



SEXUALITY, CLASS AND FAMILY IN CHILDREN'S SHORT STORIES AFTER EDSA II

Mary Ann MarcelinoMajul

Senior High School, University of Santo Tomas
España Blvd., Sampaloc, Manila, 1008, Philippines
Corresponding author: meannmajul@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines how nine children's stories which won awards in the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in the English category portray and shape children's view of themselves, their peers, family, community and the world. Using Marxism, Gender, Race and Ethnic Studies as its theoretical framework, the study reveals that the stories underscore the differences in gender roles, institutionalize the school and community as sites for learning and hegemony, contextualize decision making and ethnic identity and expose the vulnerability of women and children as reserved labor force. Furthermore, the child heroes are active participants in their respective social circles and are often enjoined to carry out adult responsibilities such as taking care of a sibling and saving a community. This paper concludes that children's literature, specifically stories, have powerful influences in shaping the child's conceptions of his or her sexuality, class consciousness and multiple roles as member of the family, community, and the state.

Keywords: Children's literature, family, gender roles, Post-Edsa II, sexuality

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Children's literature and the art of telling such are important forms of entertainment and instruments of learning for the young from the pre-Spanish times to present. In fact, children's literature has built a niche for itself in Philippine literature. The Philippines holds its National Children's Book Day (NCBD) every third Tuesday of July to celebrate the anniversary of Jose Rizal's rendition of the folk tale "The Monkey and the Turtle". Conferences, symposia and contests on children's literature are likewise conducted to provide avenues for writing, illustrating and popularizing existing and emerging forms and themes. One famous competition is the Don Carlos Memorial Awards for Literature. Established in 1950 to commemorate the memory of Don Carlos Palanca Sr., the award seeks to promote education and culture in the Philippines. Years after the foundation called for entries in the short story for children category in 1989, the Palanca Awards collection as of September 1, 2017 contains a total of 177 short stories for children, 110 student essays and 49 poems written for children in English, Filipino and the regional languages. This steady growth and popularity necessitates a critical review on its direction. This paper responds to this challenge by arguing that the winning entries from

The Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature in the children's short story categories after Edsa II continue to articulate familial ideology, gender roles, domesticity and hegemony.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Family as Social Unit

Filipino anthropologist Jocano (2002, p. 61) confirmed that the family is the only "corporate unit" in society that remained resilient from colonial times to the present. In fact, almost every community activity involves the family. For example, town fiestas are headed by a family, while other families prepare dishes or activities for the rest of the townspeople. Likewise, political dynasties are familial with several members occupying various government positions. Sometimes the position of a member of the family is bequeathed to the next generation.

Panopio and Santico (1988) claim the family is the locus of the Philippine kinship system, while Article 149 of the Family Code (2005) acknowledges the family as the basic foundation of the nation which the country must cherish and protect. Since the pre-Spanish times, the State and other social institutions like the Church, education and the media, have promoted the concept of a nuclear family consisting of a mother, a father, and children. Relatives and grandparents fall under the extended members.

During the Spanish occupation, two individuals who wish to start a family are required to marry in church. The Spanish document *Maximas Morales* outlined the specific duties of the man as head of the family and husband, and the woman, as wife and widow. The man's economic function as provider of the family, purveyor of Christian values, prefect of his wife and children, and guide of his wife were strongly emphasized. The head of the family is compared to a king and priest in that he is responsible both for the physical and spiritual needs of his household (Nuñez, 2010). In contrast, the female is asked to sacrifice for the sake of the husband and children, and ensure smooth relationship with the family of her husband. If she becomes a widow, she is instructed to swallow her misery, be a good role model and protect the dignity of the family.

The same expectations were laid down in *Urbana at Feliza*. The latter hinted that a woman needs to be a wife and a mother to attain the essence of her womanhood.

In his message at the Colloquium on the "Complementarity of Man and Woman in Marriage" and his visit to the Philippines in 2015, Pope Francis explained that complementarity is "the root of family and marriage" (Francis, 2014, para. 1). Furthermore, he echoed the importance of the family as "the fundamental pillar of the nation," "the foundation of co-existence and a guarantee against social fragmentation" (Francis, 2014, para. 4).

2.2 The Child as Center of the Family

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a child is anyone aged 18 and below. Children may be grouped into the following categories: new born to three years old, three to six years old (pre-school), six to 13 years old (school age), 11 to 16 years old (adolescent or juvenile), 16 to 21 years old (young adult).

Developmental psychologists like Piaget (1980) say that each child has his or her own characteristics, interests and needs. During the first two years of life, the child relies on what he or she perceives from his or her senses; reality is grasped in reaction to what the child thinks and feels. From two to seven years old, the child engages in transductive reasoning. He or she learns to categorize and represent objects mentally, but the inferences he or she makes may or may not be logical. By four to seven years old, the child starts thinking on his or her own, but mainly through perception.

From seven to 11 years old, the child exhibits logical thinking, but is still very concrete in his or her approach to things and ideas. By 11 to 12 years old, the child begins to think abstractly and reason. He or she formulates hypotheses, a useful skill in the next stages of life.

Throughout the Filipino child's life, the parents, State, and social institutions expose him or her to different experiences from understanding his or her domestic role in the household, duties as a citizen, religious and social affiliation, and gender roles.

2.3 Post-Edsa II

Post-Edsa II begins with the fall of Joseph Estrada to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Benigno Aquino III's rise to power. This study did not include the country's situation and literary works under the incumbent president, Rodrigo Duterte.

In January 2001, a mass gathering at Edsa calling for the impeachment of the President Joseph Ejercito Estrada who was accused of receiving millions of money from jueteng lords, kickbacks from funds released for tobacco farmers and donations from a private organization run by his wife was conducted.

Estrada was convicted of plunder in September 2007 and sentenced to reclusion perpetua. Weeks later, his predecessor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, granted him presidential pardon. Some foreign press called Estrada's ouster a mob rule, a de facto coup and a defeat of due process and that rather than restoring democracy, Mydan (2001, para. 7) reports Filipinos used the event "to supplant democracy". For many, Edsa II pales in comparison with Edsa I which is considered historical in that it was the first bloodless "revolution" which removed strongman Ferdinand Marcos from office and installed Benigno Aquino Jr.'s widow, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino as the first woman president of the country.

The local press, however, is quick to respond emphasizing the unique treatment of Estrada's ouster as peculiar to the Philippines and should in no way be unjustly compared with those of Western standards. On the other hand, little difference can be seen with Estrada's exit, Arroyo's and later Noynoy Aquino's ascension. Arroyo's involvement in the election scandal, the "Hello, Garci," is the topic of National Artist for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera's poem "BabalasaTuko".

Arroyo's predecessor Benigno Aquino III had the former president detained for election fraud. Both tried to expose each other's flaws. Arroyo explained that her administration improved the country's gross national product (GNP), basic social services and the plight of the poor. In an essay to her former student Aquino, she said:

Vilification covering up the vacuum of vision is the latest manifestation of the weak state that our generation of Filipinos has inherited. The symptoms of this weak state are a large gap between rich and poor - a gap that has been exploited for political ends - and a political system

based on patronage and, ultimately, corruption to support that patronage. Recently, politics has seen the use of black propaganda and character assassination as tools of the trade. The operative word in all of this is “politics” – too much politics. (Arroyo, 2012, para.12).

On his installation as president, Aquino promised to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Initially gaining strong backing from the elite and international credit agencies, his administration was rocked with pork barrel scandal, rampant smuggling, selective justice, poor infrastructure, lack of systematic institutional reforms, growing criminality and soaring insurgencies. Agricultural productivity and industrialization were backward and the national coffers relied heavily on the remittances of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and earnings of the outsourcing sector specifically call centers to keep afloat. These conditions provided writers, illustrators and artists fertile ground to create their works.

2.4 Children’s Literature in the Philippines

Children who lived during the pre-Spanish era were exposed to oral forms of literature such as poems, lullabies and riddles. These were sources of entertainment and wisdom for the children. When the Spaniards arrived, they printed copies of the *caton* or *cartilla* which served as material for learning the Roman alphabet along with poems and hymns to the Virgin Mary sung during the Flores de Mayo, a flower festival that honors the Blessed Mother.

The Americans did not erase didacticism from literature. The Thomasites left the Filipinos abundant reading materials that promote self-reliance, democracy, individuality, American way of life and history, and Protestantism. Some of the books brought to the Philippines include *Aesop’s Fables*, *Robinson’s Crusoe*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Mother Goose Rhymes*, *Little Women*, *Black Beauty*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Some folklore was adapted to suit the children’s sensibilities.

According to Alba (2003, para. 16), Severino Reyes using the pen name Lola Basyang, published his first of about 400 stories for children in “Liwayway” magazine on May 25, 1925. Most retold folktales or the classics. Aside from Reyes, the other two important figures in the development of children’s literature were Juan C. Laya and Camilo Osias. Laya wrote and edited *DulangKayumanggi*, a four-volume anthology series of literature in Filipino and “IisangDaigdig (DaigdigngHimala)” which were mostly taken from the awit and korido. In 1952, he published *Once Upon A Time*, while Osias penned the six-volume *The Philippine Readers* in 1932. While many of the materials were foreign, the latter was the first set of textbooks authored by a Filipino and used as reference by Filipino school children.

Rewriting of some Philippine folk literature from English to Filipino was undertaken by writers Manuel and Lydia Arguilla in *Philippines Tales and Fables* (1957). Vitaliano Bernardino, Jaime Rullan, Armando and Paula Malay, and Maximo Ramos authored *Tales of Long Ago in the Philippines* (1953), while I.V. Mallari wrote *Tales from the Mountain Province* (1958).

Bookmark produced its first picture book, *Toby and the Christmas Bell* by Marla Yotoko, in 1960. Another picture book was Bert Florentino’s publication of Jose Garcia Villa’s *Mirnisia and Other Stories*.

According to Villanueva (2014), towards the end of the 1970’s until the 1980’s, academic institutions are not yet fully prepared to recognize the child’s ability ‘to read’. Moreover, most use foreign studies as benchmark in understanding reading concerns and instruction materials

are carefully selected. In addition, some children books written during the period are constrained to autobiographical and sanitized topics such as cleanliness, personal hygiene, good citizenship, relationship with the family, community and peers, and adventures.

While the academe showed some hesitation, children's literature flourished. The developments include the publication of the hardbound, full color and complete with illustrations of the series called Young People's Library by the Philippine Appliance Corporation (Philacor) in the 70s. New Day Publishers and Philippine Book Co. printed children's books as well. Illustrator Jose Aruego added other titles, *A Crocodile's Tale: A Philippine Folk Story* and *Juan and the Asuangs*. Amelia LapeñaBonifacio published six *naDulang Pilipino para samga Bata* and a full-length puppet play *Abadeja: AngAtingSinderela* in 1976 and 1977 respectively. The *Abadeja* puppet play ushered the beginning of the children theater troupe TeatrongMulatngPilipinas.

In 1978, the magazine "Mr. & Ms." printed Nick Joaquin's (writing as Quijano de Manila) "LilitBulilit" and the "Babe-in-the-Womb". Joaquin also wrote a series of 10 titles called *Pop Stories for Groovy Kids* which retold mythical and legendary tales like *IbongAdarna*, *MariangMakiling*, *Banahaw* and *Juan Tamad* under the funding of a private institution in celebration of the International Year of the Child in 1979.

With works going full steam ahead and the proliferation of scholarly works on children's ability to read, the academe had no choice but to review its previous position and attitude. By the 1990s, forms became more experimental and some writers strayed from the usual topics to tackle other concerns from science and technology to current issues. After Edsa II, the themes of most children stories became more socially relevant. Writers discussed broken families, homosexuality, adoption, nationalism, environmental protection, globalization, technology, science, and human rights to name a few. Most titles contained guide questions and activities making them instructive and teacher and student friendly. In addition, majority of the books published were bilingual.

The lively production of children's literature in the past decades to the present, the abundance of reviews, the academe's acknowledgment of children's reading ability, increase in organizations on children's literature (Children's Literature Association of the Philippines, Inc. or CLAPI, KuwentistangmgaTsikiting or KUTING and IlustradornngKabataan or INK to name a few), the proliferation of writing competitions like the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature and the Philippine Board on Books for Young People's Salanga Prize, and the existence of local publishers of children's books like OMF Literature, Inc., Adarna, Southern Voices, Anvil, and Lampara among others attest to the growing strength of children's literature.

2.5 Marxism

Ideology, class consciousness and class relations are central in the study of Marxism. These are best illustrated using ideas from cultural hegemony specifically of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. The concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism in Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism Online states, "The concept of hegemony first appeared in Gramsci's "Notes on the Southern Question" (1926), where it was defined as a system of class alliance in which a "hegemonic class" exercised political leadership over "subaltern classes" by "winning them over" (Ramos, 1982, para. 13). Rapaport (2011, p. 38)

adds “hegemony is an alternative to the standard Marxist understanding of class conflict and poses a much more plastic and flexible understanding of social coalition”.

The subjugated often become willing subjects of the ruling class. For example, having darker skin which is typical in a tropical country like the Philippines becomes criminally ugly because white skin which is promoted by the West is better. As a result, many are inclined to patronize whitening products in the hope of gaining white skin even if they are aware that skin color does not necessarily determine beauty.

Likewise, how families are managed by parents including the values promoted in the social institution are influenced by the ideas promoted by the school, church/religion, government, media and other ideological state apparatuses (ISA). Also, the responsibility of raising a child which used to be communal, now follows capitalistic designs as proven by Engels (1884) in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Using materialist lenses, Engels worked on the ideas of Lewis Henry Morgan in *Ancient Society* (1877) and the notes of Karl Marx about the latter and arrived at the conclusion that the family was an offshoot of the development of class and caused women’s oppression and other forms of inequality. The family was never the norm because at the beginning, society was communal. Instead, the family existed to safeguard its own interest and wealth or private property.

2.6 Gender, Race and Ethnic Studies

Most proponents of gender, race and ethnic studies side with Foucault in rejecting sexual orientation, race and ethnicity as transcendental. Race is regarded as the most physically marked, while ethnicity is least (Rapaport, 2011). For Foucault, the imposition of norms with regards to matrimonial sexuality came with the rise of the bourgeoisie. This includes the view of heterosexual, monogamous and reproductive against “unproductive sexual activities” (Rapaport, 2011, p. 55). For example, Adrienne Rich (cited in Allen, 1993) explains that patriarchy used motherhood to determine the value or essence of a woman.

Aside from promotion of heterosexual biological norms, Judith Butler argues that people are subjected to the taboo against homosexuality and the incest taboo. These for her, contribute to the “false destabilization of gender” in which sexuality is regarded and leads to the establishment of a norm. Although such may be stabilized, it is not fixed and needs to be routinely performed or re-enacted. The acts take place in the public domain. Similar to a style, gender is subject to change; thus, unstable (Lane, 2013). For her, all norms produced by gender performances are arbitrary, constructed and “phantasmatic”. Likewise, Barret (1986) points out that gender identity is a continuous process of ideological representation in that one is almost perpetually altered throughout his/her life until he or she embraces or identifies with a gender.

Meanwhile, Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1948) studied the relation of race and ethnicity in the deprivation of human rights in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century specifically the danger of ethnicity thrashing nationality and citizenship (Rapaport, 2011). She explains that nations are the result of people acknowledging themselves as part of a larger social group, and this sense of collectivity and eagerness to settle permanently in a geographical location enables the establishment of clear borders and ethnic demarcations.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Marxism specifically Antonio Gramsci's hegemony and Friedrich Engels' concept of the family and the concepts on gender, race and ethnicity of Hannah Arendt, Adrienne Rich, Michelle Barret and Judith Butler are used in interrogating the literary elements (e.g. theme, characterization etc.), discourse, and identity formation of the nine children's stories which won in the Carlos Palanca Awards (English Category). The stories were chosen because they were produced after Edsa II, circulated by major publishers of children's books in the country and reflected strong familial ideology, gender roles, hegemony and domesticity.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Lipstick and Motherhood

In *No Lipstick for Mother*, the daughter is ashamed of her mother for being more manly than womanly.

Why can't she be like Aling Ana or Aling Betty, or any of the mothers in the neighborhood? They are real mothers. They stay at home in their floral dusters and when they go out, they wear lipstick. Her skin used to be fair and smooth, now it's dark and scaly. Instead of letting me sleep until breakfast time, she wakes me up early so I can help her with everything she used to do by herself: sort and soak the laundry, dust the furniture, scrub the floor, heat last night's leftovers. (Chong, 2006, pp. 2-3).

The child's concept of motherhood is limited to the woman's physical appearance and her domesticity. Doing household chores and beautifying herself are common; a woman who works as a tricycle driver is shameful. Because the family lost its breadwinner, the task of supporting the needs of the family falls on the mother. Her labor is not only privatized and domesticated, she becomes a member of the workforce.

Marxists call housework privatized domestic labor, an offshoot of capitalism in which the housewife's labor benefits the worker, the children, and other family members. Unlike wage labor, domestic labor is unpaid and often requires long hours of work specially in child care; thus, Allen (1993, p. 102) considers motherhood "dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be born as mothers and, conversely, because it denies to females the creation of a subjectivity and world that is open and free".

The family becomes the site of the woman's oppression for it does not only exploit her labor, but prevents her from actively participating in wage labor. More often, her participation becomes incidental because of her function as capitalism's reserve labor force. This is best illustrated during periods of recession and loss of livelihood. Needlessly, Mayang's mother needed to be a tricycle diver in order to support herself and her child. She did not choose any other job because the tricycle is part of the family's capital, bought at a very expensive price.

Tolentino (2014) explains that motherhood is a social construct. "Ilawngtahanan" or light of the house, for instance suggests the woman's biological capability to reproduce. Adrienne Rich (cited in Allen, 1993, p. 120) says "the problem is not motherhood itself but the patriarchal *institutionalization* of motherhood". Like Tolentino, Rich disclosed that under patriarchy and capitalism, a woman attains full womanhood and value only when she becomes a mother.

As mother, she does not only nurture her family, but she is responsible for the child's education and sexual development. To her daughter, she is her role model. Barret (1986) said "gender identity is not created once and for all at a certain point in the child's life, but is continually recreated and endorsed, modified or even altered substantially through a process of ideological representation" (p. 206). Mayang's concept of womanhood was formed by her exposure to her mother's and female neighbors' mannerisms and lifestyle. The wearing of lipstick, for instance, traces its roots from the Sumerians, Egyptians and contemporary icons. Lipstick deceives in that it adds to a woman's sexuality by increasing her beauty. In contrast, Lipstick Queen creator Poppy King claims it is a source of strength and empowerment for it draws people towards the prowess of the speaker and boosts the confidence of the woman. Mayang, however, soon realizes that the lipstick does not determine her mother's womanhood nor value as a person. After learning her mother's heroism from her neighbors and teachers, she realized that it is her mother's inner strength and faith in God that makes her beautiful.

4.2 A Child's Worth

Menggay's pet chicken is odd in color and behavior, but serves as her initial source of power and recognition. The chicken helps her predict important events in the community's life from finding lost objects to predicting the weather; thus, it becomes an extension of the family, occupying a significant place in the family's and the community's lives.

When the merman abducts the chicken, Menggay goes on a quest to retrieve it. Before starting the journey, her mother reminds her to be polite and courteous to people she meets along the way. The same people she helped and thanked lent her magical items such as the carabao milk and the magic ring which she used in rescuing her pet.

The defeat of the merman made Menggay and the community realize that it is not the chicken that is useful to the community, but the child. It is Menggay who accepted the dangerous task of rescuing the chicken from the merman's abode and who exemplified the townspeople's cherished values. She also rectified the false consciousness of the fisherman.

The fisherman believes he has fallen in love with a mermaid, but Menggay tells him that it is just a friendly dugong, an aquatic, herbivorous, usually brownish-gray mammal that resembles a manatee. It is not uncommon for people to dream of marrying his or her ideal person, usually one coming from a different social class. Dreams and fantasies provide the poor temporary escape from life's hardships and give them hope that their constructed fictional world is possible in real life. Likewise, the fisherman might have thought that there's a mermaid for him within the vast sea he often explores. After learning no such being exists, he marries a nice young washerwoman who belongs to the same social class as he.

Evasco (2014) in *Ang Bata sa Pagtuklasng mga Bayani: Ang Pagkabatang Bayanisamga Etnoepikong Pilipinas* stresses that it is important to reestablish the child's importance from the epics to the present literary production. He believes this will restore the child's proper place in society and dispel misrepresentations of Filipino children who are often situated and contextualized in colonial texts. The story might be an attempt to achieve this goal by making the child both hero and treasure of the town.

4.3 Da Best Big Brother

Kuya Tinuy is twenty-one years old. He has Down Syndrome and needs special care. Whenever Biyuda de Corazon, his mother, is away, Bunsoy, the youngest member of the family, takes

care of him. One day, the mother left to care for a patient. Bunsoy shows irritation for the older brother, but is touched by the latter's attempts to unburden him by sleeping early and bringing the picture of their mother on his graduation day.

The situation of the family does not only focus on the difficulties of being a solo parent, but the consequences of the mother's absence in the home. In her stead, the younger sibling bathes, feeds, tucks to bed, and reads stories to Tinuy. The story also illustrates the child's potential to act as surrogate parent and household support.

Women and children are shown as potential sources of cheap labor. By performing the mother's role, Bunsoy saves the family the economic expense of hiring a babysitter and household helper. He is also trained in the art of child care, a possible preparation for his role as parent in the near future. More importantly, the story hinted the family's role in the development and care of a child with Down Syndrome. Although he is unable to express his thoughts in words, Tinuy understands and feels Bunsoy's needs.

4.4 Dolls for Girls

Mina has always dreamed of becoming an archeologist. She would wake up early, don her "uniform" and take her plastic bucket and shovel. Whenever she is asked why she is dirty, she would say, "I am archeologist. Dirt is part of my job". At an early age, Mina already knows what she wants to achieve in life. Hearing, watching and reading stories of the Tabon Cave, Tabon Man, and man's early ancestors have gripped the child's fascination like toys do. Her mother, however, objects to her muddy appearance. She often scolds Mina for dirtying her yellow dress and ribbons and tells her she wants her to play dolls, think of marriage, wear pretty dresses, and stay neat just like her when she was young.

The headstrong Mina refuses to be such. Children, according to psychologists have their own interpretations of the world. Often, they might agree just to please their elders, but deep inside, they stick to the truth they believe in. The mother's insistence on her daughter to grow up the same way she did and identify with the feminine social construct perpetuates the gender construction set by the State and capitalism. Needlessly, she has become the mouthpiece of the two superstructures dictating on the young what they should be and how they should behave.

The child says otherwise, insisting on her dream and imagining herself as a full pledge archeologist. In the end, after stumbling on the doll with a missing leg, which apparently belongs to the mother, the latter accepts the child's decision. The broken doll in this story *Tabon Girl* is an artifact, a reminder to the mother of her unfulfilled childhood wishes which she can never impose on her daughter.

4.5 The Metaphor of the Apple

After learning that he is adopted, Abet, the protagonist of *I Am An Apple*, runs to his friend Pedro whom he treats as kin for comfort. He refuses to cry on the pretext "Boys don't cry". This patriarchal construct enforces the gender role that men are supposed to be tough and unemotional.

Soon Adora and their other playmates arrive. Adora uses the apple as metaphor to illustrate her status as an adopted child. The other boys Pedro, Ramon and Carding assure Abet that there is nothing wrong with being adopted. Convinced of the other children's positive acceptance,

Abet identifies with the apple and tells the readers that he intends to marry Adora who is an apple like himself.

Abet's "transformation" into an apple both reifies and liberates him. First, he becomes an object of desire, with eight parents expressing interest to adopt him. Finally, thru adoption he acquires a legal identity; thus, formally and legally becoming a part of a family.

4.6 Not Just A Shoe Story

Mrs. Eva Cruz has one secret passion—she gives away shoes to almost everyone. When she was a child she did not have white shoes for her graduation, and now that she is successful, she wants to give back to people by making sure they are never without one.

Behind the success of Mrs. Cruz is her family who taught her the values of hard work, education, and humility. Her sickly father would always encourage her to strive hard and show gratitude. He tells Eva, "Success is all about making the most of what you have been blessed with, and being thankful for it all" (p.10).

The White Shoes communicates two important things to its readers: the value of education, and the importance of living the values taught in the family. More importantly, the story confirms that it is the family that shapes the way children think, feel and behave.

4.7 The Magical Box

Minggo, the father in *Mister World and His Magical Box*, is a seaman who seldom comes home to see his family. Whenever he arrives, he tells the children stories of his voyage, shares the new words he learned, and gives *pasalubong* or gifts.

To make up for his absence, he talks to his family over the phone; thus, technology becomes the medium of communication of the family and an extension of his presence. He still sends them gifts which serve as material replacements for his inability to come home, stirring excitement among the children and providing temporary relief from loneliness.

Soon, the family receives news that Minggo died in a pirate take over and his body was not recovered. His death is reminiscent of the government's failure to safeguard OFWs, the main boosters of Philippine economy.

To ease the family's burden, Minggo's friends send his family a box of goods and a letter telling the family how much Minggo loves them and how he fondly remembers each of the family members. This sympathy shows the strong bond Minggo has formed with his colleagues at work, and how much the latter value their friendship.

Balikbayan boxes have become extensions of OFWs presence and love for the family. When Minggo was still alive, the goods he bring home delight the family. After his death, the box reified his existence. Because his physical body can never make it home, it is the material goods which he buys for the members that replace him. This gives the members a feeling that "he is home".

While the gesture of Minggo's friends is laudable, his reification in the form of material goods is not. Because the family seems contended, they might no longer press for justice for his death, which indirectly tolerates the shortcomings of the state. Moreover, if this is not

rectified, more families might lose members of their kin who work abroad. In the past, legislations and bilateral agreements aimed at protecting the rights of OFWs were put in place because of the documented cases and the petitions and complaints lodged by the families of victims.

The death of Minggo would certainly have strong physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual effects on the family. The children will lose an important pillar of strength, while the burden of providing for the family will now completely rest on the mother.

The mother has been keeping part-time jobs throughout the story, proving that Minggo's salary is not enough to provide for their needs. This puts extra strain on the mother who is left to function as both mother and father during the husband's absence. Like other wives who wish to augment the needs of the family, part-time jobs are convenient in that they do not necessarily completely interrupt household work, but allows mothers to squeeze in extra work in between chores. This type of work is a capitalistic design which promotes cheap and accessible labor without the hassle of providing full benefits due a regular worker. Moreover, since such work is usually done at home, it does not give the woman much opportunity to bargain for proper wages.

With Minggo gone, earnings from part-time work might not be sufficient to provide for the family; thus, hinting that the mother may have to enter the labor force as a full-time worker to make both ends meet.

4.8 League of Superheroes

Most young children are fond of emulating people they consider their role models or heroes. They mimic their idol's mannerisms, clothing, and characteristics. For these reasons, adults living with children need to be more cautious and sensitive in dealing with children else they might catch undesirable characteristics.

Evasco's study on child heroes in the different epics in the Philippine confirms the latter's role as embodiments of the aspirations of the race or tribe they represent. Filipino epic heroes seem immortal because they exist as a collective engaged in a quest and are willing to lay down their life for others.

In *Marvino's League of Superheroes*, Marvino learns to admire Filipino heroes because he was motivated by his History teacher. Aside from the home and peers, the school exerts strong influence on the formation of a child. A child literally spends more than five hours a day for almost ten months in school. Usually, whatever information is imprinted in a child's young mind is what he or she uses or accesses throughout his or her life. Teaching students the experience and contributions of Philippine heroes allows them to cherish the deeds of their ancestors and their race. It also develops their pride as a Filipino and encourages them to live the lessons of the past in their future endeavors. Such is important in today's time when there is an abundance of colonial superheroes who indoctrinate viewers with their own set of values and biases.

4.9 Alienation and Individuality

Abeong and his family are forced to leave Pasil because his father was offered a job as construction worker by outsiders at Tabak town near Isabel. He starts hating his father and the

elders for allowing the outsiders to lure his kinsmen away from their ancestral home in exchange for promises of good life and employment.

Abeong is uncomfortable at Tabak and feels estranged, noticing that life at Pasil is better than Tabak. He couldn't sleep and is apprehensive of adjusting to his new community and school. He is ashamed of wearing the bahag or loincloth, the sign of his ethnicity, and changes his name to Eon. Later, his father gives him the family heirloom, a bahag, and convinces him that it is magical.

The heirloom offers false hope but becomes Abeong's source of strength. He becomes more courageous and makes friends with other children, inspiring them not to be ashamed of their own roots. At home, Abeong's parents confess that the bahag is not magical. They point out that his successful adjustment and friendship with other children are due to his skills. Abeong readily accepts this explanation and decides to wear the bahag at school.

The Magic Bahag does not openly condemn the intrusion and empty promises of transnational and multinational corporations in the lives of natives; instead, it embraces it. Moreover, the story shows individuality, not ancestry or roots as the main factor which aids an individual to recover from his initial alienation. It also suggests that natives and their culture can exist hand in hand with the values and conditions of the modern world.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Children's literature, specifically stories, have powerful influences in shaping the child's conceptions of his or her sexuality, class consciousness and multiple roles as member of the family, community, and the state.

Most of the stories take place in a nuclear family and the community where the child is raised. Marxists believe that the nuclear family is a capitalistic design in which the woman's domestic labor or housework ensures that workers are properly nurtured. Women are also part of the reserve labor force, often relied on during an economic crisis. Gender roles are clearly defined and promoted within the family—the father provides the economic needs of the children, while the mother is engaged in house work. The children are expected to do household chores, study diligently, and conform to their sexual orientation.

The school and community may either enlighten children or promote hegemony. It is in school where the child's concept of heroism, sense of culture and pride for his or her race is solidified. Education is viewed in most cases, as the passport to a better life. Meanwhile, the community's rules and regulations guide children on what values to keep, customs to practice, and duties to fulfill. The themes in the stories include sacrifice, patience, respect for elders, accountability, acceptance, humility and hard work.

The child is an active participant, inquiring and deciding on his or her own. He or she goes on quests, argues, and suffers. Sometimes, the children are asked to act like miniature adults, performing adult responsibilities and taking part in the work force. Most female children are heroines of their community like Menggay.

Epiphany or self-realization does not come naturally in other stories. *In the Magic Bahag*, *Menggay's Magical Chicken*, *No Lipstick for Mother*, and *White Shoes*, it is either the parents or neighbors who tell the child important lessons in life. While parental or adult intervention is

important, insights from experience must come naturally. This will help children develop ownership of the ideas because it comes from them, not others.

While children literary writers have become more bold and experimental in their style and choice of topics, they need to remember that they are writing for children. Patindol (2011), author of *Papa's House, Mama's House*, shares "It [writing the book about separated parents inspired by her own experience] made me more conscious of the words we use around children and how our words create our realities" (p. 26). Because texts have no fixed meanings, the conditions on which they are produced and interpreted vary according to situation and ideology.

REFERENCES

- Alba, R. (2003). In focus: Nurturing children's literature in the Philippines. Retrieved from <http://ncca.gov.ph>
- Allen, J. (1993). *Motherhood: The annihilation of women*. California: Wadsworth Inc.
- Arroyo, G.M. (2012). Arroyo to Aquino: It's the economy, student! Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com>.
- Barret, M. (1986). *Women's oppression today: Problems in Marxist feminist analysis*. London: Verso.
- Chong, G.D. (2006). *No lipstick for mother*. Manila: OMF Literature.
- Engels, F. (1884). *Origin of the family, private property and the state*. Hottingen-Zurich: Marx/Engels Selected Works.
- Evasco, E.Y. (2014). Ang Bata sa Pagtuklasng mga Bayani: Ang Pagkabatang Bayanisamga Etnoepikong Pilipinas. *Diliman Review*, 52(1-4), 85-112.
- Family Code, Philippines. (2005). *Civil code of the Philippines with the family code of the Philippines and code of Muslim personal laws*. Quezon City: Rex Bookstore Inc.
- Francis, Pope of the Catholic Church. (2014). Marriage and the family are in crisis. In Vatican Radio: The voice of the Pope and the church in dialogue with the world. Retrieved from <http://en.radiovaticana.va>
- Jocano, F.L. (2002). *Anthropology of the Filipino people III Filipino social organization: Traditional kinship and family organization (2)*. Quezon City: PUNLAD Research House Inc.
- Lane, R. (2013). *Global literary theory: An anthology*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Mydan, S. (2001, February 5). People power II doesn't give Filipinos the same glow. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Nuñez, F. (2010). *Babae, lalake, kasal: Etika ng pag-aasawa noong ika-19 na dantaon*. Quezon City: C & E Publishing Inc.
- Panopio, I. & Santico, R. (1988). *Sociology and anthropology: An introduction*. Manila: Goodwill Trading Co. Inc.
- Patindol, J.L. (2011). *Papa's house, mama's house*. Quezon City: Adarna House Inc.

- Piaget, J. (1980). The stages of cognitive development. Retrieved from <http://piaget.weebly.com>
- Ramos, V. (1982). The concepts of ideology, hegemony, and organic intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org>
- Rapaport, H. (2011). *The literary toolkit a compendium of concepts and methods*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tolentino, R. (2014). Mother's day (at ang biological at kapitalistangdeterminismonito). Retrieved from <http://bulatlat.com>
- Villanueva, R.O. (2014). PagsulatngKwentongPambata. Retrieved from <http://www.panitikan.com.ph>