputation of the father in the daughter's eyes. The father exhibits machismo by being a good provider for the family and hides the proof of his

affair in the “pink box” which both the daughter and the mother eventually and inadvertently discover. The story is set in a milieu in which Filipinos’ culture was focused on the family orientation with stereotypical gender roles of the parents and the child/children.

Along with the cultural tradition principle, *Awiyo*, in *The Wedding Dance*, has to leave *Lumnay* and must marry *Madulinay* because of his desire to have a child. He decides to do so after receiving ridicule and pressure from the other males of their tribe since he has not had a child with *Lumnay* after seven harvests. In one of *Awiyo*’s lines to *Lumnay*, he says, “You know that life is not worth living without a child.” That statement proves Alano’s (1995) report that five of the six highest probable reasons for a husband’s infidelity are related to marital and family dissatisfaction. These include lousy marriage, neglect of kids/ household duties, neglect of the spouse, and not having children. Considering *Wedding Dance*, the fifth reason justifies *Awiyo*’s decision to leave *Lumnay* and attempt to marry *Madulinay* instead. When *Lumnay* lets go of *Awiyo*, she gets to show her selfless love towards her husband, which is her maternalism. From the study of Gonzales (1991), the sources of resilience for the Filipino wife are varied: faith, prayer, religion, friends and family, professional counsellors and psychiatrists, priests, education, work and personal care. In the case of *Lumnay* her maternalism is the love she definitely expresses for husband. Maternalism can be applied to anyone referring to the quality of having or showing the tenderness, warmth, and affection towards others.

The characters in the works of fiction under study who exhibit respective gender roles are representation of male and female in the society where they belong. This paper utilized primarily the idea of Freud focusing on his concept of literature as the expression of author’s unconscious mind. Likewise, the analysis also limits the hermeneutics of Gadamer to the understanding of the text emphasizing that the reader’s understanding is basically rooted from his/ her cultural background. This paper does not involve other types of hermeneutics such as of Heidegger and other psychoanalytic issues of Jung.

CONCLUSIONS

Machismo and maternalism though they vary depending on given situations, are simply the result of one’s adherence to social norms which a man or a woman does not desire to change for fear of being criticized. There are different forms and range of reasons that a person may provide to justify his/her compliance with

these norms. Such occurrences may be understood by another individual if he or she takes into account his or her personal perspective of life. Faithfulness and infidelity are the same with the different perception of human senses; accordingly, gender roles are subsequent to the culture and origin of people. As manifested in the short stories considered for this paper, desire can be viewed as the root of gender roles. In a similar way, Filipinos' concept of gender roles is rooted from their cultural and religious upbringing tainted by the society's expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that in reading, analyzing or teaching literature, one must consider the background of the text, such as the authors' background, time of writing and the eminent theme of the period unless otherwise employing the New Criticism type, or the "Isolationist." In the case of Philippine literature, one must consider that it can be understood and interpreted in the context of history. The two major colonial aggressions (Spanish and American) set as strands that influence regional and ethnic differences but somehow comprise the common theme of Philippine literature.

Furthermore, it is suggested to consider the use of four reality frames in teaching literature such as; literature as history, art, aesthetic and script. With those, understanding of the text shall be in accordance to Gadamer's "fusion of horizon."

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