

# The Metamorphosis of Filipina: Intersecting Cultural Beliefs and Norms in *Teleserye*

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DOI: 10.63941/OCCKatatau.2026.1.1.06



## Article Information

**Received:** January 12, 2026

**Accepted:** February 23, 2026

**Published:** March 25, 2026

### Keywords

*Archetypes; Contradictions; Metamorphosis; Modern Filipina; Semiotics*

## ABSTRACT

Teleseryes have long been a cherished part of Filipino culture, serving as a shared experience for families and loved ones. This study conducts an intersectional analysis of the teleserye "Wildflower," focusing on themes and character portrayals to scrutinize the depiction of modern Filipina archetypes and their impact on Filipino perspectives. Through the lenses of Feminism (Helene Cixous), Deconstructionism (Jacques Derrida), and Semiotics (Ferdinand de Saussure), it examines how the actions of the lead character, intended to subvert patriarchal hegemony, are perceived and evaluated. While feminist analysis reveals women scriptwriters' tendency to emphasize action scenes, deconstructionist insights suggest that attempts at empowerment may inadvertently reinforce existing patriarchal structures. Additionally, semiotic analysis uncovers symbolic elements enriching the narrative. Therefore, the study synthesizes Filipino sensibilities regarding gender, power dynamics, and societal norms, illustrating the transformation of female characters from passive figures to empowered modern Filipinas, reflecting broader shifts in societal attitudes and values. This study proposes conducting a comparative analysis with other teleseryes featuring diverse themes and genres to observe the transformation of women in contemporary society.

## INTRODUCTION

People adapt to the ever-changing landscape of their environment, as captured in the famous quote by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "The only constant in life is change." These societal shifts have far-reaching effects on culture and individuals. In the context of gender equality, women challenge traditional gender roles, asserting their humanity and equal standing in society (Graff et al., 2019). As "modern women," they embrace their values and demand equal rights across social, economic, and political spheres. They break free from male dominance to carve out their own identities (Hudson et al., 2012) as they characterize themselves as undergoing a process of metamorphosis. In politics, figures like the late Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago (known as the 'iron lady of Asia') epitomize this modern womanhood, defining themselves through action rather than conforming to cultural norms as the patriarchal society surrounding them. This reflects Cixous' call for women to break free from silence and assert their independence (Mendoza, 2012). Additionally, contemporary writers, irrespective of gender, often explore themes centered around women in their works either in literature or television.

In the Philippines, Filipinos enjoy watching dramas every night with their families in the living room. Quirante and Sugbo (2010) mention that people use television for different reasons. Some see it as a company at home, while others enjoy its soap operas, making them part of their daily routine. Additionally, television serves as entertainment, turning some viewers into devoted fans who connect with the characters and actors. These Filipino dramas are known as 'teleserye,' derived from 'tele' for

television and 'serye' for series, encompassing a wide range of TV soap operas. Their origins can be traced back to the early serial dramas on the radio in 1938. Over time, teleseryes have been influenced by various factors, including American soap opera norms such as avoiding conclusive endings, focusing on contemporary settings and domestic issues, incorporating didactic elements for product promotion, and targeting narratives at female audiences (Sanchez, 2021). They have also drawn from the rich storytelling traditions of the Philippines. This blend of influences has contributed to the distinct identity and popularity of the teleserye genre in Filipino media. In other words, teleseryes play an important role in Philippine television, contributing to the success and popularity of networks. They portray different facets of Filipino life, including families, values, culture, corruption, and poverty. Filipino drama is characterized by melodramatic serialized fiction, traditionally crafted with subtlety and decorum. However, teleserye content has become more diverse, extravagant, and liberating over time, reflecting changing viewer tastes and expectations across generations.

Furthermore, in a patriarchal society, various representations of women are widely celebrated in prominent media such as movies and television programs (Gill, 2016). While some teleseryes still feature women conforming to the traditional "Maria Clara," "Please be Careful with my Heart," "Kapanerang Kuba," and "Darna" roles, embodying the idealized image of a Filipina dictated by society, many of today's top-rated teleseryes diverge from such mainstream and stereotypical portrayals of female characters. Contemporary series showcase female protagonists and antagonists who exhibit strength and power, challenging conventional perceptions of femininity (Angulo et al., 2019), like "Wildflower." These characterizations empower women by deviating from the norm, granting them a voice and agency beyond traditional stereotypes, thereby fostering empowerment and liberation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Structuralist and Semiotic Perspective in Film***

In a study led by Hendra (2013) from Universitas Pamulang "Unpam" Tangerang Selatan, qualitative research was conducted under the title "An Analysis of Characterization of The Main Character Using Feminism In Film Iron Lady." The aim was to scrutinize how the main character's portrayal aligned with feminist perspectives. Utilizing qualitative methods, the researcher analyzed various sources, including biographies, journals, magazines, scripts, and the movie itself, to gain insights into characterization and feminism in film. This study concentrated on characterizing the main character through a feminist lens.

Building on this foundation, the current research aims to analyze the values embodied by characters in the "Dead Poets Society" movie. Through descriptive analysis, the study seeks to uncover the virtues depicted by characters, drawing evidence from dialogues and character actions (Lankford et al., 2002). Unlike previous studies primarily focused on educational values, this research aims to explore a broader spectrum of values depicted in the film. Set in an academy or high school setting, the movie portrays various conflicts involving students, parents, teachers, and the school environment, shedding light on the educator's role in shaping young minds.

The initial study titled "Exploring Semiotics in Haroun Hashem Rashid's Lyrics: A Peircean Perspective" (Mohammadi et al., 2016) adopts a semiotic approach, focusing on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. Mohammadi's research analyzes Haroun Hashem Rashid's lyrics, revealing the motif "Al-Awda" as a subtle sign elucidating the poet's intent, with Rashid employing symbols, hyperboles, synonyms, and allusions in his compositions. Contrasts between Mohammadi's study and the researcher's include the choice of theoretical framework, with the researcher opting for Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory instead of Peirce's. Additionally, while Mohammadi utilizes Rashid's lyrics as the primary data source, the researcher selects poems by John Milton.

The second previous study, "Deciphering Symbolism in Selected Short Stories by Edgar Allan Poe" (Jandaghi & Zohdi, 2018), focuses on identifying symbolism in Poe's works such as "Hop-Frog" (1850), "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1842), and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), employing Herman Northrop Frye's symbolism theory. Conventional symbols are identified in these short stories. Contrasts with the researcher's study include the choice of theoretical framework, with Jandaghi and Zohdi utilizing Frye's symbolism theory instead of Riffaterre's. Furthermore, while they use Poe's selected short stories as the data source, the researcher employs selected poems by John Milton.

The third investigation concerning semiotics is "Unraveling Semiotic Hidden Codes in William Faulkner's Short Story 'A Rose for Emily'" (Satria, 2018). Satria adopts a semiotic approach akin to the researcher's methodology, utilizing Roland Barthes' five systems of codes, including Action code, Hermeneutic code, Cultural code, Semic code, and Symbolic code. The study aims to unearth concealed codes and unravel their significance within Faulkner's narrative. The findings reveal the presence of three codes—Action, Hermeneutic, and Cultural—in the story. Contrasts between Satria's investigation and the researcher's include the choice of theoretical framework, with Satria employing Roland Barthes' theory while the researcher utilizes Michael Riffaterre's. Additionally, Satria examines Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" as the primary data source, whereas the researcher analyzes selected poems by John Milton.

The fourth exploration, "Deciphering the Semiotics of Edgar Allan Poe's Poem 'The Raven'" (Balan, 2015), aims to elucidate semiotic principles in general. Balan employs theories proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, with Poe's poem "The Raven" serving as the primary data source. The findings suggest that the raven symbolizes loneliness, death, and hopelessness. Contrasts between Balan's study and the researcher's include the research focus, with Balan concentrating on semiotics in the poem as a whole, while the researcher delves into identifying symbols and their meanings. Moreover, Balan utilizes Poe's "The Raven" as the data source, whereas the researcher examines selected poems by John Milton.

The fifth investigation, titled "Deciphering Semiotic Elements in William Shakespeare's 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark'" (Atrinawati, 2018), aims to uncover the fundamental narrative structure, key signifiers, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic aspects within the drama. Employing semiotics and close reading as methodological approaches, the study identifies prime signifiers present in William Shakespeare's work. Contrasts between Atrinawati's research and the current study include the research objective, with Atrinawati focusing on elucidating the basic narrative scheme, prime signifiers, paradigmatic, and syntagmatic aspects of the drama, while the current research delves into identifying symbols utilized in poems and their associated meanings. Additionally, Atrinawati utilizes William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" as the primary data source.

The sixth exploration, "A Semiotic Analysis of Cigarette Products" (Prasojowati, Natsir, & Ariani, 2019), seeks to determine the efficacy of visual imagery in conveying messages, particularly to active smokers. Employing qualitative methods and content analysis, the study draws upon theories from various experts. The findings indicate that visual images effectively communicate messages to recipients, particularly active smokers, albeit not potent enough to deter smoking. Contrasts between their research and the current study include the data source, as they examine visual images of cigarette products, while the current study analyzes selected poems by John Milton. Additionally, their research objective is to assess the communicative efficacy of visual images, whereas the current study aims to identify symbols and their meanings within the texts.

The seventh study, titled "Examining Gender Equality in Television Media: A Semiotic Analysis of Fair and Lovely Advertisement on Marriage versus Master's Degree" (Dwita & Wijayani, 2018), aims to scrutinize the portrayal of gender equality within Fair and Lovely advertisements. Employing a semiotic approach and drawing upon Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the study utilizes a qualitative

interpretative method. The primary data source for the research is Fair and Lovely advertisements. The findings reveal that visual cues in the Fair and Lovely advertisement depict women and men as equals, particularly in career and education domains.

Contrasts between Dwita & Wijayani's research and the current study include the theoretical framework utilized, as Dwita & Wijayani employ Structuralism theory, while the current research adopts Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. Additionally, there is a disparity in the data sources, with Dwita & Wijayani analyzing "Fair and Lovely" advertisements, whereas the current research examines the teleseryes portrayed by women.

### ***Deconstruction in Film Analysis***

Movies appeal to people of all ages and have the ability to transport viewers into imaginative worlds, evoking feelings of joy and happiness (Metz, 1974). This contends that movies offer auditory and visual aids that enhance students' understanding of various subjects (Hu, 2006). In fact, this characterizes deconstruction as a dual process (Enwald, 2004), breaking down hierarchical binaries while introducing new conceptual frameworks. Habib (2005) defines deconstruction as a novel approach to interpreting texts, challenging traditional interpretations.

Gill (2010) emphasizes the significance of main characters in narratives, noting their complexity and transformative journey throughout the story. Fadhilah (2010) applies deconstruction to analyze the feminist attributes of Veronica Franco in the film "A Destiny of Her Own," revealing contradictions in her portrayal as an independent woman who ultimately relies on men for support and decision-making.

Sya'roni (2017) utilized deconstruction theory in her research to delve into the portrayal of protagonists and antagonists, as well as the concepts of good and evil, in the film *Suicide Squad*. Despite being categorized as villains, the main characters in the movie assume the roles of protagonists, blurring the traditional lines between heroism and villainy. Her study reveals a dynamic shift in character roles, highlighting that they are not fixed or absolute; villains can metamorphose into protagonists and even emerge as the saviors of the world, contingent upon their intentions and the circumstances they face.

In a parallel study, Ardini (2017) examined the binary opposition between the main character and minor characters in the animated film *Moana*. Her findings emphasize the equality of each character's contribution to the storyline. Characters such as Moana's father, mother, grandmother, and Maui all play important roles in shaping Moana's journey toward becoming a strong and independent woman. This analysis underscores the collaborative nature of character dynamics, emphasizing that every character, regardless of their prominence, plays a significant part in advancing the narrative.

In her research, Sayekti (2018) employs deconstruction theory to analyze the portrayal of Alice in the movie *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. The film depicts Alice as a woman capable of strength and equality with men. Through her analysis, the researcher reevaluates Alice's character from a different perspective. The findings suggest that despite appearing independent and strong, Alice's autonomy is compromised by the influence and authority of her father.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a qualitative approach, which, as described by Ratna (cited in Santosa, 2015), falls within the context of social science research that deals with non-numerical data, focusing on interpreting the collected data's meanings. Put simply, qualitative research eschews numerical data, instead presenting findings through sentences or paragraphs. Specifically, this study aligns with

descriptive qualitative research (Nassaji, 2015), which aims to depict phenomena and their attributes. This research design suits teleserye (i.e., discourse) analysis well, as it relies solely on descriptive methods for data analysis and presentation, devoid of numerical analysis typically associated with quantitative research. Additionally, due to the nature of the data source—teleserye—it is impractical to employ numerical analysis, further justifying the qualitative approach.

### ***Data Collection***

The sources of data are taken from the teleserye ‘Wildflower’ portrayed by women. Only Episode 5 of the ‘Wildflower’ was written by a Male scriptwriter, and Episode 14 was written by a Female scriptwriter. The researcher uses two types of data: Primary and Secondary data. In this research, the primary data is taken from the dialogue and scenes related to the character of ‘Lily Cruz’ or ‘Ivy Aguas’ in the ‘Wildflower’ teleserye. The secondary data is taken from various sources. They are collected from journals, articles, and books that deal with structuralist and semiotic, Cixiou’s feminist writing, deconstruction theory, and the teleserye.

Several preparatory steps have been undertaken to facilitate this research endeavor. Initially, the process entails thoroughly watching the selected teleserye to gain a comprehensive understanding of their narratives. This in-depth comprehension serves as a foundational requirement for identifying various significant aspects pertinent to the study's objectives. Subsequently, the research delves into specifying the focal topic, focusing on the analysis of symbolic features and elements embedded within the teleserye. This analytical phase aims to uncover underlying themes and motifs crucial for elucidating the cultural and social contexts depicted in the narratives. Finally, the research involves the systematic collection of pertinent data and information, which serves as the basis for subsequent analysis and interpretation. This meticulous data-gathering process ensures the acquisition of valuable insights essential for advancing the research objectives and contributing to scholarly discourse.

### ***Research Data***

In this recent study, the research data were drawn from a popular teleserye, 'Wildflower,' one of the remarkable revenge-themed teleseryes aired on the ABS-CBN network, wherein women played the leading roles. The teleserye features female protagonists who navigate through diverse life experiences. Through an exploration analysis, the researcher aims to explore the intersectionality of this teleserye, examining how various social structures and cultural symbols are depicted. The study will delve into structuralism, semiotics, Cixous's theories on gender and writing, and Deconstruction to uncover underlying themes and messages within the narratives. Additionally, the researcher will collect supplementary data such as audience reception and critical reviews to enrich the analysis and provide a comprehensive understanding of the teleseryes' significance in Filipino media culture.

### ***Data Analysis Procedure***

In this study, the researcher employed a multifaceted approach to analyze the teleserye, incorporating the intersectionality of structuralism, semiotics, feminist theory, and deconstruction. By applying these theoretical frameworks, the researcher aimed to uncover the underlying structure and symbolism within the narratives, particularly focusing on how women are portrayed within a patriarchal society. The feminist perspective provided insights into the diverse roles and representations of women, considering the perspectives of both male and female writers. Additionally, Derrida's deconstruction theory facilitated the examination of themes such as strength, leadership, and traditional gender roles by revealing hidden meanings and challenging binary oppositions present in the teleserye. Through this comprehensive analysis, the researcher sought to offer nuanced conclusions and insights into the portrayal of gender dynamics and societal norms in Filipino media culture.

### ***Ethical Consideration***

In this recent study, the researcher utilized publicly accessible media platforms such as social media (i.e., YouTube) and television, which are widely shared and consumed by the general public. When utilizing public media, obtaining explicit consent may not always be necessary (Moreau et al., 2022), especially when the study's outcomes are presented in aggregated form, where individual data remains within its original context and is not disclosed publicly. However, it is incumbent upon the researcher to uphold macro-informatic ethics to ensure that the aggregation of data is conducted in a manner that sufficiently safeguards privacy and prevents harm or distress to individuals involved in the study, considering the current circumstances.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The principles of Gestalt psychology have had a profound impact on education, emphasizing the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Koffka, 2013). However, despite its influence, this idea has faced scrutiny and sparked debates among critics. While it is acknowledged that individuals often assess the value of something based on its overall impression, it cannot be ignored that numerous components contribute to its composition. In evaluating and appraising a piece of work, the details play a crucial role as they form the basis of the entire entity (Wageman et al., 2012). This highlights the importance of considering both the holistic perspective and the individual elements when assessing the quality or significance of something.

### Structuralism

In literature, the structure of every narrative is crucial, as it determines how the writer constructs their story. Tyson (1950) suggests that structuralist analyses of narratives delve deeply into the inner workings of literary texts to uncover the fundamental structural components, such as narrative progression units or functions, like character roles, that govern the narrative dynamics of texts. Within the context of structuralism, Todorov's (1975) narratology is often employed to analyze the plot formula of a text, providing a framework around which a writer's work revolves. Understanding this plot formula aids readers in comprehending the story and unlocking its themes. Applying Todorov's plot formula to the Wildflower *teleserye*, the researcher identified a "Search-Revenge-Liberation" narrative pattern, which forms the essence of the *teleserye*'s storytelling. By utilizing this plot formula, the researcher illustrates how the narratives within the *teleserye* shape the story and breathe life into the central female character. Additionally, by analyzing the narrative structure through this lens, deeper insights into the themes and character development of the *teleserye* are revealed.

**Search.** The protagonist starts the quest to search and uncover the identity of those individuals responsible for the murder of her family or the ones who ordered their killings. The narrative begins with the Cruz family leading a tranquil life in the town of Ardiente. Her father, serving as a public lawyer, was actively involved in litigations against the town's Mayor, particularly in cases concerning human exploitation and land or property disputes that affected the marginalized. The story takes a tragic turn when Lily Cruz, the protagonist, innocently witnesses the brutal torture and murder of her family. Fleeing for her life, she becomes the target of the assailant, who seeks to silence her to maintain the facade of peace and order in the town, even if it means resorting to further violence. The family responsible for ordering the massacre believed they had succeeded in eliminating the entire Cruz family, unaware that the protagonist had managed to escape. Similarly, in the study of Maglogiannis et al. (2020), the theme of 'searching' is connected to other common movie themes and topics: life self-discovery, finding one's identity, looking for meaning in life, and trying to understand society and human nature.

**Revenge.** The protagonist, now 'Ivy Aguas' (formerly known as Lily Cruz), found herself orphaned and taken in by a wealthy widow named Prianka Aguas. Under Prianka's care, she received education and physical defense training, shaping her into a formidable individual. As she matured, she inherited

her stepmother's company, providing her with financial stability. However, tragedy struck when Prianka succumbed to cancer, leaving the protagonist emotionally prepared to seek vengeance for her family's murder. Throughout the *teleserye*, unexpected plot twists kept viewers on the edge of their seats, enhancing their engagement with the storyline. Returning to Ardiente under the guise of Ivy Aguas, the protagonist sheds her previous persona of demure innocence, emerging as a strong and empowered figure. This transformation or metamorphosis marked a significant evolution in her character, allowing her to execute her revenge plan with determination. Her ultimate goal was to infiltrate the Ardiente family and orchestrate their downfall, ensuring they experienced the same devastation her own family had endured at their hands. Revenge is a popular and enduring theme in cinema that taps into primal human emotions like anger and the desire for justice or retribution (de Queiroz, 2016). It makes for compelling stories that resonate with audiences.

**Liberation.** The protagonist's infiltration of the Ardiente Family was part of her elaborate plan to revitalize and invest in the financially struggling town of Ardiente. With the family facing bankruptcy and needing funds for their political aspirations, Ivy strategically acquired some of their assets to finance her own agenda. As the *teleserye* unfolded, Ivy's pursuit of liberation took on deeper meaning as she uncovered secrets within the Ardiente Family, including the revelation of her imprisoned mother. This discovery added another layer to her quest for justice and freedom from the Ardiente's tyranny. As the antagonist, the Ardiente Family faced devastating consequences, ultimately leading to their downfall at the hands of Ivy's scheme. Scholars such as Sim (2014) and Workman (2015) assert that liberation often emerges as a struggle against oppression, whether it manifests politically, socially, or personally. In the *teleserye*, Ivy's journey exemplifies this theme as she navigates through obstacles to reclaim her agency, find empowerment, and break free from the constraints imposed by the Ardiente Family and society at large.

Generally, the *teleserye* was structured by its theme of 'search-revenge-liberation' based on Tyson's Structuralism Analysis. The narrative analysis thoroughly explores the inner workings of literary texts, diving into their intricacies to identify the essential structural components and functions that shape the narrative. This approach scrutinizes elements such as the narrative's progression and the characters' roles, shedding light on how these factors contribute to the overall construction and operation of the text (Tyson, 1995). This detailed examination unravels the underlying mechanisms driving the narrative and its impact on the reader's experience. Below is the structuralism of the *teleserye* as the protagonist undergoes a metamorphosis in her character in the story.

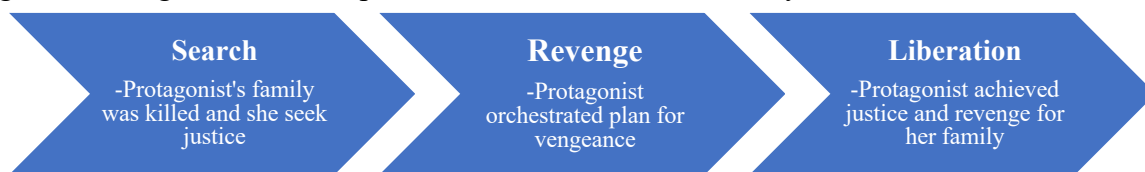


Figure 2. The Structuralism of the Wildflower

### Semiotics

Semiotic analysis of film looks at elements like cinematography as films communicate meaning through various cinematic codes and conventions (Mega & Tawami, 2022). These include iconic signs (images that resemble what they represent), indexical signs (images that indirectly represent something by showing its effect), and symbolic signs (images that have no obvious connection to their meaning but rely on shared cultural knowledge) (de Saussure, 2011). In the context of the *teleserye*, this recent study extends to analyzing the visual elements comprising it, aiming to unveil deeper layers of meaning beyond its structural aspects.

**Flower.** In episode 5 of the *teleserye*, the appearance of the wildflower serves as a powerful symbol reflecting the overarching theme of the narrative, embodying strength and resilience. Similar to the

wildflower, the protagonist demonstrates an innate ability to endure and thrive despite challenging circumstances, symbolizing her unwavering determination and fortitude. The imagery of the wildflower resonates with viewers, offering a poignant reminder that resilience and perseverance can flourish even in the face of adversity. Building on this symbolism, Pears (2005) elucidates that wildflowers are inherently resilient and capable of flourishing in the wild without human intervention. They possess adaptability and resilience, able to withstand diverse environmental conditions such as drought, extreme temperatures, and animal disturbances. This botanical metaphor enriches the narrative, providing deeper insight into the protagonist's journey and the underlying themes of resilience and empowerment depicted in the *teleserye*.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEIj0U8KLO0> (Ep 5 | Wildflower | time 4:55)

Figure 3. The Wildflower

**Chest or Treasure Chest.** The act of burying the chest containing memories and mementos symbolizes the protagonist's desire to bury the painful past and start anew. As she lays her family's keepsakes to rest, she metaphorically bids farewell to the traumas and hardships that plagued her life. However, the reappearance of the chest following her stepmother's death serves as a haunting reminder of the unresolved issues and challenges she must confront. Opening the chest can symbolize the protagonist's journey towards self-discovery and healing or unresolved conflicts, as she confronts and embraces the cherished parts of herself buried within. According to Cronbach (1984), the act of unlocking or opening the chest can represent the process of accessing and reconnecting with one's innermost thoughts, emotions, and memories. As the protagonist delves into the contents of the chest, she embarks on a profound introspective journey, seeking understanding, closure, and empowerment.

Younger Age

Adult Age



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEIj0U8KLO0> (Ep 5 | Wildflower | time 2:34 & 24:10)

Figure 4. The Treasure Chest

**Windmills.** The windmill farm, which is symbolically situated where the corrupt political dynasty, the Ardiente family, resides, carries symbolic weight, especially considering their political influence and

naming the town after their surname, "Poblacion Ardiente." Each family member's involvement in government positions adds another layer of complexity to the narrative or storyline. With Emilia serving as the former Mayor, Arnaldo assuming the current position as Mayor, and Julio holding the title of Governor, the Ardiente family's influence extends beyond their immediate sphere. This political entanglement underscores their power and control over various aspects of governance, amplifying the stakes for the protagonist's quest for justice and retribution. This semiotic connection draws parallels to the real political landscape in the Philippines, where powerful families often control resources and wield influence over entire regions or communities. Undoubtedly, in the northern regions of the Philippines, where the *Baguni Windmill* stands, politicians who were corrupt, antagonistic, and dictatorial figures reminiscent of Julio Ardiente reside.

The *terno*, a Filipino dress, was popularized by First Lady Imelda Marcos as her signature attire during her husband Ferdinand Marcos' presidential campaign, showcasing its significance in Philippine fashion history (Roces, 2008). Emilia's preference for the symbolic Filipiniana *terno* and Julio Ardiente's attire in *barong* during significant events echoes the fashion choices of the Marcos family in their era, signifying authority and prestige as national leaders. Much like the way windmills harness wind power, these families utilize their influence and wealth for self-gain, often disregarding the welfare of the common people.



Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kPpSLnrg\\_A&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kPpSLnrg_A&t=17s) (Ep 6 & 5 | Wildflower | time 1:02 & 25:40)

Figure 5. *The Windmill Farm and Terno*

**Black Bridal Gown.** The wedding ceremony, often marked by elaborate rituals, holds special significance in many cultures. In modern weddings, the bridal dress takes center stage, serving not only as a symbol of marriage customs but also reflecting the wearer's personality, femininity, and social norms, such as the tradition of the white bridal dress. Contrary to the perception of unchanging cultural traditions, the styles and colors of bridal attire have evolved over time, influenced by fashion trends, cultural shifts, and individual circumstances (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2014). The iconic white wedding dress, for instance, emerged relatively recently, around 150 years ago in the mid-19th century. In the *teleserye*, the protagonist's choice to wear a black bridal dress carries symbolic weight, representing mourning and sorrow rather than the usual celebration associated with weddings.

Similar to Arvanitidou & Gasouka's (2014) study, in times of mourning, brides dress in somber colors such as black, gray, or purple for their weddings. This practice reflected the solemnity of the occasion and the mourning process. This unconventional choice is further emphasized by the inclusion of a violet bridal bouquet, historically tied to themes of remembrance, notably used as funeral flowers in ancient Rome. This tradition suggested that the bride (i.e., protagonist) was not experiencing joy or celebration as she made her way down the aisle. Instead, her attire conveyed a sense of sorrow or mourning, reflecting the somber mood of the occasion.



Figure 6. The Black Wedding Gown

**Gold Dress.** The dress adorned with gold symbolized wealth, luxury, success, and high status, while also representing quality, sophistication, and elegance (Rudolf et al., 2011). In the *teleserye*, during the victory celebration, the protagonist garnered attention by wearing a stunning gold dress. Amidst speculation, particularly from the Ardiente family, that Ivy Aguas had been buried alive on Emilia Ardiente's orders due to her interference in Julio's political aspirations for governorship, the situation posed a crisis for the Ardientes as Ivy was believed to be dead while Lily Cruz remained alive. During the discourse, the protagonist boldly proclaims, "Black is out, Gold is in! Just like Gold, I am indestructible!" This portrayal of gold as indestructible resonates with Rudolf et al.'s (2011) study, which highlights the ancient Egyptian use of precious metals, such as gold, as currency due to their perceived indestructibility. The protagonist's choice of wearing a gold dress symbolizes her resilience and strength, suggesting that she cannot be easily destroyed or defeated. This metamorphosis from Ivy Aguas to Lily Cruz signifies her newfound power and determination to overcome any obstacles in her path (Ivy Aguas is out, Lily Cruz is in).



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inCt0J7pcuw> (Ep 168 | Wildflower | time 2:50)

Figure 7. The Gold Dress

### Celebration of Feminism

Jung (2014) posits that the archetypes are recurring patterns found in images, characters, and narrative structures. They represent universal themes and symbols that appear across various forms of literature and discourse. This paper aims to explore the recurring themes and images depicted by the main female character in the *Wildflower teleserye*. "Revenge has never been this wild" (Ocampo, 2023) serves as the captivating tagline for this highly-rated *teleserye* directed by Onat Diaz and starring Maja Salvador, Joseph Marco, RK Bagatsing, Vin Abrenica, and Roxanne Barcelo. The story revolves around Lily Cruz, whose life is plunged into chaos when her family encounters the powerful Ardiente family, led by Don Emilio. Lily's parents are killed by Emilia, but she narrowly escapes death (Librarian, 2017). In her quest for justice and vengeance, she transforms into Ivy Aguas, a courageous woman determined

to seek retribution for her family. This transformation serves as a central theme in the narrative, highlighting the protagonist's resilience and strength in the face of adversity.

Employing discourse analysis to evaluate the value of the *teleserye*, specific episodes were deliberately selected to act as focal points for examining its content within the view of male and female scriptwriters on gender roles. Utilizing framing analysis and employing basic methods such as coding, comprehension, synthesis, theorization, and identifying nominal type in the discourse, recurring themes were identified. Through this analysis, two prominent archetypes emerged, shedding light on the series' underlying narrative structures and character portrayals.

**Female versus Male Episode Writers**

From a functional point of view (Halliday, 1994), the language choices made by males and females often reflect different focuses on the topics being discussed. Thus, men's and women's communication can vary based on what they consider important or relevant to convey to the reader. For example, men may tend to emphasize certain aspects of a topic that align with their perspective or interests, while women may prioritize different elements. This distinction in linguistic signaling contributes to the overall dynamics of communication between genders and highlights the diversity of perspectives within language use.

*Table 1. The Nominal Type Used Female and Male Scriptwriters*

Nominal Type	Female Scriptwriter: <i>Bridgette Ann Rebuca</i> Episode: 14	Male Scriptwriter: <i>Melchor Escarcha</i> Episode: 5
Common Nouns	530	423
Proper Nouns	222	207
Pronouns	230	193
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>823</b>

In the *teleserye* 'Wildflower,' there is a noticeable difference in the dialogue based on the gender of the scriptwriters. Female writers tend to incorporate more common nouns into the dialogue compared to their male counterparts, who often rely on pronouns, especially if the names of characters have been mentioned previously. Moreover, female writers, exemplified by Bridgette Ann Rebuca, frequently utilize proper nouns to emphasize specific individuals, such as addressing characters by name (Ep 13: "I need to talk to you Arnaldo... Ms. Aguas..."), thus personalizing their messages. This was supported by the study of Argamon et al. (2003), which found that there is a significant difference between male and female-authored documents in the use of pronouns and certain types of noun modifiers. Although it was observed that the total number of nominals used by male and female authors is identical, females use many more pronouns than males.

On the contrary, male scriptwriters, like Melchor Escarcha, favor pronouns to establish continuity between different mentions of people or objects. There was also a discernible pattern in the choice of pronouns, with female writers more inclined to use explicit gender-specific pronouns like "she" or "he," while males tend towards more generic pronouns like "sila" or "siya." Additionally, the writing styles of the two genders differ; female writers typically adopt an 'involved' style, aimed at engaging the audience emotionally, while male writers prefer an 'informative' style (Argamon et al., 2003), focused on delivering factual information. These linguistic nuances contribute to the overall tone and impact of the storytelling, shaping the viewer's/reader's perception of the characters and events unfolding in the narrative.

In the initial episodes of the *teleserye*, women scriptwriters predominantly craft the dramatic scenes, setting the stage for the protagonist, Lily Cruz, whose life is shattered when she witnesses the Ardiente family's brutal murder of her parents, leaving her orphaned and subsequently adopted by a wealthy businesswoman. However, as the narrative progresses into episodes 5-8, which are written by male

scriptwriters, the focus shifts to the protagonist's transformation into Ivy Aguas, a character who adopts a more action-oriented role and undergoes physical changes.

Table 2. The Gender Role and Genre of the Teleserye

Episodes	Genres	
	Female Writer	Male Writer
S1. E1: Blossoms	Drama	
S1. E2: Ligalig	Drama, Political	
S1. E3: Lily takbo	Drama, Political, Crime	
S1. E4: Sagip	Drama, Political, Feminism	
S1. E5: I'm back		Action, Feminism
S1. E6: Unang sulyap		Political, Action
S1. E7: Bitag		Political, Revenge

This transition between the two phases of the storyline reflects an interesting dynamic in *teleserye* production, where different gender perspectives influence the portrayal of female characters. The observation that male scriptwriters tend to emphasize action and physicality aligns with existing research suggesting that men may struggle to authentically capture the female experience in their writing (Lange, 2008). It is plausible that male writers may fear facing skepticism or criticism for their portrayal of female characters, perhaps due to concerns about deviating from traditional masculine gender roles. This gendered approach to storytelling underscores the complexities of gender representation in media production, highlighting the need for diverse perspectives to accurately capture the nuances of female characters in narrative storytelling.

### Archetypes of Filipina in *Teleserye*

The main character in the story breaks away from traditional depictions of lead female roles, presenting Ivy as a liberated and unconventional woman. She is portrayed as independent, intelligent, empowered, daring, and career-driven, all attributes that drive her relentless pursuit of avenging her family from the Ardiente. This portrayal diverges from the conventional "Maria Clara" image (Ocampo, 2023), which typically sets the standard for Filipina characters. Unlike many mainstream *teleserye* heroines, who embody moral righteousness and serve as role models, Ivy's characterization offers a refreshing departure from the norm. In the narrative, she embodies the essence of a modern Filipina, relying solely on her own strength and determination rather than conforming to societal expectations. Ivy's portrayal celebrates female empowerment, challenging gender norms and establishing a strong identity in a male-dominated world. Her decisiveness and rational thinking underscore her independence, as she navigates complex situations without succumbing to emotional impulses. Unlike the stereotypical "Maria Clara," Ivy is a blend of independence and intelligence, driven by a singular goal (Ocampo, 2023). Despite her romantic involvement with Diego, she refuses to let her emotions dictate her actions, prioritizing her mission above all else. This portrayal of Ivy represents a departure from conventional female lead roles (Frankel, 2014), offering a nuanced and empowered perspective that challenges traditional stereotypes.

A contemporary Filipina embodies a blend of traditional and modern traits: she exhibits the nurturing qualities akin to Mary—compassionate, caring, and family-oriented—while also asserting her independence, recognizing her significant roles as a woman, and advocating for her rights. These characteristics, rooted in her quest for justice for her family, underscore her pursuit of retribution and empowerment (Ocampo, 2023). In responding to the inner voice urging her to action, she effectively challenges patriarchal norms as she overcomes and manages to lay cards in legal action as her revenge and seeks justice from her family. Furthermore, her depiction reflects the resilience of the modern Filipina who, amidst societal pressures and the struggle against entrenched machismo, asserts her autonomy. The narrative of "search-revenge-liberation" reaches its climax as she exacts justice upon

the Ardiente and secures the retribution her family deserves. This portrayal not only celebrates her strength but also highlights her agency in shaping her own destiny.

### The Ambiguities in the *Teleserye*

In her quest for justice, Ivy Aguas comes to the realization that she must undergo a profound transformation into a resolute and empowered woman in order to seek retribution against the Ardiente family. This pivotal moment underscores the narrative's portrayal of women as dynamic individuals with agency and inner strength, challenging the notion of female passivity. The teleserye subtly incorporates feminist themes, particularly in its depiction of Ivy's journey from vulnerability as Lily to empowerment as Ivy Aguas. This transformation represents a rebellion against patriarchal dominance (Ocampo, 2023), as Ivy emerges as a symbol of female liberation and autonomy.

The narrative's subversion of patriarchal norms is evident in Ivy's evolution from a passive character to a determined and courageous woman. Her actions are driven by logic rather than emotion, marking a departure from traditional gender stereotypes. As Ivy assumes control of her own destiny, she asserts her independence and makes decisions based on rational analysis rather than subjective biases (Bindu, 2019). However, despite its feminist undertones, the teleserye's portrayal of women is not without its complexities and nuances, which may detract from its intended message of female empowerment.

The depiction of Ivy as a woman driven solely by a thirst for vengeance introduces a compelling ambiguity to her character. This ambiguity becomes apparent when examining how morally ambiguous characters are perceived, a topic shrouded in complexity and mystery. Numerous factors, including trauma, motives, and actions, contribute to shaping the perception of such characters (Boudry, 2022).

In the *teleserye*, Ivy is portrayed as someone who has been taught to manipulate others to further her goals. She resorts to using her own body as a tool for manipulation, viewing it as a commodity to exploit in her dealings with adversaries, notably the heir of the Ardiente family, who is soon to become her husband. These morally dubious actions, contrary to accepted moral standards, undermine the intended portrayal of Ivy as a strong and empowered character (Akhtar et al., 2021).

While the teleserye aims to represent Ivy's quest for justice and liberation from the hardships she has endured, the means by which she seeks revenge often lead her down a morally questionable path. It is suggested that Ivy does not necessarily need to resort to immoral actions to achieve justice for her family, as doing so risks compromising her own moral integrity and sense of self.

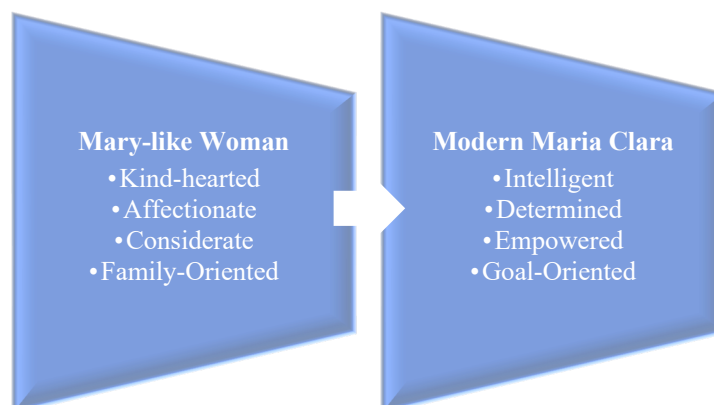


Figure 8. The Metamorphosis of Filipina in the *Teleserye*

While viewers may initially sympathize with Ivy's plight, their empathy is short-lived, as her actions are ultimately portrayed as desperate and deeply hostile. Rather than showcasing Ivy's strength, the unfolding events reveal her vulnerability and fragility. Her pursuit of vengeance for her family's sake

is driven by overwhelming grief and anger, leading to her loss of self and identity. Although the initial mistake that sparked Ivy's quest for retribution may have been made by the Ardiente family, perpetuating further wrongdoing is not the solution. As Harris (2019) aptly stated, attempting to rectify one mistake with another is akin to wielding a double-edged knife—while you may inflict harm on another, you also inflict harm upon yourself. This moral dilemma underscores the complexity of Ivy's situation and the inherent risks of seeking vengeance at any cost.

While it is undeniable that the Ardiente family bears the brunt of responsibility in the narrative, both Ivy and the Ardientes share a proportionate degree of fault. As a result, it could be argued that even if Ivy attains the justice she seeks, she will remain haunted by the repercussions of her actions. The harm she has inflicted upon those around her cannot be easily erased or rectified, meaning that even with justice served, she will never truly experience absolute freedom. The title of the teleserye serves as a metaphor for Ivy's transformation—a wildflower adrift in the dense forest of vengeance and anger, forever altered by the turmoil she has wrought.

### **The Contradictions in the Filipina Teleserye**

The traditional portrayal of women in Filipino culture often adheres to the archetype of "Maria Clara," embodying qualities of purity and submission (Maguddayao, 2016). Women are expected to conform to societal norms, serving as nurturing homemakers, dutiful wives, and pillars of the family (Lui, 2012). However, in contemporary society, women are increasingly depicted as career-oriented, independent, rational, and unorthodox in their behavior. These modern depictions accurately reflect the character of Ivy Aguas (played by Maja Salvador) in the teleserye *Wildflower*. However, rather than highlighting the strength of her feminist character, the portrayal paradoxically undermines her entire persona.

The modern archetypes and complexities presented in the teleserye shed light on the Filipino mindset and moral compass. Many Filipinos resonate with Ivy Aguas' plight after her family suffers at the hands of the Ardiente, leading them to root for her quest for justice. Filipinos tend to sympathize with characters who are oppressed and struggling against adversity, often finding themselves drawn to narratives where justice is sought for the downtrodden (Bergstrand & Jasper, 2018). The protagonist's pursuit of revenge or justice resonates deeply with viewers, fueling their desire to engage with the storyline and become fans of the character. In a sense, Filipinos become active participants in the narrative, identifying with characters that mirror their own lived experiences and realities (Durian, 2013).

The phenomenon of vicarious identification is deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, contributing to the enduring popularity of soap operas and teleseryes even in the postmodern era (Manalansan, 2014). What is particularly intriguing is that despite Ivy's departure from the traditional "Maria Clara" archetype and her deviation from long-standing moral standards, Filipino audiences remain indifferent to her character. Furthermore, even though Ivy's methods of confronting her adversaries often contradict established Filipino values, viewers still rally behind her in hopes of her triumph over the Ardiente family, finding satisfaction in her success.

The intricacies of the narrative illuminate the complex relationship Filipinos have with their dualistic morality. Despite the widespread acknowledgment that revenge is morally dubious, there remains a strong desire among people to witness Ivy exacting vengeance for her parents and obtaining justice, even if her actions diverge significantly from accepted moral standards. Furthermore, this dualistic morality is evident in the celebration of a woman's defiance against her own innate "*nature*," as she undergoes profound changes triggered by her tragic circumstances, ultimately sacrificing her identity in pursuit of vengeance for her parents.

This split-level morality underscores the evolving portrayal of women in modern teleseryes, diverging from traditional archetypes. In contemporary narratives, female characters often challenge gender norms and expectations, embodying a new persona reflective of the postmodern milieu.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Filipinos are drawn to narratives featuring women who, despite facing adversity, demonstrate resilience and courage in standing up to life's challenges. These empowered women navigate a society marked by stifling conformity, refusing to passively accept the dictates of machismo. Instead, they actively challenge and seek to dismantle the manipulative power wielded by men. Even when their actions diverge from conventional moral standards, people remain captivated by the possibility of their success. The teleserye explores themes of searching for revenge and attaining liberation, with symbolic elements enriching the storyline—whether it be the setting, objects, or attire, each contributes depth and meaning for viewers. In terms of scriptwriting, female writers often employ descriptive language, emphasizing drama and political themes, whereas male writers tend to focus more on action scenes with minimal dialogue. Indeed, the teleserye depicts a transformative journey for its female characters, evolving from Mary-like figures to empowered modern Filipinas. Its high ratings attest to its resonance with audiences, reflecting the nuanced morality inherent in Filipino culture. This teleserye represents a departure from traditional soap operas, ushering in a new era of innovative storytelling that resonates with contemporary audiences. This study suggests exploring and comparing other teleseryes featuring women across different genres to uncover various nuances within the Philippine media landscape. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the diverse portrayals of women in Filipino television and the complex dynamics at play.

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