

Narratives of Compulsory Heterosexuality Struggles of Filipino Lesbians in the Selected Poems from Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writings

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality, this research investigates narratives and struggles of Filipino lesbians as depicted in selected poems from "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writings." Rich's theory, which describes heterosexuality as a social imperative and not an option available to women, can serve as a critical lens to understand Filipino literature more fully. This research exposes the profound effect of Rich's conception of society on the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ community members in the Philippines. Through careful investigation using qualitative content analysis, themes of social pressure, economic dependence, and compulsory heterosexuality become evident. The findings underlined the urgency of acknowledging and challenging these deeply entrenched struggles, drawing attention to the potential damage imposed by societal norms and perceptions that persist over time. The conclusion of this research calls for greater inclusivity, representation, and support of the LGBTQIA+ community. Institutions across various sectors should actively foster understanding, acceptance, and celebration of diverse narratives to enrich the human experience.

KEYWORDS

Filipino lesbian poems; compulsory heterosexuality; lesbian writings

INTRODUCTION

In the rich selection of Filipino literature, poetry has always been a powerful medium for self-expression of the most profound emotions, societal observations, and cultural narratives. While much of the country's literary history has been dominated by traditional themes, a growing body of work that delves into marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQIA+, is fast emerging. Literary works like *Ladlad Anthologies*, *Philippine Gay Culture*, *Riverrun*, *Bagay Tayo*, and *Wildfire* have made rounds to educate the masses in upholding the rights of the gay community in the Philippines (Escalante, 2023).

According to Erlita et al. (2017), three themes are present in the first published book about gay literature in the country, namely, (1) *Life in the Closet*, (2) *Coming Out*, and (3) *Living in the Life of a Gay Person*. The ideas presented in *Ladlad Anthology* have encapsulated the struggles of the LGBT community in their day-to-day living. The work of Jhoanna Lyn Cruz: "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing," on the other hand, is a collection of narratives expressed in stories and poems that brings women loving women into the open by making them visible in their terms. The word tingle prompted writers to define their terms and enactment of lesbianism. Most of the pieces were about the sparked recognition that one

loves a woman as a woman. There is a growing need to analyze the background of these problems in the status quo.

Analyzing the circumstances undergone by the LGBTQIA+ community, discrimination and bullying are always on the list, especially for those who openly declare themselves. (Tang & Poudel, 2018). These settings are usually circulated among families, communities, and schools. Though the Philippines is known to be one of the most LGBT-friendly countries in Asia (De Guzman, 2022), one cannot deny that demeaning tags like "bakla," "tomboy," "bading," etc. have been used to describe someone's weakness and deviance in society. The dynamics of sexuality and gender are intertwined with the nation's history, religious beliefs, and traditional values (Collantes, 2018; Dery et al., 2019). It can be noted that the Filipino culture, predominately Roman Catholic, emphasizes traditional gender roles and family structures. Such values have amplified the struggles of Filipino gay communities.

Compulsory heterosexuality has been widely studied in gender and sexual studies. Rich (1980) describes this as societal pressures that position heterosexuality as the default and superior orientation, leading to systemic discrimination against those who do not conform. One cannot deny the influence of societal markers of religion and culture played a big part (Bataui, 2022).

The majority of the struggles of the LGBT movement in the Philippine context are documented mainly on the side of gay people, which is usually associated with those with male biology. The research gap, therefore, lies in the representation of Filipino lesbian communities. This paper fills the documentation of the struggles by looking at the narratives employed in compulsory heterosexuality. It will analyze how the selected poems in "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing" impact the lives of Filipino lesbians.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in primary theoretical perspectives: Adrienne Rich's concept of "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Given the struggles of Filipino lesbian women in the Philippine context, the aim is to provide a lens on how these experiences reflected in the poem affected their lives.

Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality suggests that heterosexuality is not simply a sexual preference but a societal construct that enforces heterosexuality as the norm and marginalizes or suppresses all non-heterosexual identities, particularly lesbianism. (Rich, 2003) argues that women's sexuality has been oppressed and controlled within a patriarchal society, which confines women's sexual relationships within the sphere of male-centered relationships. This concept is a foundational theoretical lens for examining the depiction of sapphic struggles within Filipino lesbian writings, specifically selected poems.

Several vital mechanisms reinforcing compulsory heterosexuality are socialization and education, economic dependence, legal and institutional structures, violence, and the threat of violence. (1) Socialization and education cover the presented narratives emphasizing romantic fulfillment as a life goal. (2) Economic dependence, on the other hand, refers to a woman's financial well-being, dependent on their relationships with men, compels many to entertain heterosexual relationships for economic security. (3) Legal and institutional structures are laws and societal norms that privilege heterosexual marriage and parenthood, thus reinforcing the expectation of heterosexuality. Furthermore, last is (4) violence and threat of violence, in which Rich (1980) underscores how male violence against women acts as a form of control that upholds compulsory heterosexuality.

Given the practices and roles of women in Philippine society, they are expected to be married and bear children. This supports Rich's claim that women are forced to embrace a predetermined structure to follow. This is even highlighted by the notion of Maria Clara's

depictions of women, which promotes the beauty of women through the values of modesty, purity, and chastity (Charnina & Maguddayao, n.d.). Maria Clara is a character in Jose Rizal's novel that exemplifies what a Filipino woman should be. These famous icons, however, defined the limitations of women and their role in society.

Another idea that Rich emphasizes is the notion of Lesbian existence as resistance. It is visible in society that the lesbian continuum encompasses a range of woman-identified experiences, from profound friendships to romantic relationships. By acknowledging and valuing relationships, women can challenge the narrative of compulsory heterosexuality. It should be noted that the embodiment of resistance to male dominance and validation of women's inherent worth should be measured from the outside contexts of their relationships with their male counterparts (Gay et al., 2022a).

Employing the framework of understanding mandatory heterosexuality will help gain deeper insights into the records of Filipino lesbian experiences in the Philippines. The poems that will be analyzed will look at the depicted experiences and pressures that will celebrate the myriad ways Filipino lesbian struggles in the complex cultural landscape. The methodology includes a detailed analysis of the selected poems from the Anthology Tingle, employing close reading, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis to identify recurring motifs and themes, the representation of lesbian characters and relationships, and commentary on heteronormativity and gender norms.

The implications of this study extend beyond academia. By illuminating underrepresented voices and experiences, we aim to contribute to a broader understanding and recognition of sapphic struggles and resistance within a heteronormative society.

Objective of the Study

This research explores the narratives of compulsory heterosexuality and their impact on Filipino lesbians, as presented in selected poems. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the struggles of Filipino lesbians under the pressure of compulsory heterosexuality represented in these selected poems in terms of:
 - 1.1. Socialization and education
 - 1.2. Economic dependence
 - 1.3. Legal and institutional structures
 - 1.4. Violence and threat of violence?
2. What distinct themes emerge from these depictions?

RESEARCH METHODS

The study explored the different narratives of compulsory heterosexuality in Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writings through the lens of Adrienne Rich's discussion on Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. The approach was used to identify the different experiences and narratives present in the selected poems of Filipino Lesbian Poets about their struggles with the pressure imposed by their society's heteronormative.

The study used a qualitative research method, specifically a close reading of the selected poems involving a detailed analysis of the texts to identify the struggles, interpret the data, and identify themes. The researcher made sure that the texts were read multiple times in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the depictions of struggles and the emerging themes of the poems (Ibrahimi, I., Haqiqat, H., & Shafaqat, S. (2021).

Data collection was done by gathering and organizing evidence from the text, such as quoting lines that illustrate depicted struggles and analyzing them through thematic analysis for themes. Other textual examples were analyzed and cross-referenced to secondary sources.

Overall, the research methodology aimed to provide a deeper analysis of the selected poems from the Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writings, particularly on the struggles experienced under the pressure of compulsory heterosexuality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. *What are the struggles of Filipino lesbians under the pressure of compulsory heterosexuality represented in the selected poems in terms of:*

- 1) *Socialization and education*
- 2) *Economic dependence*
- 3) *Legal and institutional structures*
- 4) *Violence and threat of violence*

Title of the Poem	Struggles of Filipino Lesbians				Compulsory Heterosexuality
	Socialization and Education	Economic dependence	Legal and Institutional Structures	Violence and threat of violence	
Piko by Naro Alonzo (POEM 1)	<p>Stanza 1 Lines 1-3 <i>Mum of Tree trunks we've undressed off their bark, pamato we tossed to mark our</i></p> <p><i>Mine's. Each of us has a house</i></p> <p>Stanza 2 Lines 1-2 <i>for keeping, the other was forbidden to touch...</i></p>	<p>Imagery: <i>Houses and private property</i></p>	<p>Stanza 3 Line 3 <i>roof palm erasing the walls</i></p> <p>Stanza 4 Line 1: <i>of your private property</i></p>	<p>Stanza 3 Line 1-3 <i>...Goliath in all</i></p> <p><i>Her breasts and brawn breakthrough your</i></p> <p><i>Roof, palms erasing the walls</i></p> <p>Stanza 4 Line 1-2: <i>of your private property, smearing the skeleton,</i></p> <p><i>Of our subdivision on my pure blue skirt</i></p>	<p>The indicated narratives of struggles from the identified stanzas and lines are summed up into:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Piko game served as a metaphor for the institution that confines women to societal norms and roles set by society. (Stanza 1-Line 1-3; Stanza 2-Line 1-2) 2. Symbols: Houses and private property picture economic dependence. Those who do not conform to societal norms can interpret the act of one's house as being destroyed or trespassed upon as an economic vulnerability. 3. Legal and institutional Structures presented in these lines "palms erasing the walls of your provide property" suggest legal barriers that lesbians might face in society, alluding to societal structures that dictate how they should live.

					Feelings of violation by Filipino lesbians are narrated as they conform to society's standard, which hints heteronormative conformance.
Brrroom by Naro Alonzo (POEM 2)	Stanza 1 Lines 1-2: We pretended to wear helmets, riding-in-tandem on a walis tingting as police gave chase. Outmaneuvering		Stanza 1 Lines 1-2: We pretended to wear helmets, riding-in-tandem on a walis tingting as police gave chase. Outmaneuvering	Stanza 9 Line 2-3 to Stanza 10 Lines 1-3 <i>to refill the weapon used to clear dead leaves from our eden where our mothers waited by its doors, took ourescape and crashed it against our legs. Over and over, burning buds of mosquito bites into bouquets of rash. We could be mis- taken for gashed trunks if looked at from afar, but this close, we could only feel the rise of ghosts' invisible soles.</i>	The indicated narratives of the poem can be summed up into the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The poem vividly portrays childhood memories intertwined with deeper themes of identity and societal expectations faced by Filipino lesbians under heteronormativity. 2. In Stanza 1, Lines 1-2 show a children's game that often mirrors societal roles and norms. The act of pretending to be chased by the police reflected scrutiny and judgment from society, who failed to perform the expected role. 3. There was no clear idea of economic independence in the poem. 4. Legal and institutional structures are metaphorically represented in the imagery "Being chased by the police." This hints at the idea that society is mindful of the societal deviance of lesbians who intend to display affection. (stanza 1: lines 1-2) 5. Stanza 10, Lines 1-3 supports the depiction of physical violence or mental punishment possibly inflicted on those who defy societal expectations. The narrative of compulsory heterosexuality is evident that societal expectations faced by Filipino lesbians would lead to detachment



					and discrimination by their family and cultural affiliation.
For Mama by Camille Rivera (POEM 3)	Stanza 1 Lines 1- 4 <i>L1 When I told my mother about the first girl I loved</i> <i>L2 and how it ended, her voice got caught in her throat.</i> <i>L3 It wasn't just static over-the-phone line.</i> <i>L4 She was stunned at how she could still be needed</i> <i>L5, after all this time, by her first-born no less,</i>	Stanza 1 Lines 7-8 <i>L7 the way I did when she boarded a plane</i> <i>L8 to work in another country more than ten years ago.</i> Stanza 2 Line 1 <i>L1 After a failed marriage and numerous bank loans,</i>	Stanza 2 Line 1 <i>L1 After a failed marriage and numerous bank loans,</i>		The poem's narrative on compulsory heterosexuality is reflected in Stanza 1, Line 1, which indicates hesitance to share her struggles about love for the same sex. The initial shock of the parent shows the heteronormative norm that is expected of a Filipino woman to be in love with a man. The numerous experiences of the parent (woman) led her to come to an understanding with the daughter (lesbian) of her needs and make a move of comforting, as reflected in Stanza 2- Lines 3-7. <i>L3 love is shutting the door of your house and leaving the</i> <i>L4 keys,</i> <i>L5 knowing everything you hold dear is right behind it?</i> <i>L6 All she said was Darling,</i> <i>L7we cry every time we are born.</i>
The Jacuzzi Party by Aida Santos (POEM 4)	Stanza 2 Lines 1-2; Lines 5-6 <i>L1 women in the jacuzzi</i> <i>L2 shirts thrown in abandon</i> <i>L5 we swim in our heads</i> <i>L6 desires, perhaps, stirring quietly</i>		Stanza 2 Lines 8-10 <i>L8 i see your breasts carved</i> <i>L9 against the blue waters</i> <i>L10 i am confused, like this racing liquid</i>	Stanza 2 Lines 4-5 <i>L4 translucent upon our skin;</i> <i>L5 we swim in our heads</i> Stanza 3 Lines 2-5 <i>L2 as i touch, oh very lightly</i> <i>L3 my own breasts</i> <i>L4 connecting with the warmth</i> <i>L5 of an unknown</i>	Recognizing another woman's beauty and ensuing confusion directly hint at the compulsory heterosexual narrative. This exemplifies the internal battle between innate feelings and external societal expectations. The Jacuzzi Party offers subtle nods to the struggle of being shaped to follow the norm.

What I Think About While I Am Going Down on You by Jhonna Lynn B. Cruz (POEM 5)	<i>L4 my Tita Sonia's specialty: beef shank bulalo stewed for six L5 hours in a sour soup;</i>	<i>L11 the Lumix camera I've been wanting to buy; L12 what's taking you so long;</i>	<i>L6 your husband, singing "Please Release Me" in your living L7 room, to the delight of his police posse munching on L7 room, to the delight of his police posse munching on</i>	<i>L6 your husband, singing "Please Release Me" in your living L7 room, to the delight of his police posse munching on</i>	Filipino lesbians are governed with the challenges imposed by the society they follow. The juxtaposition of intimacy and mundanity emphasizes how the mind can wander during the moments of physical intimacy—suggesting that the act is perfunctory or void of genuine emotional connection from the persona. Culture and traditions imposed by society are evident that women, particularly lesbian Filipinos, are halted from engaging and being obedient to the norm because of the favors they could get. They are afraid to face the consequences of being deviant to heteronormativity.
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Compulsory heterosexuality is evident in most cultures (Fabillar, Fellizar, et al., 2019; Lawal, 2020). The societal construct of mandatory heterosexuality is apparent in the selected poems in Tingle: Anthology of Lesbian Writing. The struggles portrayed by Filipino lesbian women can be broken into four aspects, as discussed by Rich (1980), which are socialization and education, economic dependence, legal and institutional structures, and violence and the threat of violence.

Socialization and education

Norms, values, and expectations are determining factors that create the social construct of gender. In the struggle narratives about societal expectations, it is evident that most selected texts contain descriptions of societal expectations thrown at women on how they should act. Socialization and education are pivotal elements that create this heteronormative norm among Filipino lesbians. Taken from the poem Piko- Stanza 1, lines 1-3; Stanza 2, lines 1-2 are markers that provide a socialization context where children learn societal norms and roles through games. This defines territories that can be seen as a metaphor for society assigning gender and sexual roles to its members. The word "pamato" capsulizes the norm of Filipino gender roles, setting the venue for obedience to promote order. In the game of Piko, a player should be able to throw the stone in the right area to be in the game. Once the pamato is placed on the other player's territory, the opponent can play their turn, even in some cases, will be disqualified to play if they cannot pass to other owned domains. This is a picture of how norms are delivered in the Philippines; there is a need to comply with society's demand to follow gender roles.

In the second poem, Brroom, Stanza 1, lines 1 and 2, "walis tingting as police gave chase. Outmaneuvering invisible sirens with our battle cries", evoke the idea of societal watchdogs

who police behaviors that are not aligned to societal gender accepted behavior. This provides a picture that if one is deviant from the regular norm, one could expect punishments to be experienced. With its stringent ideas of femininity and relationships, the educational system might be represented by this chasing police. Moreover, in private spaces, there is an internal struggle, which is often a result of years of socialized beliefs about sexuality; lines 5-6 of stanza 2 of the poem, Jacuzzi Party, "we swim in our heads desires, perhaps, stirring quietly," indicates the woman that can be attracted to another woman, is self-policing herself because of the adopted heteronormativity norm. This leads to harm in how they look at their identity.

Lesbian women in the Philippines are always silent on the forced conformance to societal norms; lines 7-9 in the poem "What I Think about While I am Going Down on You" shed light on heteronormative figures embedded in social and educational spheres. The act of thinking of the figures: "L4 my Tita Sonia's specialty: beef shank bulalo stewed for six; L5 hours in a sour soup;" in intimate moments signifies the omnipresent pressure and scrutiny from society. Additionally, even the lines of the poem, Lost in Cubao, "Is there a prayer against a lewd gaze of theater billboards carrying metaphors of vinegar, oil, and open doors," captures the societal influence of perception. The public displays, like billboards, often serve as educational tools on what is acceptable. Thus, lesbian identity is alienated and viewed as 'other,' pushing the protagonist to question her place in society.

Overall, the selected poems support the idea of compulsory performativity in the gender roles of women in Philippine society.

Economic Dependence

A robust reflection of societal pressures and vulnerabilities faced by lesbians is economic dependence. Rich's (1980) seminal idea of compulsory heterosexuality under heteronormativity norm is not just a societal expectation. However, it is ingrained and enforced through various economic ties between society and Filipino lesbians. Alonzo's Piko delves into the use of evocative imagery wherein the game Piko becomes a metaphor for societal institutions that confine women, particularly lesbians, within rigid roles. By drawing parallels between the breaking of a house and the violation of societal norms, Alonzo underscores the economic vulnerabilities faced by those who dare to deviate.

In the poem Brroom, Alonzo again captures the societal expectation of looking at the innocent lens of children's games. The act of pretending to be chased by policy serves as another metaphor for scrutiny faced by lesbians in Filipino society, particularly challenging the status quo. The poem explores societal expectations and economic responsibilities. The house's symbolic use suggests the idea of providing property and the potential vulnerability of its inhabitants, especially when there is defiance of the imposed norm. As quoted, "Each of us has a house... for keeping, the other was forbidden to touch..." (*Stanza 1-Line 1-3; Stanza 2-Line 1-2*). This economic pressure sets the tone for the most common marker of power, in which embedded benefits like food, shelter, and clothing are provided. When there is deviance on the part of Filipino lesbians, they will be stripped of these benefits.

Moreover, in the work of Camille Rivera, "For Mama," there is a glimpse of economic layers of dependence in the narrative. The mother's financial struggles and choices are juxtaposed with the daughter's revelations. These lines: "When she boarded a plane to work in another country more than ten years ago. After a failed marriage and numerous bank loans" (Stanza 1, Lines 7-8; Stanza 2 Line 1), reflects the Filipino financial struggles after being separated from their heterosexual relationship. This also provided intimate reactions and ramifications of coming out to a family, which the mother's daughter materialized in the poem. Economic undercurrents influence relationships and understanding within the family structure.

The Jacuzzi Party did not address economic themes of struggle. There is a backdrop of potential economic affluence, suggesting that financial stability does not necessarily equate to freedom from societal norms. On the other hand, Cruz's poem subtly intertwines moments of intimacy with hints of material aspirations and desires, as seen in the mentioned parts: "The Lumix camera I've been wanting to buy" (*Line 11*); these highlight the economic dependence and constraints. The narrative provides a window into the societal pressures to perform heteronormative roles, possibly to ensure societal and financial stability.

Legal and Institutional Structures

In the rich panorama of Filipino lesbian experiences portrayed in the chosen poems, the inherent challenges arising from legal and institutional structures are conspicuous. This recurrent motif of maneuvering through sociocultural terrains, which frequently amplifies their adversities, resonates strongly with Adrienne Rich's groundbreaking concept of "compulsory heterosexuality." Rich, in her seminal work "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," argues that heterosexuality extends beyond a mere sexual orientation—it functions as a potent political tool, systematically sidelining, marginalizing, or erasing non-conforming sexual identities, especially lesbianism.

The verses of Naro Alonzo, particularly "Piko" and "Brrroom," are vivid testaments to these systemic pressures. "Piko" proffers the metaphor of "palms erasing the walls of your private property" (Stanza 3, Line 1-3), which paints arresting imagery of societal—and potential legal—forces seeking to invalidate or diminish lesbian unions. This mirrors Rich's articulations about the historical and systemic erasure or diminution of lesbian existences and relationships. Concurrently, the imagery of "being chased by the police" in "Brrroom" (Stanza 1, Lines 1-2) conjures a world where deviations from heteronormative constructs invite not mere disdain but active prosecution, a reality that aligns with the vigilant surveillance and regulation Rich highlights.

However, the anthology showcases diverse narratives; not all confront societal impositions directly. Pieces like "For Mama" by Camille Rivera emphasize interpersonal dynamics and familial ties, while "The Jacuzzi Party" by Aida Santos offers an introspective plunge into self and societal perception. Even within these varied narrative styles, one can trace the subtle tremors of societal impositions, attesting to Rich's idea of an omnipresent push-pull between individual authenticity and externally enforced heteronormative scripts.

Melding these intricate patterns, when viewed through the lens of Rich's profound insights, the selected poems reveal a poignant tapestry. Filipino lesbians, as depicted, are not merely grappling with personal quests for identity and belonging but are also entangled in a larger, often adversarial, dance with societal and juridical frameworks that resist granting them their deserved place in the vast mosaic of human narratives.

Violence and Threat of Violence

LGBTQIA+ people have experienced discrimination in many cases. This theme of violence and the threat of violence consistently manifests throughout the selected poems. Allegorical violence represents the palpable hardships confronting Filipino lesbians, mainly where conventional or heteronormative values are deeply rooted.

The poem "Piko" depicts struggles and confrontations with societal norms and heteronormativity, hinting at this looming violence. The lines, *"Goliath in all her breasts and brawn breakthrough your roof, palms erasing the walls,"* paint an imagery of overpowering force. This could indicate a societal or even self-inflicted form of violence as one grapples with the confines of societal expectations. One could be emotionally harmed

as one navigates the day-to-day dealings. Moreover, these experiences are well documented, as even others who have not come out yet are afraid to confront these realities.

Brrroom by Naro Alonzo presents a more explicit representation of violence. The childhood game where "police gave chase" is not just an innocent portrayal of playful antics but holds more profound implications. This chase can be interpreted as societal scrutiny or even the threat of punitive actions towards those who stray from accepted societal norms. The ensuing lines, where children's play is met with a harsh reaction, "crashed it against our legs. Over and over, burning buds of mosquito bites into bouquets of rash," reflect physical and emotional violence. This reiterates the harsh realities faced by those, particularly Filipino lesbians, who defy or do not fit within the societal mold.

The emphasis on inner turmoil and self-discovery rather than overt violence is the focus of the Jacuzzi Party. Lines like "i see your breasts carved against the blue waters, I am confused like this racing liquid" depict the protagonist's internal confusion. While not directly violent, this confusion might stem from the societal judgments and possible backlash associated with such feelings and self-realization. The concept of what is right and wrong in society is usually the moral compass of lesbians. Thus, deviance from the norm often leads to self-harm by not accepting their uniqueness (Gay et al., 2022).

Lastly, What I Think About While I Am Going Down on You by Jhonna Lynn B. Cruz** introduces a more complex dimension to the theme. The mention of "your husband, singing 'Please Release Me'" suggests a clandestine relationship with a married woman. Such liaisons in traditional societies could lead to potentially violent consequences if discovered. The poem subtly touches upon the emotional and psychological violence that arises when individuals are pressured to lead dual lives, torn between societal obligations and personal desires.

The poems provide poignant insights into the varying forms of violence- direct, emotional, or psychological- experienced by Filipino lesbians. Whether it is the overt threats or the more subtle emotional conflicts, the pain of existing in societies bound by heteronormative values is deeply felt throughout the verses.

Compulsory Heteronormativity

The selected poems serve as a profound exploration of the challenges faced by Filipino lesbians as they navigate a society steeped in compulsory heterosexuality. Coined by Adrienne Rich, 'compulsory heterosexuality' refers to the societal enforcement of heterosexuality as the default while often sidelining or suppressing other sexual identities. The impact of this dominant societal norm resonates deeply within the poem, hinting at the emotional, economic, and even legal repercussions of non-conformity.

One of the poem's notable strengths is its adept use of metaphor and symbolism. For instance, the 'Piko game' stands as a vivid metaphor, alluding to how societal norms and roles are embedded in even the most innocent childhood games. Similarly, the symbolism of 'houses' and 'private property' eloquently captures economic dependence and vulnerability themes. Such images serve as poignant reminders of how ingrained heteronormative values can become within everyday cultural practices and societal systems.

The poem also sheds light on the broader legal and institutional challenges Filipino lesbians might confront. Lines that touch upon "palms erasing the walls of your private property" are not mere poetic flourishes; they reflect the natural barriers and societal structures that govern and sometimes constrict their lives. This entwining personal emotions with societal constructs makes the poem's narrative incredibly impactful.

An incredibly evocative section of the poem delves into the parent-daughter dynamic. Initial reactions of shock or denial from the parent, which likely mirror broader societal

sentiments, evolve into understanding and acceptance. This transformation can be seen as a metaphor for society's potential journey from ignorance toward genuine acceptance. Nevertheless, the emotional weight of this journey, especially for Filipino lesbians, is palpable throughout. References to possible physical violence or mental punishment underscore the severe challenges of deviating from societal norms.

The poem's subtle nuances, such as the juxtaposition of intimacy with mundanity, further enrich its narrative. Such juxtapositions remind us of many's internal turmoils when grappling with genuine emotions and societal expectations. For instance, the allusion to intimacy devoid of real emotional connection speaks volumes about the emptiness that can accompany societal conformity.

Lastly, the poem hints at the double-edged sword of culture and tradition. On the one hand, they are the bedrock of identity and offer a sense of belonging. On the other, they can act as chains, especially when they confer benefits for adherence to heteronormative standards. Thus, Filipino lesbians find themselves in a precarious position, torn between the allure of societal benefits and the desire for authentic self-expression.

1. What distinct themes emerge from these depictions?

Emerging themes	Meanings
Nature and Personal Intimacy	The recurring use of natural imagery intertwined with personal, intimate moments suggests that love and desire are as organic and natural as the landscapes described. This challenges the idea of heterosexuality as the only "natural" form of attraction. The poems argue for its innate presence in the human experience by associating same-sex intimacy with nature.
Navigating Cultural Norms and Identity	The societal expectations and cultural norms that permeate these poems reinforce the weight of compulsory heterosexuality. For instance, the poem "For Mama" touches on the difficulty of coming out and the tension it causes within the family unit, a primary institution where heterosexual norms are reinforced.
Memory and Nostalgia	The recollection of childhood memories and past events underscores how early compulsory heterosexuality starts to influence our lives. For instance, childhood games and moments of innocent intimacy, as seen in "Brrroom," become loaded with meaning when viewed through the lens of adulthood and societal norms.
Desire and Longing	The raw portrayal of desire and sensuality between women in these poems directly challenges compulsory heterosexuality by centering and validating same-sex attraction.

The recurring use of natural imagery intertwined with personal, intimate moments in the poems suggests that love and desire between individuals of the same sex are as organic and intrinsic as the landscapes described. This challenges the idea that heterosexuality is the sole "natural" form of attraction. By drawing parallels between same-sex intimacy and nature, the poems argue for its innate and inherent presence in the human experience, counteracting the often-held belief that heterosexual love is the default.

One of the most poignant themes in these poems is the navigation of cultural norms and identity. The societal expectations and the weight of cultural norms that resonate through these verses underscore the pervasiveness of compulsory heterosexuality. For example, the poem "For Mama" touches on the profound difficulty and emotional upheaval of coming

out, highlighting the tension it can cause within the family. In this institution, heterosexual norms are deeply entrenched. By shedding light on the struggles faced by Pinay lesbians when their desires and identities deviate from societal expectations, the poems emphasize the personal and societal cost of such deviations. This not only amplifies the pervasive nature of compulsory heterosexuality but also emphasizes the courage it takes to defy such norms.

Memory and nostalgia, as themes, play a crucial role in reflecting how early the influence of compulsory heterosexuality starts. Through recollections of childhood memories, such as those in "Brrroom," these poems underscore how moments of innocence and intimacy during youth become laden with profound meaning when viewed through the adult lens of societal norms. By revisiting these memories, the poems convey a yearning for a time when societal constructs did not so tightly bind love and attraction. This challenges the idea that heterosexuality is the sole valid form of love, even from an early age.

Lastly, the raw and candid portrayal of desire and longing between women in these poems directly affronts compulsory heterosexuality. By entering and validating same-sex attraction, these poems reject the narrative of heterosexuality as the only or primary form of love and intimacy. In "WHAT I THINK ABOUT WHILE I AM GOING DOWN ON YOU," the juxtaposition of domestic, everyday thoughts with an intimate act underscores the ordinariness and ubiquity of same-sex desire, thereby challenging its perceived "otherness."

In conclusion, the themes in the shared poems from "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing" offer a profound critique of compulsory heterosexuality. Through evocative imagery, deeply personal narratives, and raw emotional expression, these poems illuminate the lived experiences of Pinay lesbians. They underscore their formidable challenges in a heteronormative world and their love and desires' profound beauty and validity. Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality is a critical lens, allowing readers to discern these poems' resistance and resilience against societal pressures and entrenched norms.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of themes within the selected poems from "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing" unveils a world that often remains obscured in mainstream literature. In this world, the societal construct of compulsory heterosexuality looms large. These poems, laden with evocative imagery, poignant narratives, and raw emotional articulation, mirror the intricate, multifaceted experiences of Pinay lesbians. They highlight these individuals' nuanced struggles, from societal expectations and familial pressures to internal conflicts and the quest for self-acceptance.

While the challenges presented are manifold, painting a picture of a heteronormative landscape that often marginalizes and misrepresents, there is a simultaneous undercurrent of resilience, resistance, and empowerment. The poems do not merely depict a passive acceptance of societal norms; instead, they echo the profound beauty, authenticity, and validity of sapphic love and desires. They become a testament to the strength and endurance of the Pinay lesbian community in the face of adversity.

Using Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality as a foundational framework, this study delves deeper into understanding how societal pressures shape, constrain, and inadvertently galvanize resistance. The poems, in their essence, stand as powerful narratives that challenge entrenched norms and offer a fresh perspective on love, identity, and resistance. They emphasize the importance of visibility, representation, and the validation of experiences that, for too long, have been overshadowed.

"Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing" is a collection of poems and a movement championing the voices of those often relegated to the periphery. It is a clarion call for

understanding, acceptance, and celebrating diverse narratives in the tapestry of human experience.

Recommendation

- **Literary Inclusion:** To foster inclusivity and representation, educational institutions and literary bodies are encouraged to include anthologies like "Tingle: Anthology of Pinay Lesbian Writing" in their curricula. By doing so, they can provide a platform for marginalized voices, breaking stereotypes and promoting understanding.
- **Further Research:** Future studies should delve deeper into the myriad experiences of the broader LGBTQIA+ community in the Philippines, specifically focusing on intersectionality. Such research can uncover nuanced narratives that remain hidden within broader categories.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Governmental and non-governmental organizations should initiate awareness campaigns highlighting the struggles of the Pinay lesbian community. By shedding light on their experiences, society can move towards acceptance and understanding, reducing discrimination and prejudice.
- **Cultural Introspection:** Cultural and religious bodies should engage in introspection and dialogue regarding their teachings and beliefs, especially those that might perpetuate heteronormative ideals. Open conversations can lead to more acceptance and less stigmatization of non-traditional gender and sexual identities.
- **Support Systems:** There is a need for more robust support systems, both formal and informal, for the Filipino lesbian community. Mental health resources, community centers, and safe spaces can provide crucial support and refuge for individuals facing societal pressures and discrimination.
- **Artistic Expression:** Encouraging more literary and artistic expressions from the LGBTQIA+ community can serve as both therapeutic for the creators and educational for the audience. Funding and platforms for such expressions can lead to a richer cultural tapestry, showcasing the diverse experiences within the Philippines.

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