
Socio-political Context of The First Play-Poem “Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran Ni Juan Dela Cruz” Of Jose Lacaba

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Abstract

Poetry is a central model of human beings' use of words to explore, express, and understand (Simecek and Rumbold, 2016). Dramatizing poetry encourages students to consider poetic themes and substance more fully and unlocks the meaning of poems in various ways. (Ferguson, 2014) In the Philippines, it was the University of the Philippines (UP) Repertory Company which developed the convenient form of the first play-poem (dula-tula), "Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan Dela Cruz". This literary study assumes that there is a sociopolitical context in the first play-poem, "Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan Dela Cruz" in today's societal issues. Using critical discourse analysis, the researcher explores the local colors, figurative languages, and poem messages that reveal sociopolitical. The researcher anchors the realism and Marxism literary theories on the analysis of the play-poem. Results indicate that the first play-poem shows sociopolitical through local colors, figurative languages, and messages. The study confirms that the first play-poem of Jose Lacaba have sociopolitical context embedded in their literary element.

Keywords: play-poem, Jose Lacaba, Philippines, socio-political, drama

1. Introduction

Poetry is a central model of human beings' use of words to explore, express, and understand. It gives the structure and purpose of the experiences, allowing us to navigate the world we know and then beyond it boldly. (Simecek and Rumbold, 2016) During the 18th century, there was already a contribution of poetic drama. However, it was T.S. Eliot who established it as permanent in human nature. T.S. Eliot emphasized that poetry is a complete medium of drama. Poetic drama is entirely a new phenomenon in the history of English drama. It is a literary revolution of the 20th century. It has a high level of seriousness as well as a conversational aspect. It is a synthesis of tradition and experimentation, as well as the old and the modern. It's both symbolic and challenging. It is in blank verse or free verse form. In a nutshell, the poem is its vehicle, the picture is its mechanism, myth is its essence, and the musical pattern is its uniting power (Roy, 2017). Compared to other activities, Dramatic activities are more helpful in studying poetry and resulting in improved comprehension. Dramatizing poetry encourages students to consider poetic themes and substance more fully and unlocks the meaning of poems in a variety of ways. (Ferguson, 2014) Because oral characteristics such as volume, emphasis, and tone can impact and shape the listener's understanding of a poem, performing a poem utilizing choral reading or readers' theatre can boost comprehension. Students actively engage

in comprehension skills when they act poetry aloud (O'Connor, 2004). In the Philippines, it was the University of the Philippines (UP) Repertory Company which developed the convenient form of the first play-poem (dula-tula), "Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan Dela Cruz". It was written by an activist and journalist, Jose F. Lacaba, in 1979. It was performed while the narrator reads the poem. One actor played Juan de la Cruz, an ordinary citizen during the early years of martial law who became irritated at every turn until he fled to the mountains to join the rebels. All of the other characters, including a bus operator, a wall, sea waves, a bishop, and a soldier, were played by another actor. (Marasigan, 2016)

However, this play evolved in performing in the different high schools. All members of the group do the role of narrator. One member will act as Juan Dela Cruz, and other actors will play all other characters. This play is performed with limited props and costumes.

Despite being forbidden, poets, writers, playwrights, and journalists continued to speak out about the Filipino people's struggles during the Marcos era. They become the catalysts for the Filipino people's uprising against the ruler. (Reyes, Legaspi, Calandada, 2012) One of those was Jose Lacaba, the author of the first poem tortured during the Martial Law Regime. He rebelled against the Marcos administration's abuses through his writings, and his films echoed the views of the Filipino working class.

Evident in most of the studies, many studies investigate, explore, and look into the different poems in the Philippines. However, there is no study yet which looks into the sociopolitical context of the first play-poem. This study aims to explore the sociopolitical context of the first play-poem, "Ang Kagila-Gilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan Dela Cruz" in today's societal issues that our country is facing.

According to Ogundukun (2014), literature depicts social reality, depicting events as they are rather than as they are thought to be. Literature is a social institution, a type of tradition that has existed for a long time and is acknowledged as a vital component of a particular society to perform certain functions. It is not only a social construct anchored in mere ideas, imaginations, or hypothetical scenarios. Thus, the literary research investigates the sociopolitical context of the first play-poem of Jose "Pete" Lacaba in the context of local colors, figurative languages, and messages.

2. Methodology

This study assumes that there is a socio-political context in the first play-poem, "Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan Dela Cruz" in today's societal issues and this assumption is supported by Realism and Marxism theories.

This literary research also employs a critical discourse analysis which is a subpart of the qualitative research method. The gathering, analyzing, and interpreting of non-numerical data, such as language, is qualitative research. It can be used to understand how an individual subjectively perceives and gives meaning to their social reality.

On the other hand, Realism. Literary realism is a literary movement that depicts reality in actual life by describing banal, everyday occurrences. It typically depicts society's middle and lower classes, with familiar people, places, and tales. Instead of dramatizing or romanticizing a narrative, literary realism strives to present it as realistically as possible. This form of literature believes in fidelity to actuality in its representation. Realism is about recreating life in literature.

(Scheidenhelm, n.d.) The realist art movement began in nineteenth-century France and continued until the early twentieth century. Literary realism is a subset of this movement. It started as a reaction to Romanticism in the eighteenth century and the emergence of the bourgeoisie in Europe.



Figure 1. A Schematic Presentation of a Theoretical Background of the study

Romanticism's works were seen to be excessively exotic and out of touch with reality. Literary realism has its origins in France, where realist authors published realism results in novels and serial form in newspapers. Honoré de Balzac, who imbued his work with complex characters and extensive observations about society, and Gustave Flaubert, who invented realist narrative as we know it today, are among the early realist writers (Masterclass, 2020).

Meanwhile, Marxism or The Marxist perspective connects literary texts to the society, history, and cultural and political institutions in which they are generated. Marxist ideologies have influenced Twentieth-century literary criticism by Karl Marx. As to Marx, literature belongs to the superstructure, which is a product of the base realities. (Panda, 2015) He theorized that human beings are a product of their social and economic surroundings. The base or infrastructure of existence, according to Marx, is the economic conditions of life. Everything from technology and raw materials to the social organization of the workplace is part of the foundation. This financial foundation has a significant impact on the superstructure, which Marx defined as a society, culture, and the realm of ideas. As a result, literature exposes to us the spirit of the times and the concerns that people cared about. Literature (and pleasure) is a representation of class struggle, not just for amusement or escapism (Williams, 1977).

3. Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents the results and discussion of the study that answers to the sub-problems.

Local Colors

The first play- poem reveals several sociopolitical contexts using local colors, custom, and setting. A custom is a commonly recognized and conventional manner of acting or doing

something unique to a particular society, area, or time. Meanwhile, the setting is the place or type of surroundings where something is positioned, or an event takes place.

Table 1. Local Colors Analysis

First Play- Poem	Local Colors	Sociopolitical
"Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran Ni Juan Dela Cruz"	BAWAL MANIGARILYO BOSS sabi ng konduktora (custom)	air pollution
	nilakad ni Juan de la Cruz ang buong Avenida (setting)	poverty
	BAWAL PUMARADA sabi ng kalsada (custom)	traffic
	BAWAL UMIHI DITO sabi ng bakod (custom)	littering/ dirty streets
	tumapat sa Ma Mon Luk (setting)	poverty
	Sine Dalisay (setting)	discrimination
	Konggreso (setting)	corruption
	Malakanyang (setting)	corruption
	KEEP OFF THE GRASS sabi ng hardinero sabi ng sundalo (custom)	discrimination
	namasyal sa Culiculi at nahulog sa pusali (custom)	prostitution
	BAWAL MAGTAPON NG BASURA sabi ng alon. (custom)	discrimination
	IN GOD WE TRUST sabi ng obispo ALL OTHERS PAY CASH (custom)	corruption
	umakyat Sa Arayat (setting)	rebellion
	kung bakit sinulsulan ang isang tahimik na mamamayan (custom)	poverty

The line "Bawal Manigarilyo Boss sabi ng konduktora" is a Filipino tradition of behaving in public, lighting up their cigarettes not bothering the effects that other people could get out from their behavior. The line shows air pollution as a sociopolitical context. Air pollution has long been a problem for the Philippines. In 2018, the World Health Organization study said there were 45.3 air pollution-related deaths for every 100,000 people in the Philippines. (Sabilo, 2020) Moreover, the line "Bawal Umihl Dito sabi ng bakod" is a practice of Filipinos peeing everywhere in the streets. It shows littering and dirty streets in the country. Being undisciplined is one of the problems of putting dirt in public spaces without thinking of a possible problem like floods because of bad habits. The line "Bawal Pumarada sabi ng kalsada" is a law in the Philippines to decongest the traffic in the country, especially in urban cities like Manila. The Traffic Index 2019 by TomTom, which ranks congestion in cities worldwide, showed that Manila has a congestion level of 71 percent, the second-worst traffic congestion out of the 416 cities surveyed worldwide. The study means that Filipino drivers spend an average of 71 percent extra travel time stuck in traffic. (CNN Philippines, 2020) Furthermore, the lines "namasyal sa Culiculi at nahulog sa pusali" and "umakyat sa Arayat" show prostitution and rebellion in the country, respectively. Prostitution in the country is illegal. The Republic Act 10158 or the Anti- Prostitution Law amending the articles 202 & 341 of the Revised Penal Code has passed in the country; however, the practice still exists in the status quo. (PCW, n.d.) Meanwhile, rebellion in the Philippines is long-existing. The local insurgency of the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army- National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA- NDF) is one of the longest-running insurgencies in the world. The poem tells us that because of inequality, poverty, and an unjust system for ordinary people like Juan Dela Cruz, people would go to rebel against the government.

On the other hand, there is a sociopolitical context with three local colors that correspond to each. The said sociopolitical context is widely evident in the status quo in the country. These are poverty, corruption, and discrimination.

The lines "nilakad ni Juan de la Cruz ang buong Avenida", "tumapat sa Ma Mon Luk", and "kung bakit sinulsulan ang isang tahimik na mamamayan" show poverty in the country. The first line manifests the poor Filipinos who don't have transportation and are even deprived of the vehicle because they don't have money for their fare. Some Filipinos walk under the scorching heat of the sun to be at their destination for their work. The second line tells us the hunger due to poverty. Some Filipinos do not have something to eat, especially when they struggle to have a job. According to a poll done by the Social Weather Stations, the number of Filipino families facing involuntary hunger reached a new high of 21.1 percent for the entire year of 2020. In other words, millions of Filipinos are still in hunger. (CNN Philippines, 2020) The last line tells us that some poor Filipinos rebel because of the unjust treatment they get in the country's system. The burden of their daily lives gave a reason for them to take arm-struggle against the government. Karl Marx explains the class struggles as the proletariat are victims of the oppressive system of the elites and bourgeoisie in the society.

Moreover, the words "Kongreso," "Malakanyang," and the lines "IN GOD WE TRUST sabi ng obispo, "ALL OTHERS PAY CASH" reveal corruption in the country. The first word, "Kongreso" signifies corruption. The poem tells us that we need to beware of dogs in Congress. It implies that some lawmakers are puppets and "tuta" of the administration that cannot balance the government. There is an alleged practice of bribes in the lawmakers in the country, such as the controversy of pork barrel or Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF). The second word, "Malakanyang" conveys corruption. In the poem, Juan dela Cruz went to the said place even without incense. It is a substance that's burned to produce a fragrant scent. In other words, the said place smells bad. The last lines also indicate corruption. The poem tells us that there is also corruption in the church. In the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International, a non-profit organization that monitors the state of global public-sector corruption, the country ranked 113th of 180 countries studied on their perceived political integrity.

The data show that the sociopolitical context through the local colors, namely customs and settings on the first play-poem by Jose Lacaba, encompasses poverty in the Philippines, corruption of government officials, discrimination, rebellion, littering, traffic, air pollution, and prostitution in the Philippines.

Figurative Languages

Table 2. Figurative Languages Analysis

First Play- Poem	Figurative Languages	Sociopolitical
"Ang Kagila-Gilalas Na Pakikipagsapalaran Ni Juan Dela Cruz"	BAWAL PUMARADA sabi ng kalsada (personification)	traffic
	BAWAL UMIHI DITO sabi ng bakod (personification)	littering/ dirty streets
	MAG-INGAT SA ASO (personification)	corruption
	nahulog sa pusali parang espadang bali- bali (simile)	prostitution
	Pusturang-pustura kahit walang laman ang bursa (oxymoron)	poverty
	Humikab ang dagat na parang leon (simile)	littering

The first play-poem reveals several sociopolitical context using figurative languages: one oxymoron, two simile, and three personification.

The oxymoron comes from the line "pusturang-pustura kahit walang laman ang bursa". Oxymoron is a figurative language pairing two words together that are opposing and contradictory. This line signifies that Filipinos will do everything to look good despite having no money in their pocket. Looking good and no money are two conflicting words. This manifests poverty as a sociopolitical context in the Philippines.

Moreover, two lines used simile in the poem. A simile is a figurative language in which two inherently different items or concepts are explicitly compared using the words "like" or "as." The lines "nahulog sa pusali parang espadang bali-bali" and "humikab ang dagat na parang leon" compare one object from another using the word "like". The first line tells us about prostitution. In the poem, Juan dela Cruz looks for a girl; however, girls look for cash, and it seems like the character in the poem fails. Meanwhile, the second line shows littering. The waves of the sea are so big. However, it is mentioned in the verse that it is full of garbage.

Furthermore, three lines are used as personification in the poem. A personification is a form of metaphorical language in which a concept or object is given human characteristics and sentiments or is spoken of as human. The lines "Bawal Pumarada sabi ng kalsada", "Bawal Umihi Dito Sabi Ng Bakod", and "Mag-Ingat Sa Aso" signifies persona in the poem. The first line signifies that the road reminded the character not to stop in a specific place. It represents traffic in a sociopolitical context. This practice was put into law to decongest the existing traffic problem in the country, particularly in the Philippines. Meanwhile, the second line conveys the fence reminded the character not to pee in a specific area. It signifies littering/ having dirty streets in the country. This is caused by being undisciplined by some Filipinos. It is observed as a practice to stop in the country. Lastly, the third line, "Mag-Ingat sa Aso" gives persona to the lawmakers as the character visited the Congress. The researcher evaluates it as personification as it defines lawmakers as dogs. This conveys corruption as some of the

lawmakers bribed by the administration to lobby their intentions in the separate branch of the government, such as the Congress' controversy of pork barrel.

The data show that the sociopolitical context through the figurative languages namely personification, simile, and oxymoron on the first play-poem by Jose Lacaba encompasses traffic and littering of the streets in the Philippines, prostitution and corruption in the Philippines, and the corruption of government officials.

Messages

The researcher analyzes the first play poem and uncovers the overall messages of the poem using the theories. It shows that Juan dela Cruz represents the ordinary Filipino people, especially in the lower class. The common people without power, money, and influence are experiencing unjust and unfair treatment from the society they live in. The play- poem also signifies that the people are victims of incompetent and corrupt government officials. The poem concluded that the people with lower-class status put up arm-struggle and rebelled against the government because of the oppression and inequality that they were experiencing in their daily lives. The poem also reminded us not to blame the poor people who took arms in the revolution but blame the corrupt officials for their bad governance. The said poem was written by Jose Lacaba during the Martial Law era. However, it is also manifested that the struggles and oppression of the system such as discrimination, corruption, and rebellion as the sociopolitical contexts still exist in our society today.

The data reveal that the sociopolitical context through the messages of the first play-poem of Jose Lacaba deals with the corruption of government officials, discrimination of unjust and unfair treatment of the society, and rebellion of the poor people against the bad governance and incompetence of corrupt government officials.

4. Conclusion

With the application of Gustave Flaubert's realism and Karl Marx's Marxism theory on the data, the study confirms that the first play-poem of Jose Lacaba has sociopolitical context embedded in their literary elements through the analysis of its local color, figurative languages and messages aspects of the play-poem.

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