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FEATURE

**Prismatic View of Gender Power Relations at the
Intersection in Linda Ty-Casper's *Ten Thousand Seeds***

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Abstract. *The never-ending waves of domestic conflict portrayed in Linda Ty-Casper's Ten Thousand Seeds usher the readers to serious disempowering scenarios of the dominated gender which are viewed as "natural" social occurrence in the society. This article critically analyzes gender relations revolving the communication repertoire of the newlywed American couple, the Rowbothams, the only American couple during the American occupation in the Philippines in the 1900s featured in Ty-Casper's novel. American Occupation refers to the period when Philippines was colonized by the Americans. Employing the qualitative research, the article applies cultural studies approach in more specific terms to reveal a microcosmic power struggle between the husband and wife in confined setting as well as their reaction to American rule. The aim is to reveal powerlessness caused by social factors and historical forces caused by colonization. In conclusion, it demonstrates to the readers why husbands and wives in gender relations behave in different ways and explains some of the noticeable differences in the levels of enjoyment, sphere of authority, privileges, and influence in various landscapes of human relations.*

Keywords: qualitative research, cultural studies approach, gender relations, marginalization, power dynamics, Philippines

Introduction

Gender relations refer to the intimate relations between the husband, the dominant gender, and wife, the dominated gender. An analysis of the "politics of everyday life" is a challenging endeavor because it reveals society's micro-scale power relations in the local sites such as societal structures particularly at home (Taylor, 2002, pp. 401-402).

In effect, the powerful gender is able to acquire valued societal resources, and consequently, the possession of such resources is in turn a means of generating and accumulating more power and privileges in various social institutions. Undeniably, individuals differ in behavior when they interact in ordinary condition and especially in regimented settings. Disparity in power relations is a persistent feature of all human structures such as gender relations (Farley, 2000). A critical interrogation of gender relations in *Ten Thousand Seeds* by Linda Ty-Casper is the primary concern of this research work and employs the cultural studies approach to unmask the dynamics of small-structured power relations in gender relations.

Interestingly, this paper presents how the dominated gender is positioned in the margin or at the edge of the frame's border, so to speak. Gender relations can't escape hardly noticed daily assaults, such as periods of accessibility and inaccessibility of the dominant gender. In conclusion, there is a need for understanding gender dynamics in the Philippine society. This social phenomenon is just taken as a subtle, overlooked, or insignificant detail in fictional texts and more importantly, even in real life experiences. Considering that the cultural studies approach draws from a range of theoretical and methodological paradigms, the principal theories that guide this exploration are those of Raymond Williams's theory on culture and hegemony and Louis Althusser's theory on ideology in social formation and subjectivity.

For Williams, culture emphasizes the significance of "relationship" created by "organization" and "structure" in the society. Further, he views society as an "expressive totality" in which political practices, economic practices and ideological practices, closely interact with each other (Barker, 2000; Frow, 1995; Hornedo, 2002).

With Althusserian insights on ideological address, it is easy to understand how subjectivity is formed in society. For Althusser, ideology plays a crucial role in the entire spectrum of the subjectivity phenomenon. Ideology is the driving force in the "lived relation" of the person to institutional structures, i.e. home. Due to required structural dominant practices, the subject (person) gives consent to act without being affected by doubt, an implicit consent, so to speak (Belsey, 1980; Leitch, 2010).

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature unfolded an array of critical inquiries from various sources on the role of cultural studies in power relations as well as the unequal power relations between genders in the society includes the following: Guillem (2013) presents a dialectical proposal to illuminate the role of power relations in cultural studies to see various societal conditions in a different light. Guillem (2013) argues for a need of a dialectical proposal that can shed light in communication studies because power relation is an invaluable element of cultural *June 2018, Vol. 21, No. 1*

approach. In her study, Guillem stresses the significant contribution of Michael Foucault, especially in his theories on discourse, knowledge, and power as having close harmonic connection. In a similar vein, she illuminates Antonio Gramsci's and Raymond Williams's contribution to cultural studies, which provides perspectives on how people can improve capability to overcome unfriendly social condition affecting their everyday lives.

Guillem's recognition of the theories of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams to understand the inability of people to improve their social conditions illuminates power relations. In a similar vein, the article pays particular attention to the social factors that contributed to the disempowerment of the woman. These social factors include the institutional structures, such as family, as part of the ideological state apparatuses.

Hochman (1997) believes that green cultural studies are closely related to cultural studies because as an emerging discipline, it is centered on the dynamism of power relations, experiences of the oppressed working class including those who belong to the socially-disadvantaged group. Hochman's article shares common ground with the present study because it discusses the experiences of the oppressed working class unequally treated in the macro context. One major difference is Hochman's exploration of macro-political analysis rather than analysis on gender power relations.

Rado (2013) defends the cultural studies approach despite its ambiguity and philosophical messiness because "cultural theory remains the critical mode that forces us to recognize that individual context matters" (p. 4). In addition, she points out the "the specific historical, environmental, and social circumstances" (p. 4) in which a person or group of persons is situated. Information shared in the book has some commonality with the present study because it employed the cultural studies approach in modernism, gender, and culture. However, the latter employed cultural studies approach using Raymond Williams's theory on culture and hegemony, and Louis Althusser's theory on the ideology of social formation and subjectivity.

Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, and Tincknel (2004) present significant critical works that deal with the employment of cultural studies in novels. They cited Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973) that presents a "cultural materialist model of analysis", a kind of analysis in cultural studies commonly used in fictional text. Johnson et al.'s *The Practice of Cultural Studies* contains Raymond Williams's study of the urban and bucolic communities from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. Raymond Williams relocates Jane Austen's novels to their social contexts to show how the communities are affected ideologically by their positions in social institutions as well as their roles in economic and historical transformations (Johnson et al., 2004).

Interestingly, Raymond Williams points out that Austen's novels deal with material or economic sphere, thus, the novels "document income and social status in minute detail and with great precision" (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 190). Raymond Williams's work has been highly influential in all kinds of ways, particularly its explicit engagement to explore "how particular forms of consciousness—rather than particular kinds of economic structures—come into being..." (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 190). However, this book is different from the present study because the latter is centered on gender relations and it applies Raymond Williams's concept of culture and hegemony during American colonial rule in the Philippine Islands.

Andersen and Collins (2004) present a collection of essays on gender, class, and race relations stressing that people live in a diverse society with a wealth of information to help them become well-rounded and informed human beings. Andersen and Collins' anthology presents the different forces; for instance, the ideology that results in the immobilization and reduction of lives in the modern world. It talks about how different institutions participate in the network of forces affecting everyday lives as revealed in the personal experiences of the contributors.

Andersen and Collins' (2004) book shares some common ground with the present study because it identifies some of the ideological state apparatuses and their set of beliefs, practices in a social environment that influence the behavior of interpellated subjects. Interestingly, the anthology's main argument is aimed at bringing a global dimension to the study of race, class, and gender, especially that its analysis includes how the process of globalization shapes life in the United States while the article's engagement is on gender relations during a particular historical period, the early American occupation in the Philippines, including the matrix of domination.

Bertens (2001) discusses the different literary theories, one of which is the cultural studies. In Chapter 7, Bertens examines cultural studies as applied in analyzing literary works. Bertens explains that cultural studies bring to light the ideology that is offered in texts. Moreover, he emphasizes the relevance of cultural studies as an approach in literary study, and explores in greater depth what is involved in terms of language knowledge. Bertens' book provides essential methodological and theoretical strands in the current investigation and presents a discussion of different critical approaches to literature, including cultural studies and its prominent theorists, while the article attends to micro-political power relations as seen through gender relations during the early American colonial rule in the country.

Barker (2000) provides some discussion on the significance of cultural materialism as a model of analysis in cultural studies. As cultural materialism develops, it has drawn on the work of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to show the role of fictional works as spaces of occurrence of contested meanings. For Gramsci, hegemony refers to the exercise of authority and leadership over the powerless through a combination of force and more importantly consent, to effect
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change (Barker, 2000). The author highlights the key concepts, major cultural studies figures, historical roots of cultural studies, other related schools of thought, and lends an exceptional help for those who are confronted with the undoubted difficulties of teaching cultural studies. On the other hand, the present study employs symptomatic reading and applies Raymond Williams' theories on culture and hegemony, and Louis Althusser's ideological address or interpellation to understand the complexity of gender power relations.

Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham (1999) present cultural studies as one of the critical approaches to literature. Guerin et al. stress that cultural studies join “subjectivity” with “engagement.” This means that cultural studies are centered on culture in relation to individual lives that intend to attack inequality in society. They emphasize that cultural studies as a critical approach to literature drives the readers to gain further insights into the literary work, particularly on culture, ideological state apparatuses and power relations by thinking not only about the powerful but also about the powerless persons caught up in massive oppositions or caught up in forces beyond their control, such as being entangled in an oppressive social, political or socioeconomic culture. They suggest that cultural studies had been influenced by Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. The current study, however, is centered both on the powerful and the powerless as seen through gender relations including the complex web of colonization

Vaknin (2015) asserts that the subject (person) is in an “environment of competing interpellations” because ideologies from different social institutions are offered to the subject (person) and taken as “natural”. People see the conditions of their existence through the practice of ideology. Vaknin shares mutual interests with the present work because it presents Althusserian critical practice; that is, to read through ideology the real conditions of existence. This reading is being referred to as “symptomatic reading” of two texts. The third text is being referred to as “human psyche”. Althusser’s critical practice presupposes the existence of two texts. The current investigation introduces Raymond Williams's concept of culture and hegemony applied in the present analysis.

Meanwhile, Herlihy focuses on the nationalist frames and examines the phenomenon that challenges the construction of the collective identity influenced by governmental and social manipulations, resulting in literary and cultural expressions (Herlihy, 2012). With the discussion on the nationalist frames, the present study shares commonality with the article, though the present study concentrates more on the role of interpellation in the social construction of subjectivity and its implications.

Stevenson reviews the role of localization in the global arena as well as the desired effect from Transition Movement in forming cultural frames to see the negative and positive effects of border crossing affecting cultural citizenship (Stevenson, 2013). The present study shares commonality with the article,

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particularly its exploration of the complexity of cultural citizenship. However, the present study does not explore citizenship in the context of globalization but it seeks to present the historical forces that affected the citizens' perspective particularly at war as portrayed in Linda Ty-Casper's *Ten Thousand Seeds*. It concentrates on gender relations during the American colonial rule, the hegemonic practices employed by the colonizers to forge alliance with the Filipinos, as well as the response of the Filipinos to the different mechanisms of the colonial process.

Peters (2002) argues on being treated differently as the gendered 'other' rather than being appreciated as competent leaders, and manages with a range of different approaches and different communications. Peters (2002) points out that it is clear that many of the women want to challenge traditional cultural assumptions and organizational barriers which exclude approximately half of the pool of talented individuals from realizing their full potential in the world of work. Their experiences from a feminist perspective reveal the micro-political process at work as they disrupted a management hierarchy embedded in tradition. These women decided to leave in search of a more supportive working environment. The article shares some commonality with the present study because it is centered on micro-politics in gender relations in the corporate world of work. However, the present study is more focused on the analysis of gender relations in Linda Ty-Casper's *Ten Thousand Seeds* during the American colonial rule. Specifically, the present study examines power dynamics in gender relations such as domination, marginalization, resistance in micro-structured. It attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the portrayal of gender power relations at the intersection in the novel?
2. What are the causes of marginalization of the dominated gender in gender relations?
3. What are the dominated gender's modes of resistance?

Methodology

This part outlines the research design, research setting, data collection, and data analysis. Ethical considerations pertaining to the study were addressed, and the researcher's reflexivity was discussed. Sampling is not included because this type of research does not need it.

Research Design

This article employs qualitative type of research using descriptive-analytical method centered on constructing a body of knowledge by describing as well as analyzing *Ten Thousand Seeds* by Linda Ty-Casper, focused on the microcosmic power relations; specially, the domestic power dynamics, such as domination, marginalization, resistance, in gender relations. In addition, it employs the cultural
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studies approach guided by the insights derived from the theories of Raymond Williams and Louis Althusser to unveil power relations in gender relationship.

Research Setting

This research work was done in Manila after pursuing my doctoral degree at the University of Sto. Tomas, Manila, Philippines.

Data Collection

The source of data used by the researcher is Ty-Casper's *Ten Thousand Seeds*. Ty-Casper's novel presents Rowbothams' story with Philippine-American relations during the active colonization of the Americans in the country as the background. Considering the spectrum of novel reading, close reading and symptomatic reading were done and only focused on gender power dynamics.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of gender relations at the intersection, close reading was done to identify the tensions, silences, denials, and contradictions found in some formal elements of the novel on which symptomatic reading was based. Symptomatic reading demonstrated the reading of the manifest text or the text that is obvious, and also the latent text or the text that is produced by lapses and absences.

In symptomatic reading, both the manifest text and latent text were explored to unmask the "underlying tensions and contradictions inherent in ideological position" (Johnsons, Chambers, Raghuram, Tincknell, 2004, p. 195). These tensions and contradictions in the text are mere "symptoms" of an underlying ideology at work in the text.

Ethical Considerations

Pertaining to ethical considerations, I observed academic conventions and copyright law to write this research article.

Researcher's Reflexivity

In addition to being a grantee of the postgraduate scholarship sponsored by the Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), Tacloban City, I am also employed as Associate Professor V of the EVSU Graduate School, Tacloban City. I teach English and Literature subjects. Through probing of Ty-Casper's work, I try to demonstrate to the readers that the critical analysis of the novel involves grasping

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the creative forms of expressions to unveil the insignificant detail affecting the characters' behavior.

Results

Ten Thousand Seeds by Linda Ty-Casper is set during the waging of the American colonial campaign in the Philippines in spite of the Filipino leaders' declaration that it is an independent country. The narrative of the American colonization is framed within the American newlyweds Edward and Calista Rowbotham who arrived in Manila weeks after Admiral George Dewey defeated the Spanish flotilla in Manila Bay on August 13, 1898.

Edward and Calista left Paris for the more exotic Philippine Islands that had just been liberated from the Spanish tyrannical rule. Though it was more of Edward's decision to be in the Philippines, Calista saw the decision as a way of evading to live in Boston or Richmond. They were welcomed by Mr. Hardwicke, a wealthy young man whom they met in Hongkong. On December 21, 1898, US President McKinley proclaimed that the Philippines had been ceded to the US. The war continued to ravage where numerous houses were burned and dead bodies scattered in the streets. Other characters in the story show different faces of Americans. For instance, Munro Pettgill, the best friend of Calista's brother, is hosted by the Rowbothams before Westcott Cheltenham's arrival. Westcott is the cousin of Edward. Munro goes to the Philippines not as a tourist but as a traveler who is a member of the anti-imperialist league. He travels to the Philippine Islands to gather information and significant facts proving that Filipinos do not want to be annexed to the US.

After a series of military confrontations where Americans used heavy clutch of power on the Filipinos, they recognized Filipinos as highly aggressive people who defend their land and with this realization, they decided to leave the archipelago. Thus, Filipinos achieve their long sought-after independence. Edward Rowbotham sees war as immoral because it only brings pyrrhic victory. The couple happily goes back to their country.

Gender Relations at the Intersection

Ten Thousand Seeds presents the story of newlyweds Edward Rowbotham and Calista Rowbotham who opted to travel to the Philippine Islands instead of travelling to Europe with the wars (Spanish-American war and Philippine-American war) and America as a neophyte imperialist power framed as the story's background.

Edward and Calista "come from different climates and ways of life" (p.7). Both are members of the privileged family in their country but they are historically

differentiated by their respective families' participation in the American Civil War. Edward exhibits a strong-willed adventurous personality; he shows closeness with the Filipino insurgents by fighting against the Spaniards. He "wanted to experience everything" while Calista "wanted to understand everything." She willingly accepts her husband's whims and caprices even their stay in the Philippines. She submits to whatever her husband wishes for but she does not indulge in self-pity because she engages in worthwhile activities such as painting to make herself busy during his absence.

Calista's demeanor shows that she wants to share a place beside her man. Deep inside, she longs for a relationship of joint empowerment. She wants her presence to matter. She wants to enjoy an emotional affirmation, not just a physical one, with her mate. She wants to experience the world with him but the day-to-day undercurrent of stress of building a family unit pushes her to engage with other matters outside their marital affairs such as her active participation with the Lilybridges's missionary work.

In an abusive relationship, mutuality and equality do not exist. Edward does not discuss long or short term goals with Calista, for instance, to make plans with her for a weekend. He is preoccupied with the revolution as if he is a part of the war. In the novel, neither personal goals nor plans for the future are discussed and agreed upon in a mutually supportive way by Edward and Calista. He opens his plans in bits and pieces to his friends or new acquaintances but does not disclose his decisions to her. Plans and decisions are two different things.

Planning, either for long or short term goals, needs thorough analysis, discernment, and agreement by both partners before it should be fully realized. When the husband decides, it is understood that he has taken into account everything including his wife's contribution which could either be reaction, approval or disapproval on a certain family concern. Interpersonal communication is important in enjoying a fulfilling marital relationship. Planning together is a manifestation of interpersonal communication in which the active exchange of ideas takes place. In the fast interplay as listener or speaker, both the husband and wife may play as listener or speaker at the same time when they are planning together.

Thus, both the husband and wife must value interpersonal communication. Planning is part of intimacy in a relationship which requires mutuality. Mutuality demands goodwill, openness, and a willingness to share oneself in the planning process. Since they are newlywed, marital plans may include the number of children they want, where to construct their house, or where to establish their family. Definitely, the realization of plans contributes to a successful marital life. In the same way, the failure to realize such plans result in unfulfilling relations and worst, abusive relationship caused by the husband's hypocrisy. In essence, both husband and wife should value thoughtful conversation, respectful listening and well-intentioned words.

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Truly, intimate relations show that the main business of marital life is holding conversations with each other. Both partners must allow the relationship to derive power and authority by being accessible. Distancing oneself by being inaccessible with one's partner results in poor relationship. Partners in intimate relations need to foster a fulfilling marital atmosphere by continually breaking down barriers. This has a powerful effect of making the partner feel valued and more importantly, loved. Breaking down barriers may include appreciating talent or upholding strongly held life's views of the partner. Creating a tight marital environment by uttering statements such as "Don't talk" or "I'm in control" could lead to an abusive gender relationship (Evans, 2010). Each partner must see each other as equal because the building of a strong marital connection is a never-ending process.

Power struggle does not value full-hearted participation and cooperation between the husband and wife. Each partner exercises a specific set of functions because any tasks done at the periphery or at the marital center truly matter in the relationship. The recognition that the marital matters at the periphery or at the center are interdependent can create a balanced and harmonious relation. Breaking away from the traditional hierarchical ways of thinking in a patriarchal structure, where the husband occupies the highest position in the family management, has an enormous contribution to make in the inevitable transformation of the family as one of the major institutions in the Philippine society. Indeed, any family matters should be built, structured, reformed, and refined by both the husband and wife as equal partners.

Examining closely the inequality in gender relations, it exists because the male group earns material as well as social benefits from the subordinate status of women. The male group has the power to shape society in ways that suits self-interests. The dominant status of men in society resulted in political approval, social recognition, and economic security because they have more influence than women (Collins, 1971; Farley, 2000; Reskin, 1988). On a larger measure, Edward Rowbotham, enjoys greater status, autonomy, authority on the job, greater mobility, and choice over how to spend his time. In all these ways, Edward clearly benefits in a material sense from gender inequality. However, it cannot be denied that there are also costs. Edward experiences greater pressure to be in control and not to show emotion, greater difficulty sharing and expressing feelings, and lack of time to interact with his wife.

Causes of Marginalization

Unequal power relations between men and women remain a fact not only in the larger society but in the home as well, especially the gender relations between husband and wife who come from the same social class and racial group. The disempowerment of Calista, Edward's wife, shows that power struggle does not

only take place on grand stages, with enormous audiences but it can happen even in local sites, such as workplace and especially at home. This kind of power struggle is just unnoticed by society because the disempowered gender just accepts it with unquestioning obedience and loyalty to her husband.

In the novel, for instance, Edward and Calista relocate due to the former's decision to explore the newly-freed nation from the hands of the Spaniards. With the unfolding of events, the couple stays in the Philippines for Edward's better job opportunities. Calista, like other women, spends many hours a week alone in the apartment because Edward spends time looking for answers about the Philippine-Spanish war.

The submissive position of Calista, particularly in the use of language, reveals that she has to grapple with what it means to be a marginalized gender. Analyzing closely her language, she lacks the skills to speak assertively and demonstrates cooperative, intimacy-enhancing speech style. Her speech is indirect while Edward is direct.

Modes of Resistance

Calista uses conversational humor to express her displeasure with Edward's insensibility, such as being too hasty in his decisions. Humor's flexibility provides adaptability to conversational changing requirements to maintain better relationship. This becomes possible due to humor's indirect role in discourse (Unger, 2001).

Clearly, humor becomes a site of resistance because it allows the unutterable or inexpressible to enter the verbal interchange of ideas (Unger, 2001). With its flexibility, it enters the discourse in an inoffensive way which allows the dominated gender to ventilate her side and at the same time maintain strong marital bond. Being direct in his speech, Edward can define reality in ways that meet his needs. He talks as a way of influencing other people, establishing relationship, and justifying his plans or even behavior. He is more focused on controlling things being settled outright while Calista communicates for the central purpose of building connection to attain affirmation, confirmation, and support.

Calista remains flexible to be able to stretch her psyche horizontally and vertically. By stretching horizontally, she is able to maintain connection and more importantly, intimacy with her husband. Vertical stretching balances adjustment and adaptation. Adjustment is manifested when she understands her husband's idiosyncrasies while adaptation is seen when she adapts herself to a new terrain---her stay in the Philippines which happened due to Edward's decision. Essentially, the relationship between Edward and Calista does not reveal a fulfilling relationship. The couple's relationship demonstrates a gender-abusive relationship because they do not plan together. Planning requires mutuality and equality.

Conclusion

In gender relations, power imbalances facilitate marginalization. Gender inequalities in terms of wealth, income, and status take shape in social institutions, such as family, where expectations are established. By reproducing gender roles every day, male and female reinforce gender roles which in turn become a means for society to differentiate men and women. For instance, a wife would overwhelmingly spend more time on domestic affairs or a woman grows up believing that she should put her husband's career before her own like Calista Rowbotham in Linda Ty-Casper's *Ten Thousand Seeds* (Ty-Casper, 1987).

As a critical approach, cultural studies show us the need to examine the behavior of characters and to pay close attention to the social context in order to understand why they behave in different ways. It demonstrates a broader view of why characters are as they are and act as they do and sheds light on issues that we regard as "natural" which may not be so (Abocot, 2016). It also highlights that what is accepted as "givens" of our life are strongly influenced by social forces, such as social ideologies.

The novel shows that the wife wants her feelings to be taken seriously and wants to enjoy emotional security. Undoubtedly, whether the husband and wife come from the same social class or racial group, unequal power relation is evident because disempowerment and inequality are created, shaped, and maintained in social institutions. As interpellated subjects, both behave according to their beliefs and lived relations with the society.

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