

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### GENDER POLITICS IN EDILBERTO K. TIEMPO'S *TO BE FREE*: A CULTURAL STUDIES READING

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#### ABSTRACT

The patriarchal structure presents a rigid human relationship because it moves the dominated gender (wife) to act as an unwitting accomplice to further her subjectivity. This subjectivity pushes the marginalized gender to have a limited public sphere and enjoy lesser societal privileges leading to a more socially disadvantaged position in the society.

The article is centered on the interrogation of the micro-scale power relations in gender relations in *To Be Free* by Edilberto K. Tiempo. Gender relations refers to the intimate relations between husband, the dominant gender, and wife, the dominated gender. The communication repertoire between husband and wife is affected by social forces. Consequently, socially produced meanings are left unquestioningly in a patriarchal structure.

**Keywords:** Micropolitics, Marginalization, Dominated gender

#### INTRODUCTION

This article examines micropolitics, causes of marginalization, and forms of resistance of the dominated gender in *To Be Free* by Edilberto K. Tiempo. Keith Taylor defines micropolitical power

relations as that which refers to the “politics of everyday life that arises in multitude of local sites throughout society” (Taylor 2002: 401). To unmask the dynamics of micropolitics, this paper employs cultural studies. Cultural studies explores power relations such as domination, marginalization, resistance in micro-structured power dynamics in gender relations; it also interrogates the causes of these power relations, e.g., why the wife conforms in silence; why she overwhelmingly concentrates in routine domestic concerns, such as child care; or why she takes resistance as an action. In a similar vein, it questions why the husband has more access to valued societal resources; or why he has a larger sphere of power and influence. This everyday power struggle is taken as “natural” or just left unnoticed, the powerless accepting it as an ordinary occurrence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This article on micropolitical power relations focused on *To Be Free* by Edilberto K. Tiempo seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the illustration of micropolitical power relations in the novel?
2. What are the causes of marginalization of the wife?
3. What are the wife's forms of resistance?

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

A number of related literature were reviewed for the study. Guerin, Earle, Reesman, and Willingham, (1999), *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, presents cultural studies as one of the critical approaches to literature. It stresses that cultural studies joins “subjectivity” with “engagement,” meaning that cultural studies is centered on culture in relation to individual lives that intend to attack inequalities in society. It underscores 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 lesser 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. The book suggests that cultural studies had been influenced by Louis Althusser, German thinker, and Antonio Gramsci, an Italian leftist. The current article, however, is centered both on the powerful and the powerless, as seen through gender relations including the complex web of domestic power play.

Hebdige (1979) "From Culture to Hegemony" shares common ground with the present article because it highlights power relations in the social world and disenchantments of marginalized classes. He emphasized that access to the means on how ideas are shared or disseminated is not enjoyed by all classes and that "some groups have more say, more opportunity to make the rules, to organize meanings, while others are less favorably placed, have less power to produce and impose their definitions of the world on the world." However, the present article is more focused on micropolitical power relations, particularly in gender relations during the American colonial rule in the Philippines.

Stuart Hall's essay "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" (in Leitch, 2000, 1986) suggests a moment of self-reflection "on cultural studies as a practice" and "on its institutional positioning." More importantly, it challenges the role of critical intellectuals as well as their centrality or marginality in the stream of cultural studies. His essay shares common ground with the present study, particularly in its emphasis on "the ways in which the power of ruling elites is constituted and reconstituted within a complex cultural scene that affords various possibilities for action". However, the present research article focuses on gender politics, using Raymond Williams's theory on culture, and Louis Althusser's theory on ideology on social formation and subjectivity.

Rado (2013:7) presents modernism, gender, and culture using cultural studies approach. She defends 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." By "context" she meant "the specific historical, environmental and social circumstances" in which a person or group of persons are situated. Her contention shares commonality with the present study, because it employed cultural studies approach in modernism, gender, and culture. However, the

latter employed cultural studies approach using Raymond Williams's theory on culture, and Louis Althusser's theory on ideology on social formation and subjectivity.

Peters (2002) in "Gender In Communication: Micropolitics At Work" argues that 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. She 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 micropolitical 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 ([www.aare.edu.au/02pap/peto2184](http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/peto2184)).

The cited study shares commonality with the present study because it highlights on micropolitics in gender relations in the corporate world of work. However, the present study is more focused on the analysis of micropolitics in gender relations in *To Be Free* by Edilberto K. Tiempo.

"Rethinking Power Relations in Critical/Cultural Studies: A Dialectical (Re) Proposal" by Susana Martinez Guillem (2013) argues for the need to rethink dialectics as part of understanding of power relations, and as a fundamental component of critical/cultural approaches in Communication studies. In this project, Guillem critiques the main contribution of Michael Foucault highlighting his influential theorization of discourse, knowledge and power as intrinsically related constructs. In a similar vein, she introduces the notion of dialects as theorized in the work of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams. More specifically, she stresses the underestimated aspect of these authors contributions "to construct alternative starting points" for a critical / cultural project in communication scholarship and for a theory of power "to create the space needed to account for people's (in) capability to overcome adverse social conditions". (*The Review of*

*Communication* vol. 13, no. 3, July 2013 pp.184-204).

The present study shares commonality with the previous article, particularly in recognizing the theories of Gramsci and Williams to understand the inability of people to improve their social conditions. However, the former pays particular attention to the social factors that contributed to the woman's disempowerment. These social factors include the institutional structures as part of the ideological state apparatuses.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Considering that cultural studies approach draws from a range of theoretical and methodological paradigms, the principal theories that guide this research article are those of Raymond Williams's theory on culture and hegemony, Louis Althusser's theory on ideology in social formation and subjectivity, and the researcher's insights on culture.

For Williams, culture is defined as the "organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members communicate" (quoted in Frow, 1995:9; also in Hornedo, 2002:37). This definition 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: 51).

The appropriation of Althusserian insights into ideological address or interpellation enriches the understanding of the social construction of subjectivity. For Althusser, ideology is the "lived relation" of the subject (person) to social institutions such as the family, court, and school (Leitch, 2001:2446). Ideology does not only exist in the mind, but also manifests itself in the behavior of people who behave according to their beliefs (Belsey, 1980:57). Furthermore, Althusser pointed out:

... ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness'  
 ... It is profoundly *unconscious*  
 ... Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness. They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them (*For Marx* 233 quoted in Leitch, 2001:2453; [http://www.csubak.edu/~mpaw/owski/cultural\\_critique.html](http://www.csubak.edu/~mpaw/owski/cultural_critique.html)).

## METHODOLOGY

Using the descriptive-analytical method of research, the study constructs a body of knowledge by describing as well as analyzing Edilberto K. Tiempo's novel *To Be Free* focused on the micro-structured power relations, especially the domestic power dynamics, e.g., domination, marginalization, resistance in gender relations. In the analysis of micropolitics in the novel, the research: (1) identified the tensions, silences, denials, and contradictions as causes of the conflicts; and (2) examined the ideologies and practices in micro relationships and interactions in gender power relations.

Two kinds of reading were applied: a) Close textual reading sought to identify the tensions, silences, denials, and contradictions found in some formal elements of the novel on which symptomatic reading was based; and b) Symptomatic reading that demonstrated the reading of the manifest text (or the text that is obvious) and the latent text—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” (Johnson et al., 2004:195). These tensions and contradictions in the text are mere “symptoms” of an underlying ideology at work in the text. With this

method, gender politics centered on gender relations as portrayed in the novel was closely analyzed.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

### **A. Ediberto K. Tiempo's *To Be Free***

The initial batch of American forces in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya arrives quietly in 1899. The Spanish governor's residence is taken over by the American military governor signalling that Nueva Vizcaya has been freed of Spanish grip of power. Capitan Lucas, governor of N. Vizcaya, father of Hilarion Alcantara and Lamberto Alcantara, feels it a "wait and see" situation. Filipinos continue their daily routine, but keep vigilant in case the Americans might try to harm or dishonor their women.

One day, Theodore McIntosh, the American military governor, visits Capitan Lucas for two reasons: to win their friendship and to let Senior Hilarion help him as a Senior Provincial Board member. He stresses that they won't stay long in the Philippines and intends to give Filipinos complete autonomy until such time they are ready for self-government. Knowing that the strong-willed Hilarion will not take the job, he offers instead the position to Capitan Lucas who hesitantly accepts the offer. Capitan Lucas feels unhappy for betraying his son unavailable at that moment.

As expected, Capitan Lucas is elected governor of Nueva Vizcaya in the first popular election for provincial officials. After serving his first term of office, he is re-elected as governor, but a year before his second term expired, he dies. At that time, Teodora, Lamberto's daughter, 13, is in high school.

Through the invitation and prodding of his friends, Lamberto runs as governor and emerges as winner after enduring different kinds of political machinations that take place behind the scenes during his political campaign.

Later, Teodora marries Primo, the junior partner of her Uncle Hilarion

in his law firm. Lamberto is disappointed for what his daughter has done. Dejected, he is not informed about the marriage of Teodora and Primo, made worse by his son-in-law's not undergoing the Gaddang marriage custom of servitude.

Much later, Luisa dies while Primo and Teodora are blessed with a baby girl named Luisa Consuelo. When World War II breaks out, the Japanese reign of terror has seen some Filipinos participate in as collaborators, while others as puppet officials of the Japanese Imperial Army. However, the combined forces of the Americans and Filipinos who fight side by side end the Japanese rule.

After the war, Lamberto serves Nueva Vizcaya again and resigns later from the government service to devote his time to Teodora and his granddaughter that he dotes on. In due time, Luisa meets Col. Lansing again, now a divorced man and accepts Ruben, Luisa Consuelo's son to Felix, as his own flesh. They later stay at the US leaving behind Luisa Consuelo's grandfather Lamberto Alcantara.

## **B. Analysis**

### 1. Micropolitics

*To Be Free* is an endearing story that depicts the different faces of Philippine life during the colonial rule framed in the lives of Capitan Lucas Alcantara, Hilarion Alcantara, eldest son, and Lamberto Alcantara, youngest son, married to Luisa.

Capitan Lucas, just like other Filipinos, welcomes with hesitation the new ruler through Mr. McIntosh who promises a new kind of government, an avowed stance to help Filipinos enjoy autonomy in the future. The communicative encounter with Mr. McIntosh pushes Capitan Lucas to think that he has many things to protect for—his family and his riches—so he couldn't stay disengaged from the colonial rulers, but collaborates by organizing political activities such as participating in election. In other words, he indirectly helps Mr. McIntosh, a representative of American government, to put things in the desired order of the colonizers. By winning the election, he has to carry out, however, American scheme in establishing



strong political base in Nueva Vizcaya.

Clearly, with the imposition of the new order, McIntosh studies every possible reaction and ricochet before he makes certain moves. His mind is preoccupied with a specific intent, that is, to win the goodwill of the Alcantaras, in particular, and the Filipinos, in general. In effect his relationship with the Alcantaras signifies that every new thought serves as an internalized debate in his spirit like testing its merits in order to accomplish his political mission in the Philippines. He communicates with a desired objective and always judges every shade of meaning during his conversation with Capitan Lucas. In this regard, (1953: 71-78) reveals the psychological underpinning of communication:

highly planned communication (messages) are power communications in the sense that specific behavioral effects are expected to follow specific content. The control of content assumes the control of these effects, and, hence, is closely connected with the power structures of society ( Fearing, 1953: 71-78).

In the repertoire of communicative transactions with Capitan Lucas and Lamberto, McIntosh senses the importance of securing understanding, establishing acceptance, and motivating action to evoke the desired effect. Truly, in micro interpersonal communication which may consist only of two or three persons, highly planned messages have the likelihood of evoking the desired objectives.

Throughout the novel, Hilarion Alcantara is consistent in exhibiting strong resistance against the new foreign ruler because he feels betrayed on what transpired during the concluded *Treaty of Paris* which ceded the Philippines to US for \$20 million. Clearly, the establishment of the seat of government in Malolos, Bulacan crystallizes the resistance of the Filipinos against any colonizers. This means that Filipino leaders, e.g., Hilarion, prefers to serve the civil and political needs of the Filipinos than to embrace allegiance to the new foreign sovereignty. Thus, Hilarion joins General Malvar and his guerilla troops. He turns down the Senior Provincial Board post

offered by Governor McIntosh because he does not want to be an "underling" in the American regime. He fully knows that the colonizers will not engage in unplanned, unstructured, and unintentional communication encounter because the communication intent is consciously designed to accomplish objectives favorable to the dominant racial group.

One of the important issues in the novel is the imbalance of power in gender relations. Even women who come from affluent families have filled inferior positions only. For instance, Luisa has not pursued higher education in that she is left doing domestic work such as cooking, baking cakes and related home chores. When she gets married, she preoccupies herself with the rearing of Teodora. She has been associated with domesticity, hence, she disagrees with her husband's decision to let Teodora study at St. Cecilia College. For her, it would be enough for Teodora to finish secondary education because it is her belief that women should be relegated to do household management only.

Another part of the novel that shows gender inequality is the discussion about politics. There is an unspoken dictum in early Philippine society that politics is tailored for men's world. Matters that deal with political affairs are left to men. In spheres of authority and competition, e.g., country's politics, men are considered to be more competitive on the harsh atmosphere of the "man's world" of politics. This is a clear feature of gender difference during colonization time that women are more relationship-oriented, while men tend to be preoccupied with ambition. Thus, this brings a whole set of emotional challenges for both men and women in marital relationship. In these different positions in the field of power play, women face the steepest challenge because their voices are not heard.

When Hilarion and his brother Lamberto are talking about politics, the former does not want Luisa to engage in their conversation simply because she is a woman. Since Luisa is a kind of woman who knows her way, she is allowed, however, to exchange views with them, but she never occupies an elective position even if the political climate favors her family. She never attempts to ask for any elective position and no one offers her to participate in any political

activities. This act could be attributed for her being an interpellated subject. She believes that women should only be relegated to domestic work including her daughter. She insists that her daughter must not pursue specialized education but Lamberto ignores her.

Significantly, the novel paints a picture of a warm and fulfilling family relations, especially its perpetuating the dominant social practice in Nueva Vizcaya, the Gaddang marriage custom. As a time-honored period of servitude in Nueva Vizcaya, Gaddang marriage custom is a test and demonstration of sincerity of both parties. In this custom, the man is tied to the woman's family like a common servant and the woman bound not to accept suitors. The traditional years of servitude are agreed upon by both families. Initially, the father writes a letter of proposal regarding the intention of his son to win the heart of the woman and once approved, the man is formally introduced to the family that he will serve for five, six or seven years depending upon the agreement. This social practice teaches young generation to pay a price for everything they want to get, so to speak. Capitan Lucas and his son Lamberto undergo the process during their younger years. Thus, Lamberto is disappointed upon learning that Primo, Teodora's husband, did not undergo the Gaddang marriage custom due to his daughter's elopement with him.

The novel pursues the idea that as each generation emerges, the Philippines becomes a fertile ground for liberal American lifestyle to come out. This emergence of new ways of life is shocking or revolting to the old generation represented by Lamberto Alcantara. Undoubtedly, as industrialization advances in the Philippine soil, it increasingly weakens family value system like Teodora's disregard of the Gaddang marriage custom. Consuelo Luisa, daughter of Teodora and Primo, imbibes the values and manners of the colonizers that result in her suffering of indignities. She entertains numerous men who come her way; enjoys an independent life like driving her own car, and does not value either the significance of marriage because " she felt that marriage was a kind of bondage , a servitude, in the noble way her grandfather had undergone it..."(*To Be Free*, p. 321). Simply put, the stifling formality of traditional family life influenced by deeply honored social practices, makes her resistant to it because the ravaging tide of

colonization pushes her to embrace its new way of life. Clearly, the unspeakably precious traditional social practice has been shattered. Thus, Lamberto sums up the problem in these terms:

His own daughter's elopement was a violent departure from the code of servitude that had been the pride of his day and of his father's before him. By comparison his grandfather's servile pursuit of a man couldn't go any lower. Servitude as a source of pride was a paradox, but it had held true for a long, long time. By comparison his granddaughter's servile pursuit of a man couldn't go any lower. But seeing the fallen girl rise with courage and dignity was something he had not expected (*To Be Free*, p. 329).

With the footfalls and footprints of the colonizers in the Philippine soil, the women characters have rebellious streak against traditional social practices, not totally disempowered, but with limited power and authority. In the first generation, for instance, Luisa, Lamberto's fiancée at that time, spoke out her independent thinking in insisting that he wears G-string to test his grit in eating up his sense of pride in parading before the others. Later, Luisa reveals to Bettu (Lamberto) that the primary reason why she wishes him to parade with G-string because of a curious whim if Bettu has "infectious disease or something above his knees" (p. 86). In the second generation, Teodora marries Primo, her uncle Hilarion's law partner, without undergoing the Gaddang marriage custom while in the third generation, Luisa Consuelo refuses to reconcile with her prodigal husband Felix, instead she marries Col. Lansing, a divorced American man.

Interestingly, this Lamberto's train of thought presents Edilberto K. Tiempo's employment of the stream of consciousness technique in which Lamberto's feelings and reactions are reflected in his interior monologue depicted in a continuous flow, uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogues. *To Be Free* by Edilberto K. Tiempo is one of the few Filipino novels written in English that makes use of the stream of consciousness. The entire novel portrays some of Senor Lamberto's continuing "stream" of thoughts

as they occur. His indirect interior monologue particularly his sudden shifts from thought to thought exposing his memories and apprehensions are very evident.

## 2. Causes of Marginalization

The novel shows that unequal power between men and women remains a fact not only in the larger society but in the home as well, particularly in the gender relations between husband and wife. Luisa believes that in achieving successful marital relations, the wife should be a good cook, besides answering her husband's biological needs. Lamberto's reaction demonstrates that men are more interested in exercising power over women. He subscribes to the belief that a home is a male-dominated environment. Lamberto is neither motivated to do domestic tasks because of less tangible rewards, such as collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork with his wife. In this regard Kimbal (in Unger, 2001: 67) asserts in "Gender Similarities and Differences as Feminist Contradictions":

As human beings, women and men shared in basic human rights and duty to develop virtue through the exercise of reason that ought to be equally available to both men and women.

Even the relationship between two *aripan*, Rubio and Saturnina, unequal micro-political power relations is very evident. When Rubio, an *aripan*, asks Lamberto Alcantara's blessings regarding his marriage with Saturnina, the former refuses to accept the land and valuable things offered to him by the latter as a token of gratitude for his servitude. Instead, he asks Senior Lamberto to let him stay in the latter's house because he is marrying Saturnina on the condition that they will serve Lamberto to the end of his days. Saturnina, as an interpellated subject consents with her husband's decision because of her affection for him and she adheres to the belief of servitude which a dominant social practice among the economically disadvantaged group. Rubio is an interpellated subject ,too, who strongly adheres to servitude as revealed in his conversation with Senior Lamberto.

"What it is, Rubio?"

"I would like to stay on in this house." Lamberto studied his face. "How would your wife feel about it?"

"I am marrying her on that condition, Señor."

"But why Rubio? What about the land and the other things? Don't you want to be your own master? "Yes, of course and I thank you for your concern. But I want to serve you to the end of your days. And then later my family and I will live on the land you give me." Is that what you really want to do?"

" Yes, Señor."

"You are delaying the enjoyment of your freedom?"

"No, Señor." It is hard to explain: When you offered the land to my father, and the house and the money and the rest, you freed him from my family's promise to serve this house. When my father choose to stay I think he did right. I also choose to stay" (p. 273)

This unfolding of events shows that Rubio does not want to undergo the ritual of emancipation from the bondage of servitude. He is really an interpellated subject in that he willfully accepted his lot that he is poor, that should serve to the end of his master's life. During the American colonial rule, the less favorably positioned group is excluded from the political process leading them to develop deep-rooted insecurity, e.g. strongly adhering to servitude. Thus, they develop feeling of insecurity because of their inability to provide basic needs for their families. Worst, these attitude set the life pattern for young Filipino *aripan* like in the case of Rufino and his son, Rubio. They have been overpowered by this dominant social

practice, a crippling mind-set that shows they are caught in the psychological chains of that master-servant mentality passed on from one generation to another generation. In addition, domestic work, especially its drudgery done for rich families takes the form of a badge of social inferiority.

Moreover, a certain part of the novel shows that being an *aripan* demonstrates an extreme form of inequality in which one is taken as being owned as property by others. This is explicitly shown when Lamberto commands Rubio to hit Felix physically when the former does not want Felix to continue his relationship with his granddaughter Luisa Consuelo. Interestingly, Rufino is Rubio's father and a trusted servant of Senor Lamberto. Rodrigo is Rufino's father and grandfather of Rubio. Rodrigo's grandfather, Ariston, had been saved by Capitan Lucas, Senor Lamberto's father, from execution at the hands of the Spaniards; in gratitude, the man vowed not only to serve Capitan Lucas as long as he lived but also he charged that a son of his family line bore no male child, would serve in the house of the Alcantaras through the generations.

Clearly, the conversation between Senor Lamberto and Rubio demonstrates what Mendiola (2015) terms the Foucault: an "residual culture that strongly manifests itself in the *aripan*'s (existential) choice of rejecting his freedom from slavery". He goes on to say that "the feudal lord has succeeded in imposing his political power over the *aripan*—actually a vassal in this power relationship, again a medieval stance of what the French aptly terms *noblesse oblige*, a slave's or inferior's eternal sense of gratitude to the master." Reworded, the relationship of Rubio's family with the Alcantaras shows eternal gratitude and indebtedness, and pledges strong allegiance to the master, so to speak.

### 3. Forms of Resistance

Wives have different ways of showing resistance against their husbands. Luisa, for instance, does not argue with her husband because of her belief that women should only be relegated to perform domestic chores. Similarly, Saturnina's agreement with Rubio's condition suggests that she is powerless who silently agrees

with the latter's plan for their family's future. The silence indicates both approval as well as opposition. Her acquiescence shows her love for him, the traditional society's accepted practice that if a woman marries an *aripan*, she, too, becomes an *aripan* for the rest of her life except when one undergoes the ritual of emancipation.

Luisa's and Saturnina's actions present the microcosm of intimate personal relationship with their husbands that influence the macrocosm of society's customs and practices. Bearing the burden of the feeling of responsibility, they feel that they must go along with what their husbands want to prove their affection as well as to have a happier and fulfilling marital relations by avoiding the feeling of rejection. Luisa's and Saturnina's decisions show that they hope for (better yet, long for) connection, understanding, and intimacy from their respective husbands even if the decisions entail extreme submissiveness or engaging in an oppressive marital relations. However, the truth persists that they set aside their own personal needs (and happiness) to help husbands pursue their own goals. Worst, they are not in their state of personal power, much less emotionally secured, because security comes from within--from their connection with their life. Their feelings of inadequacy therefore makes them an easy prey. Truly, the feeling of rejection brings forth frustration and loneliness.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural studies shows us the need to look beyond the "manifest text" or to probe the causes of the characters' behavior, and to pay close attention to the social context in order to grasp why people behave in a different way. As a critical approach, it demonstrates a broader view of why characters are as they are and act as they do. It captures the readers' imagination on power relations, particularly its impact in our relationships, leading us to see that we constitute a "society" through our actions, and are constructed by it. Similarly, it sheds light on what we regard as "natural" may not be such, and that the "givens" of our life are strongly influenced by social forces. The novel shows that the wife wants her feelings to be taken seriously, if not enjoy an emotional



security. Undoubtedly, whether the husband and wife come from the same privileged racial group or economically disadvantaged group, unequal power relations remains evident since 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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