

Literary Analysis: Narrative Strategies and Cultural Implications in Cecilia Manguerra Brainard's Short Stories

**Rochelie D. Avenido¹, Alona Jane P. Beriarmente², Cris Al M. Cagoscos³,
Katherine Z. Estra⁴, Rica B. Jorillo⁵, Rodolfo A. Golbin Jr⁶,
Joxenne Jane A. Tamarra⁷**

^{1,2,3,4,5}Undergraduate Researchers, College of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Arts in English Language, Cebu Technological University-Moalboal Campus, Moalboal, Cebu, Republic of the Philippines.

⁶Research Instructor, College of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Arts in English Language across English Professions, Cebu Technological University-Moalboal Campus, Republic of the Philippines.

⁷Research Adviser, College of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Arts in English Language across English Professions, Cebu Technological University-Moalboal Campus, Republic of the Philippines.

Abstract

"The Flip Gothic" and "Woman with Horns" are two of the most influential and famous works of the Filipino-American author Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, containing different narrative strategies and cultural implications. This study examines these literary pieces using qualitative analysis as well as their interaction through analyzing their cultural meaning. The results showed that both short stories have a strong emphasis on tone and diction, while simple sentences appear to be more frequently used than other types of sentence structure. Moreover, there is a clear exposition of characters, plots, concepts, settings, conflicts, and foreshadowing; flashbacks, symbolism, and imagery are also visible. Likewise, Filipino cultural activities, such as the Sinulog festival, the belief in mythical creatures, and the practice of having 'lechon' on every occasion, are embodied in the stories as well. In conclusion, the author's writing styles and previous personal experiences have greatly influenced her way of writing. Therefore, the researchers recommend the development of a literary analysis resource that is both comprehensive and easily accessible, serving as a valuable reference for future researchers doing literary analysis studies.

Keywords: cultural implications, diaspora experiences, literary analysis, narrative strategies, writing styles

Introduction

The enticing nature of neglected Filipino authors and their narratives resides in their capacity to take readers to a diverse, lively, and multi-dimensional culture frequently disregarded in popular literature. Despite being somewhat obscure in their native land, these authors substantially impact the international literary scene, providing foreign readers with a distinctive understanding of the Filipino mindset, culture, and customs. Additionally, the Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, possesses various dialects, customs, and opinions. It provides a distinctive environment for various narratives, like the

islands. Due to over 50 years of American governance, Filipinos have acquired a remarkable level of proficiency in English. It is taught at all educational levels, focusing on grammar and reading comprehension. Literature mainly consists of short tales and poetry; literature encompasses brief narratives and poetry, yet there has been a need for more fervor toward Filipino national literature (Romero, 2022).

Nevertheless, the paradox resides in the fact that these writers are more renowned among international readers than among Filipinos themselves. Possible reasons include limited accessibility, insufficient promotion, and exposure, or a general inclination for domestic literature. This unfortunate reality emphasizes the need to promote these abilities and their narratives inside the nation. Consequently, this observation motivated the researchers to become acquainted with Filipino authors, as their exceptional literary work is evidence of literature's ability to surpass boundaries and establish connections. These unrecognized Filipino writers must be acknowledged and valued internationally and in their own country. These accounts are subtle whispers emerging from the heart of the Philippines, eagerly anticipating to be heard, understood, and treasured.

This study focuses on conducting a literary analysis of two specific short stories by Brainard, namely "Woman with Horns" and "Flip Gothic." In order to effectively generate ideas on how to convey the message of a short tale, it is necessary to engage in literary analysis. This process allows for multiple interpretations and meaningful encounters with literary texts (Duff and Malley, 1990). "Typically, it entails examining the author's utilization of literary devices to generate impacts and communicate concepts," he appended. It entails an in-depth examination and interpretation of a literary piece, such as a novel, poetry, drama, or short story. Acquiring knowledge in literary analysis has always been essential for comprehending the intricate connection between literature, culture, and society and assessing many textual components, such as themes, characters, stories, literary techniques, and writing style.

Initially, the researchers thoroughly analyzed the text, closely examining aspects such as metaphorical language, syntax, style, and organization. When examining these elements, readers should consider how the author employs them to create coherence. Afterward, they support their analytical claims about the text by providing specific examples from the work. Examining the narrative methods writers employ and their cultural implications can provide valuable insights into the historical, social, and political contexts in which literary works are produced. On the other hand, Wigley (2008) analyzed Cecilia Manguerra Brainard's short story, "Fictionalized Bodies," specifically focusing on its feminist viewpoint. Using Brainard's experiences, the researcher posits that a woman might reclaim her status and find a suitable avenue for manifesting her being and essence through her embodiment.

Furthermore, its purpose is to emphasize the precise cultural implications of her narrative techniques. This analysis aims to thoroughly examine Brainard's works, which have been highly praised as a depiction of Filipino and Filipino-American culture. Additionally, it will enhance comprehension of the cultural atmosphere in which Brainard's works were created, a crucial facet of literary examination. Therefore, this study holds importance as it elucidates Brainard's sophisticated and complex literary strategies and their role in conveying cultural meanings in her stories.

Theoretical Background

This study is based on one theory and one model, namely Meyer Howard Abrams 4Cs and Norman Fairclough's 3-Dimensional model, and is anchored by "The Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines: Fair Use Doctrine under section 185" and "The 1987 Philippine Constitution Article III, Section 4". The

M.H Abrams 4Cs are the four elements constituting the natural environment in which literature is produced and read: an author, a reader, a shared world, and a text. Purohit (2013) explained that the 4Cs are not to discover some "verifiable truth" but to establish principles enabling us to justify, order, and clarify our interpretation and appraisal of the aesthetic. It can provide a framework, especially for analyzing a text, to provide a more accurate and concrete interpretation of a particular text. The 3-Dimensional model, described as the model, analyses the text from perspectives of three levels: text, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices. The 3D model developed by Fairclough (as referenced in Hussain et al., 2020) is crucial in discourse analysis as it establishes a direct connection between text and society in terms of social interactions. It is a component of discourse that encompasses the entire social interaction process. The use of the model will help elucidate the strategies used by the author and the experiences that grew in the port city of Cebu. On the other hand, the narrative strategies and cultural implications in Cecilia Manguerra Brainard's short stories are relevant to the four theories of M.H. Abrams and Norman Fairclough's 3-dimensional model because they provide a framework for analyzing how these elements work together to create meaning in the text. The four theories, also known as the 4Cs of M.H. Abrams (coherence or complexity, character, and context), are divided into four main groups (such as mimetic theory, pragmatic theory, expressive theory, and objective theory). It will help researchers understand how Brainard's narrative strategies contribute to the story's meaning. For example, her use of a non-linear structure in her short stories might create a sense of complexity and disorientation for the reader. Still, it also allows her to explore the complex relationships between characters and cultures. Similarly, her use of the outsider perspective can contribute to character development and highlight the tension between different cultural values. On the other hand, Norman Fairclough's 3-Dimensional model helps researchers analyze how Brainard's use of language contributes to the cultural implications of her short stories. For example, by examining the textual dimension, we can explore how she uses vocabulary to create meaning within the story and how her personal experiences and cultural background shape this meaning. The inter-discursive extent can help us understand how her short stories connect to other texts and contexts, such as the history and culture of the Philippines. Finally, the social dimension helps researchers analyze how her stories reflect and reproduce social relations and power structures, such as the marginalization of Filipino immigrants in the United States. Upon reviewing the theories, related literature, and studies analyzing Brainard's use of narrative strategies and language through the frameworks of M.H Abrams' 4 Theories and Norman Fairclough's 3-Dimensional Model, the researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how her personal experiences and cultural background have shaped her writing and the cultural implications of her work. As well as the legal basis of its application and implementation, the researcher aims to propose instructional material that will help develop how to analyze literary texts as an outline for analyzing literary analysis. Moreover, this study is based on the "Fair Use Doctrine under Section 185" of the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines and "Article III, Section 4" of the Philippine Constitution. As specified in section 185 of the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines, the Fair Use Doctrine permits restricted use of copyrighted materials for explicit purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research (Eschenfelder, 2007). This provision serves to safeguard the rights of authors and publishers. This research aims to establish a correlation between the variables in this study to ensure the collected data's accuracy and reliability. Individuals must utilize the writings with the authors' explicit permission. The Philippine Constitution, specifically Article III, Section 4 and Article IV, Section 3, safeguard the freedom of speech and expression. This encompasses the right to read and analyze texts without censorship or government

intervention. These provisions promote the preservation, enhancement, and progressive development of Filipino national culture, based on unity in diversity, within an environment that encourages unrestricted artistic and intellectual expression. These two articles will enable the authors to critically evaluate a literary work using theories as the foundation for analysis. Furthermore, by incorporating the author's cultural experiences, sections 3 and 4 of the study will enhance her connection to the stories she wrote. Providing readers with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the stories and comprehend the author's artistic techniques will aid in preserving Filipino culture and enhancing their intellectual capacity.

Objectives

This study is to address the subsequent questions:

1. Apply the narrative strategies: What is the author's writing style for the two selected short stories in terms of:
 - 1.1. Grammar;
 - 1.2. Elements; and
 - 1.3. Literary Devices.
2. Applying the cultural approach, what are the material and non-material cultures present in the two short stories?
3. What are the author's real-life experiences integrated into the two short stories?

Methodology

The researchers employed a qualitative research strategy, incorporating a narrative analysis method. Qualitative research employs an emergent, inductive, interpretative, and naturalistic approach to investigate individuals' subjective interpretations of the world. It examines people, instances, phenomena, social situations, and processes in their natural environments to uncover the meanings they attribute to them (Yilmaz, 2013). Furthermore, narrative analysis is a method that acknowledges the extent to which our stories offer a valuable comprehension of our actual experiences (Earthy and Cronin, 2008). This approach offers a comprehensive examination of the Short Stories authored by Cecilia ManguerraBrainard. The process involves gathering descriptive data to understand the narrative methods and cultural implications of the book.

Discussion

The analysis of the two short stories, "Flip Gothic" and "Woman with Horns," reveals a predominant use of informal diction in terms of grammar. This choice of diction is consistent across both narratives, as opposed to other types of diction. Furthermore, the narratives included various punctuation markings, with the period being the most commonly utilized among the other forms of punctuation marks. The following excerpts exhibit informal diction and periods in the pieces "Flip Gothic" and "Woman with Horns."

Informal Diction

• Flip Gothic

"I talked to Mia's Mom yesterday"
(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 1, sentence 7)

"Jun and I just don't know what to do with her."

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 2, sentence 2)

“We’re sure Mindy’s not into drugs.”

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 3, sentence 14)

- **Woman with Horns**

“He saw a woman trying to open the door.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 7, sentence 23)

“His Spanish was bad and his Ubegan dialect far worse.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 8, sentence 29)

“I have a daughter, you see.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 8, sentence 43)

Period

- **Flip Gothic**

“Thank you for agreeing to have Mindy.”

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 1, sentence 1)

“Sending her to the Philippines was all I could think of.”

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 3, sentence 23)

He feels he has failed not only as a father but as a doctor.

((Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 4, sentence 6)

- **Woman with Horns**

“The doctors and nurses were hurrying home.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 1, sentence 2)

“Hereread his report about the cholera epidemic in the southern town of Carcar.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 4, sentence 11)

“He glanced at the calendar on his ornate desk”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 5, sentence 70)

Meanwhile, sentence structures were also prevalent in both stories, revealing that ‘**simple sentences**’ were chiefly used. These are the following prominent simple sentences found in the two stories:

- **Flip Gothic**

“Thank you for agreeing to have Mindy.”

And “Jun and I just don’t know what to do with her.”

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 1, sentence 1 & 2)

“Mia, her Japanese American friend, had to be sent to a drug rehab place.”
(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 1, sentence 4)

“There’s so much anger in these kids, I can’t figure it out.”
“They have everything— all the toys, clothes, computer games and whatever else they’ve wanted.”
(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 2, sentence 1 & 2)

- **Woman with Horns**

“The doctors and nurses were hurrying home.”
(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 1, sentence 2)

“Gerald could not understand this local custom.”
(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 3, sentence 8)

“In the distance, the river and sea shimmered brilliantly.”
(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 97, sentence 307)

The researchers discovered the author, Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, frequently utilized simpler sentences than the other type of sentence structure in the short story. The utilization of uncomplicated sentences in a narrative aims to guarantee lucidity and facilitate comprehension for the reader. Concise phrases are more easily understood and followed, enabling the reader to completely comprehend the narrative without becoming perplexed or overwhelmed by intricate sentence constructions. Simple sentences can also help in conveying ideas and emotions more effectively, as they can be concise and impactful. By using simple sentences, authors can simplify their storytelling and engage a wider audience, which is apparent in the two stories, making the story more accessible to readers of different ages, literacy levels, or language comprehension abilities.

Moreover, all of the features of the narrative, including the characters, storyline, topic, setting, and conflict, were evident in both literary works. The primary characters in each narrative had notable character development, were characterized by a well-crafted plot structure, and were readily identifiable. Both stories were set in Ubec (Cebu), and their overarching themes were around relationships, family dynamics, love, and conflict. The narrative encompassed various types of conflicts, including interpersonal conflicts, conflicts between individuals and their surroundings, internal conflicts inside individuals, and conflicts between individuals and societal norms. In the narrative "Flip Gothic," the predominant literary device employed is the incorporation of flashbacks, with other literary devices such as symbolism and imagery. In contrast, among the several literary devices employed in the story of Woman with Horns, foreshadowing emerges as the most pervasive. This predominance is observed in relation to other devices such as symbolism, flashbacking, and imagery. These are the prevailing sentences that have a flashback in the story of Flip Gothic:

"Ma, don't be old-fashioned; this is the American way."
(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 12, sentence 63)

"Oh, another thing, she insists being called Arminda, not Mindy. She said she has always hated that name; that it reminds her of some dumb television show "Mork and Mindy."

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 19, sentence 106 and 107)

“And I told Arminda of how you were born with beri-beri and how I danced to the Child Jesus so that you would be saved.”

(Flip Gothic: 1995, paragraph 40, sentence 180)

Likewise are the prevailing flashback of sentences in the story of Woman with Horns:

"I can see why the people would despise a widow who carries on the way she does."

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 29, sentence 83)

“You and I have a kinship. Come to my house and my daughter and I will feed you.”

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 61, sentence 175)

"ah, the moon is full."

(Woman with Horns: 1997, paragraph 90, sentence 297)

Moreover, in terms of cultural approach in Flip Gothic and Woman with Horns, materials and non-materials were evident in both stories. The materials present in the story were Santo Nino, Filipino Cuisine like 'roast pig,' which is commonly known as 'letchon,' 'rellenos,' 'embotidos,' 'toceno del cielo,' 'majablanca,' and 'sab-a' (bananas rolled in sugar), and the Traditional Filipino Clothing like old 'sayas and tapis.' The non-materials available were the reflection of spirituality and religion, family values, traditional festivals, respect for elders, taking a nap, also called 'siesta' or 'idlip,' gossiping and talking about other people's life, believing that nature contains spirits, and honoring an individual's life after death and acknowledges the influence that someone had on the existence.

Finally, Cecilia's compilation of short stories exhibits a profound reflection of her encounters during her formative years in the Philippines, as well as her eventual transition to the United States. Brainard elucidates that her narrative of Flip Gothic is rooted in her encounters as a juvenile female who relocated from Cebu to Manila and then to the United States. The individual conveyed a feeling of being marginalized and emphasized the necessity of adjusting to diverse cultural norms and societal expectations. Brainard's work also delves into the exploration of self-discovery and the contrasting dynamics between urban and rural cultures in the Philippines. The narrative entitled "Woman with Horns," authored by Brainard, draws inspiration from an exhibition observed at a museum in Cebu.

This exhibition showcased a woman who was adorned with horns. The primary objective of her work was to provide a precise portrayal of the historical and cultural dimensions of the Philippines in the context of American colonialism while also addressing and challenging prevailing prejudices and biases towards the Filipino populace. Applying M.H. Abrams' four critical theories provides a comprehensive understanding of how her writing aligns with the wider literary milieu. The Mimetic Theory, also known as Realism, explores the representation of reality in literature, focusing on the complexities of human existence. In "Flip Gothic," the story portrays the challenges faced by Arminda (Mindy) as she grapples with personal identity and cultural disparities. This portrayal captures the authentic essence of immigrant encounters in the United States. In "Woman with Horns," Brainard accurately portrays Filipino culture and traditions through various components such as the midday siesta, traditional attire, gossip, and burial ceremonies.

Her primary objective is to encapsulate the fundamental characteristics of the culture and portray them authentically and accurately.

Additionally, Pragmatic Theory, specifically the Reader-Response approach, emphasizes the reader's involvement in the interpretation and ascribing meaning to a given text. Brainard's narratives evoke a range of interpretations and emotional attachments, which are shaped by individuals' cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. Likewise, the Expressive Theory, also known as Romanticism, emphasizes the author's feelings and thoughts conveyed through their artistic creations. These works are deeply influenced by Brainard's Filipino background and her distinct identity as a Filipino-American individual. Lastly, Objective Theory, also known as Formalism, emphasizes the internal structure and literary strategies employed within the text. Brainard's work uses symbolism, foreshadowing, and narrative structure to construct her narratives and express her thematic elements.

Some of the themes and settings in the two short stories were related to Cecilia's diary. In the short story *Flip Gothic*, it was stated in the diary that Brainard felt empty feelings towards her mother since she thought her mother had abandoned her. Even though her mother gave her everything she needed, including money, Brainard did not feel loved, which is why she became rebellious. In the short story *Flip Gothic*, the main character, Arminda, or Mindy, is a brat because she also feels neglected by her parents. Despite having everything served to her on a silver platter, Mindy remains enraged and defiant, like Brainard in her diary. Moreover, Brainard and her mother went to the Santo Niño Basilica to pray; Mindy, the main heroine of *Flip Gothic*, and her grandma also went to Santo Niño during the Sinulog Festival in Ubec.

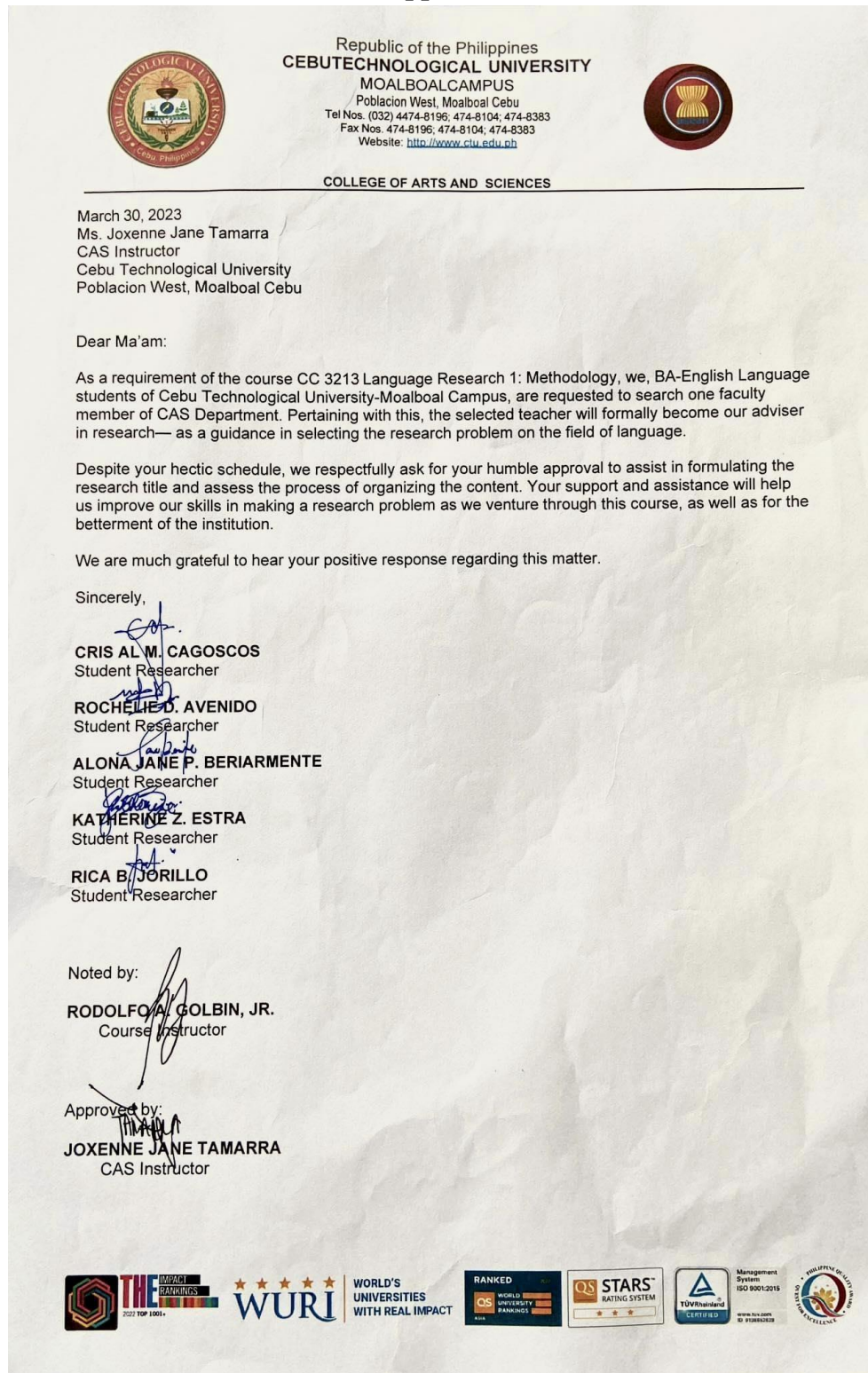
Similarly, in *Woman with Horns*, it was also revealed that Brainard's grandfather had passed. The author hated the fact that instead of weeping, people took the opportunity to engage in conversational rumors and create noise. Similar to the short story *Woman with Horns*, Ubecans enjoy gossiping and utilize it as a means of connecting. Additionally, the belief in mythical creatures was present in Cecilia Manguerra Brainard's childhood days, as stated in her diary: "In the very far end of the yard, there was a mysterious jackfruit tree that was reportedly occupied by an enchanted *agta*, or black giant," which is also present in the story *Woman with Horns*, where "the people say that her mother had—ah, how do you say—an encounter with an *encantado*."

Therefore, Brainard skillfully weaves her personal experiences and keen observations into her narratives, showcasing a distinctive storytelling technique. This integration enriches her stories, adding authenticity and depth as she draws from her own life to present the intricacies of human experience artfully.

Conclusion

According to the research findings, the author's work is significantly impacted by her personal experiences, cultural background, and notable writing style. Additionally, this study reinforces the "three-dimensional model" presented by Norman Fairclough, which underscores the importance of text, discourse practices, and cultural practices in shaping an author's approach and constructing significance within their narratives.

Appendix



Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank everyone who contributed and helped them, directly or indirectly, to complete this research study.

First, the researchers would like to start by expressing their gratitude to Cebu Technological

University- Moalboal Campus for providing them with the learning opportunity that enabled them to acquire essential life lessons about tolerance, perseverance, teamwork, resilience, cooperation, and, most importantly, the never-ending pursuit of knowledge.

Second, the researchers want to thank Mr. Rodolfo Golbin, Jr., the research instructor, for making this study feasible. You have been a beacon of knowledge and insight, motivating us to pursue excellence in this field. Your commitment to teaching and enthusiasm for the subject has sparked a fire in us. Your stimulating lectures and challenging assignments have broadened our horizons and honed our critical thinking ability. This dedication honors your dedication to education and your profound influence on our intellectual growth.

To our esteemed research adviser, Ms. Joxenne Jane Tamarra, we extend our sincere appreciation. Your direction and mentorship have been instrumental in influencing our research endeavors. Your wealth of knowledge, intelligent feedback, and tolerance has assisted us in navigating the academic complexities. Your unwavering confidence in our capabilities has pushed us beyond our limits, inspiring us to investigate new avenues and query conventional wisdom. Thank you for the encouragement, support, and guidance throughout the process of making the study to the committee, whose suggestions, support, and ideas contributed to the completion and success of the research. This commitment is a reflection of your exceptional guidance and the influence you have had on our academic development.

To our devoted friends, during the highs and lows of our research, you have been our pillars of support. Your unwavering support, innumerable late-night conversations, and willingness to lend an ear have been priceless. Your belief in our aspirations and constant encouragement kept us going even when we questioned our abilities. This commitment is equally ours and yours. Thank you for always being there.

The parents of the researchers deserve the deepest thanks for their unending care, fervent prayers, unwavering support, and selfless sacrifices. Without them, the study would not have been possible. Lastly, the researchers are very grateful to Almighty God for giving them the courage, information, skills, and chance to conduct the research study. They would not be able to complete this research or the everyday efforts without his mercy. All glory to God.

References

1. Duff, A. & Maley, A. (2007). Literature. Oxford University Press
2. Earthy, S., & Cronin, A. (2008). Narrative analysis. In *Researching social life*. Sage. <https://openresearch.surrey.ac.uk/esploro/outputs/bookChapter/Narrative-Analysis/99513072602346>
3. Eschenfelder, K. R., & Robertson, N. D. M. (2007). Know Your Rights: Licensing, Copyright, Fair Use, and Technological Protection Measures in Electronic Resources. <https://core.ac.uk/download/4688511.pdf>
4. Hussain, M. S., Gill, F., & Afzal, M. (2020). An Overview of the Process in Conducting Research in Social Sciences Using Discourse Studies Perspective. *sjesr*, 3(3), 162-168.
5. Purohit, D. (2013). Four critical theories from view point of M.H.Abrams. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301228266_Four_critical_theories_from_view_point_of_MHAbams
6. Republic act no. 10372. Available at: Republic Act No. 10372 (lawphil.net)

7. Romero, P. G. (2022). Philippine Literature in English: An Underrated Gem. Medium. <https://paologabrielromero.medium.com/philippine-literature-in-english-an-underrated-gem-4eaaca2f705c>
8. The 1987 constitution of the Republic of the Philippines – article III ... Available at: The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines – Article Iii | Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines
9. Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48(2), 311-325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12014>
10. Wigley, John Jack. "From Waxing to Waning: Woman's Psychosexual Development in Selected Short Stories of Cecilia Manguerra Brainard and Michelle Cruz Skinner." *Inter/Sections* (February 18, 2008):48-49.
11. Woman with Horns and Other Stories. (n.d.). Goodreads. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/20524178-woman-with-horns-and-other-stories>