

NORMS OF MORALITY AS REFLECTED IN THE 19TH CENTURY PHILIPPINE LITERATURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify the norms of morality as reflected in the 19th century Philippine literature. Content analysis was used in this study using the three approaches in literary analysis, namely Moral-Philosophical Approach, Feminism, and Historical-Biographical Approach. In moral-philosophical approach, the following are the norms of morality as depicted in Lopez-Jaena's *Between Kastila and Filipina*: Temperance and Patience. In Marcelo H. Del Pilar's *To Josefa Gatmaitan*, the following attributes can be seen: Courage, Fortitude, Simplicity and Virtue. Jose Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos* exemplified the following: Piety, Fortitude/Courage, Prudence, and Resoluteness. Using the Feminist Approach, women at that time were regarded as "second class citizens" in a highly-patriarchal Philippine society, taking secondary roles in the home and in other aspects of their lives. Using the historical-biographical approach the Filipinos were repressed in their intellect and creativity because of the Spanish occupation of the Philippines. Their struggles and pains in being writers at a time of colonization are evident in their works.

Keywords: norms, morality, Philippine literature, Spanish Colonization, feminist approach, moral-philosophical approach, historical-biographical approach, 19th century literature

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of the Study

Literature is a verbal art. It is an art whose medium is language used to affect the imagination. It results from the communication of thought and feeling through consciously organized language. It is a verbal art form that may be written or oral. Its oral form has transcended many generations through words of mouth, and its written form, through its permanence on the printed page. Literature, both oral and written, has affected the lives of many.

The Philippine history has been a picture of a colonized past. The Spanish colonial period, the longest in Philippine history marked a strong influence in the lives of many Filipinos. This colonization which started in 1521, the 16th century period and lasted until the 19th century has also produced significant contributions in the field of arts and literature, architecture, education, food, among others. Particularly, in the field of education, several ilustrados, or those Filipinos in the late 19th century were able to travel to Spain and other parts of Europe to study. They were the children of the middle class Filipinos who desired a high quality of education for their children. These children were educated in Spanish and exposed to Spanish liberal and European nationalist ideals. Having been educated in Spanish and exposed to Spanish and European nationalist ideas, the likes of Jose Rizal, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Marcelo del Pilar, and other ilustrados were able to write literary poems concerning issues faced by Filipinos in the Philippines.

Moreover, the role of women during the Spanish period was stereotyped in such a way that women were submissive and religious. This is the typical "Maria Clara", the ideal woman, diminished in societal role as compared during the pre-hispanic era. Before the Spanish colonization, history tells that pre-hispanic women can hold position in the society. The "babaylans", for example,

the female priestess held power as the source of spiritual gift that served as guidance to the people in the community.

Thus, The Philippines in the 19th century was understood more by going back to it through its literature. In order to do this, the Historical-Biographical Approach to analyzing literary text was appropriate. At the same time, the Moral-Philosophical Approach helped researchers understand and ascertain *what* is taught (Guerin, 1992). The Feminist Approach was used to read the chosen texts, in order to better understand the role and significance of women during the 19th century. Also, this approach helped identify whether or not women were given equal treatment as men in the text. These three approaches were used in this study in order to read, interpret theoretical understanding of the selected texts.

It is imperative to critically review the three selected texts because not so much have been written in order to fully understand these rare writings of the three great propagandists of the 19th century period. There have been few articles about the said literary works, but the articles available do not discuss in depth the ramifications of the selected texts.

General Objective of the Study

A content analysis was conducted to identify the norms of morality as reflected in the 19th century Philippine literature.

Specifically, this study aimed:

1. to identify 19th century Filipino norms of morality as reflected in the selected literary texts;
2. to document 19th century Filipino norms of morality identified in the selected literary texts.

3. to analyze critically the three selected literary texts such as *Between Kastila and a Filipina* (short story), *To Josefa Gatmaitan* (letter), and *To the Young Women of Malolos* (essay) from the 19th century Philippine literature;
4. to appraise the value of literature focusing on its "affective aspect."

Theoretical Bases of the Study

This study employed the historical-biographical, moral-philosophical, and feminist approaches to texts.

The historical-biographical approach sees a literary work, chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times of the characters in the work (Guerin, 1992).

The moral-philosophical approach, as old as classical Greek and Roman critics, stresses that literature should be *dulceet utile* (delightful and instructive) (Guerin, 1992). It is concerned with content and values.

Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, social, and psychological oppression of women (Tyson, 1999).

Significance of the Study

On the international level, the findings of this study will provide readers around the world, particularly Filipinos who have lived abroad for a long time and those born and raised in a foreign country, a grasp of the Filipino culture and the ways of Filipinos in the past. As such, this will help them develop a sense of identity and pride for the Filipino culture.

On the national level, the findings of the study will also be beneficial to students of literature in other universities across the country. The findings can be used as an instructional material, being a record of tradition and artifacts, not only for literature subjects, but also for history, humanities, and sociology subjects.

On the regional level, the findings of this study will become an important resource to students and teachers of regional literature. Literature is viewed as an authentic medium for introducing students to the specific aspects of language and culture.

In CPU, in particular, where the course in Literature 200 (The Literatures of the Philippines) is required in most courses, as required by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the results of the study will provide teachers and students reference materials for instruction and further research. With the implementation of the K-12 curriculum in the Philippine Educational System, research outputs such as this would strengthen the resource materials in teaching literature.

Also, for the Religion and Ethics and Sociology subjects which are offered in Central Philippine University, the results of the study would be a good reference material in the discussion of Filipino ethics.

Moreover, CPU offers the subject Soc. Sci 19 (Rizal and his Social Ideals), thus, the research output in the same manner can be a good reference material.

This study will be beneficial to Filipinos in general, as they understand their own unique culture and the ways of their forefathers which gives them an identity of their own.

Scope and Limitation

This study was limited to the three chosen 19th century Filipino literary texts in the following genres: short story, letter and essay. Manuscripts included were in English, either originally in or translated to English. The study was limited to the identification of 19th century Filipino norms of morality as reflected in the three selected literary texts. Moreover, the three literary texts were analysed using the following elements: theme, setting and characterization. Further, it was limited to the documentation of these identified norms of morality.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive research design.

The researchers looked for 19th century Filipino literature. To qualify, those that can be considered are works written by Filipinos during the 19th century, provided that the work is originally in English or an English translation is available.

In order to have an extensive search for manuscripts, the researchers went to big libraries in Manila, such as the National Library, Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines Library where original manuscripts of 19th century Philippine literature are archived.

The researchers identified 19th century Filipino literature. The criteria for the selection of texts were the following: interestingness, rarity, accessibility, popularity of the literary texts, as well as the prominence of the writers or

authors. Also, the three selected texts represented three different literary genres namely short story, letter and essay.

In analyzing the texts, the researchers used three literary approaches such as, Moral-Philosophical, Historical-Biographical and Feminism.

Historical-Biographical Approach

According to Meyer (2003), knowledge of an author's life can help readers understand his or her work more fully. Events in a literary work might follow actual events in a writer's life just as characters might be based on people known by the author. Ernest Hemingway in "Soldier's Home" has clearly depicted this approach. In the story, the difficulties of a World War I veteran named Krebs returning to his small hometown in Oklahoma portrayed Hemingway's personal experience. Krebs has a hard time accepting the fact that his neighbors are not at all concerned about his personal encounter of the dreadful events in the war. These biographical evidences that show Krebs's hesitancy to keep to himself his war experiences shows Hemingway's own reactions on his return to Oak Park, Illinois in 1919.

Charters (2004), states that biographical criticism starts with the premise that stories, poems, and plays are written by human beings, and that important facts about the life of an author can shed light on literary texts.

Moral-Philosophical Approach

The approach is as old as literature itself, for literature is a traditional mode of imparting morality (Yap-Patron, 2002). This approach means examining the work's ideas and values in relation to a particular ethical system.

Clausen (1986) said that literary works usually embody moral problems and reflect moral attitudes, sometimes even oral theories.

According to Irmischer (1975) in Altick (1993), through the characters in a literary work, literature reveals the human motives; it invites identification and reactions. Moreover, in the study of Nawaz, it explains that moral-philosophical approach emphasizes the moral values and lessons and their philosophical impact on the life of an individual. Also, moral-philosophical critics believe that the larger purpose of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues.

Feminist Criticism

In Schilb and Clifford (2003), feminist criticism developed during the 1970s as an outgrowth of a resurgent women's movement. The goals of the feminist critic and the feminist political activist are similar to contest the patriarchal point of view as the standard for all moral, aesthetic, political, and intellectual judgments and to assert that gender roles are primarily learned, not universal. They hope to uncover and challenge essentialist attitudes that hold it is normal for women to be kept domestic, have secondary and subservient roles, and they affirm the value of a woman's experiences and perspectives in understanding the world.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF LITERARY MEANINGS

BETWEEN KASTILA AND FILIPINA (Graciano Lopez Jaena)

The story is a very short narrative that depicts life in the Philippines, a Spanish colony in the nineteenth century period. Although he specifically mentioned that he was not alluding to anyone in the narrative, anyone who is aware of the events during the Spanish period can say that the story may be possibly true. The two main characters in the story are Pepay, a mestiza, that is to say, a child born of a Spanish friar, and a Filipina, called as an India/Indio during the Spanish colonial period, and Ricardo, an old Spaniard who works in the colony as Inspector of the Provincial Administration.

Using the moral-philosophical approach, the following are the norms and standards of morality depicted in the text: gentleness, temperance, and patience.

The father of Pepay, although not described in detail in the story would be a picture of a Spanish friar as portrayed or depicted by Jose Rizal in his novels such as *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Also, in the satirical sketch "Fray Botod" literally "Friar Big Belly" Lopez Jaena vividly portrays a Spanish cleric so utterly dissipated and depraved that he exists solely to satisfy his carnal appetites.

Pepay may have inherited some of the traits of the Spanish father, but the traits of the mother being sweet and gentle are those that prevailed in the character of Pepay. This is evidenced by Pepay's demeanor to what life brought her forth as a consequence of her marriage to Ricardo, as read in the story, *"...without foreseeing the future happenings that would embitter her life, gladly agreed to accompany him being anxious to see Spain and the marvels of Europe."*

Moreover, these are the lines showing gentleness in the character of Pepay, *"...Pepay suffered silently, she was resigned to the unexpected change in the character of her husband, believing it to be the due influence of atmospheric variations and hoping that such tenseness would not last long."*

"Pepay, always a charming and affectionate wife, trying to persuade her Ricardo to follow the right path, responded with ineffable sweetness to the pricks and impertinence of her unfaithful husband."

Using the Feminist Approach, one can find characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that both work for and against the females in nineteenth century Philippine society.

To society's standards at that time, Pepay posed as beautiful – with the *alabaster skin of the father, with fascinating dreamy eyes, and a graceful gait*. It was for this reason that Ricardo fell desperately in love with her. In this context, the woman is seen and is loved not because of her intellectual gifts or pleasing personality but because of her physical features and nothing more.

On the other hand, quite a domineering woman, Solea, Ricardo's other woman, is a typical example of a "bad" girl (aggressive and wordy), (Tyson, 1999), for she *had sucked his brains*, causing Ricardo to become indifferent to his wife. Solea's sexual recklessness is illustrated by her alliance with a married man, and in the nineteenth century, her behavior merits her the label of a "sinful woman" whose unconstrained approach to love *destroyed her honor (puri)*, (Reyes, 2008).

By Ricardo's illicit affair with Solea, and Pepay's knowledge about it, she (Pepay), suffered silently – a typical female reaction. She is supposed to be demure, by society's standards, and that she should keep her misery to herself, all the more reinforcing the standard that between husbands and wives, the authority of the household rests on the former.

Domestication is further seen in Ricardo's wish *to dominate Pepay to the point of humiliation* (p.163). Feminism is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and Ricardo's wish to dominate his wife Pepay is an example of such oppression.

In the historical-biographical aspect, the life of Graciano Lopez Jaena, his interests, and the things or subjects that he abhors are best seen in his writings, particularly Between Kastila and Filipino. The narrative is a satire of the real events in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period in the nineteenth century.

Graciano Lopez Jaena made a clear portrayal of the characteristics of Spaniards in the Philippines through the description of the father of Pepay.

TO JOSEFA GATMAITAN (Marcelo H. del Pilar)

To Josefa Gatmaitan is Marcelo del Pilar's personal letter to his niece, Josefa Gatmaitan, dated March 13, 1889 when he was based in Barcelona in Spain. It is originally written in Spanish. It tells about his life in Spain, his experiences and the people that he had associations with. Most important of all, Del Pilar, in his letter, gives pieces of advice to his niece on issues about being a woman.

Using the Moral-Philosophical Approach, the following values may be seen in the text: courage, fortitude, simplicity and virtue. In the Feminist Approach, through his words, Del Pilar acknowledges the important role of the woman, as she wears many hats as a daughter, a sister, a wife, or a mother. In all her endeavors, the woman manages to do all her responsibilities, and at times, she does many things at the same time, the idea of multi-tasking. Del Pilar exalts women further by saying that in the many countries that he has visited, he has seen how virtuous women are: no vices and popular customs are predominantly dignified. He adds that for the woman to at least equal the man, if not surpass him, she must have the ambition to be educated.

From the historical-biographical perspective, Marcelo H. del Pilar and Jose P. Rizal, prime movers of the Propaganda Movement, both educated abroad realized the importance of education, more particularly in the expression of speech and ideals. Marcelo del Pilar, went to a school in Bulacan for his early years of studies, then his college in Manila for his Bachelor of Arts degree and University of Santo Tomas for his Bachelor of Laws. Jose P. Rizal finished his education at Ateneo de Municipal and went to Madrid, and Barcelona to pursue higher studies.

Rizal and del Pilar's love for education and thirst for knowledge led them both to compliment and congratulate Josefa Gatmaitan, niece of del Pilar, and the rest of the young women of Malolos when they took courage to write the petition to the Spanish governor-general to give them proper education.

LETTER TO THE YOUNG WOMEN OF MALOLOS (Jose P. Rizal)

Written in 1889, *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos* is an essay that addresses all kinds of women- mothers, wives, and the unmarried. It was written by Jose Rizal while he was in London, and the original text was written in Tagalog.

From the Moral-Philosophical realm, the following virtues are portrayed in Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos*: piety, fortitude/courage, prudence and resoluteness.

Letter to the Young Women of Malolos is Rizal's letter to "his countrywomen" – to the young women of Malolos. Rizal, in this text, described women as *endowed with sweet disposition, beautiful habits, gentle manners, and modesty*. In the feminist approach, these are often the descriptions given to women, as if women, even in the nineteenth century, have always been depicted in a formulaic way: sweet, angelic, gentle, incapable of anger. While these descriptions are positive, and women will be happy to be described with such endearing adjectives and characteristics, Rizal continued to write that the women rendered complete deference and obedience to every word and request of the so-called *fathers of the soul* – the men.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the study with the title, *Norms of Morality as Reflected in 19th Century Philippine Literature*, the following are the findings:

1. The literary pieces produced in the Philippines during the 19th Century tell about the lives of Filipinos at that time. Topics range from relationships between and among people, including love, rebellion, and faith.

2. The following are the norms of morality depicted in Lopez-Jaena's *Between Kastila and Filipina*:

- a. Temperance
- b. Patience

3. In Marcelo H. Del Pilar's *To Josefa Gatmaitan*, the following attributes can be seen:

- a. Courage
- b. Fortitude
- c. Simplicity
- d. Virtue

4. Jose Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos* exemplified the following:

- a. Piety
- b. Fortitude/Courage
- c. Prudence
- d. Resoluteness

5. Extrapolating further, using the Feminist Approach, it was seen from the three texts that women at that time were regarded as "second class citizens" in a highly-patriarchal Philippine society, taking secondary roles in the home and in other aspects of their lives, yet the three texts have also shown that women could be vengeful and daring if the situation called for it.

6. Reading the texts using the historical-biographical approach, much can be said about the difficulty of the writers' lives in Philippine society during the 19th Century. They were repressed in their intellect and creativity because of

the Spanish occupation of the Philippines. Their struggles and pains in being writers at a time of colonization are evident in their works.

7. In terms of courage, Filipinos were characterized as people who would rise when oppressed, as they would not allow themselves and their rights to be trampled upon. The same is happening in present-day Philippine society. Today's Filipinos are willing to fight for their rights and for their freedom.

8. Filipinos in the 19th Century were even-tempered and patient. They were willing to wait, to bide their time, and hope for good things to come. Present-day Filipinos are similar. In the face of difficulties, they are willing to wait, not get angry, and hope for better tomorrows.

9. Nineteenth century Filipinos were simple and led simple lives, wanting only what was rightfully theirs. While the world today has gone global, the simplicity of the Filipinos are still evident in their love for the simple joys of life – a complete family, a stable job to support this family, and the security of a roof above their heads. They may have dreams and aspirations for a grander life, yet the simple life is all right.

10. The Filipinos' love and faith for God was evident in the inclusion of prayer and church in the literary texts. When the tasks were daunting and life was difficult, 19th century Filipinos turned to God for supplication, a character that is apparent even in today's Philippine society.

11. Literary texts, in general, are produced and appreciated not only for their aesthetic value but also for their emotional appeal. It is from reading these texts that we become attuned to our own personal feelings and emotions. The situations and events depicted in the text, regardless of its genre, make us reflect on our own struggles in our personal lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of the study:

1. Literary texts produced by Filipino writers during the 19th century can be further studied using other literary approaches such as Marxist-Communist, Deconstruction, etc.

2. Studies about norms of morality depicted in Philippine Literature in the 21st century can be studied.

3. A handbook on Filipino norms of morality can be produced to be used by students taking courses on Personality Development and Humanities.

4. In as much as the results of this study can be a useful enrichment material for students taking a course on *The Literatures of the Philippines*, it can also be a beneficial discussion tool for courses such as *Rizal and His Social Ideals* and *Philippine History*. Also, it can be a good enrichment material in the teaching and learning of Religion and Ethics subjects, specifically *RE2: Christian Ethics in a Changing World*.

5. Filipinos who have been living abroad for a long time can use the results of the study to strengthen their ties with the Philippines and make them understand and appreciate the Filipino culture better.

6. With the introduction of the K-12 curriculum in the Philippine Educational System, the results of this study can serve as an additional teaching and learning resource in the study of Philippine literature.

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