

# The Women in the Katipunan: Assessing Lino Villanueva's *Para sa Babai, 1896*

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## ABSTRACT

The 19th-century Filipino woman has been canonized in literary and non-literary texts as passive and as an object of men manifested by the power and influence of a society ruled by the church. This paper examined Lino Villanueva's *Para sa Babai* as a primary source to interpret his message that Filipino women known as submissive can be revolutionary in an attempt to contribute to women's study and discourse. To make an in-depth analysis of the source as a historical document in the context of its time, the Revolution of 1896, the poem was supplemented with other primary sources using an intertextual approach to trace the writer's references. Lastly, the researchers posed insights and recommendations to shed light on the progress of women's representation in today's literature.

**Keywords:** *Philippine Revolution, Katipunan, Lino Villanueva, History of Women in the Philippines*

## Introduction

In the 19th century Spanish Philippines, the state of Filipino women had been already integrated into the social life of the community, and to an extent, into the colony itself. Before the end of the century, Filipino women had already joined the revolution, first against the Spaniards and later against the Americans. However, just like most women in other national histories, Filipino women, for the most part, except those who are connected to the great men of history are either not found in the narratives or only limited and briefly mentioned in books. Women are a marginalized sector during the colonial centuries and barely written about due to the limited conventional sources available.

However, this does not mean that there were no historical documents or sources that discussed women: how they made their marks and contributions to the colony and later, to the revolution. A few of these are Jose Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos* and Emilio Jacinto's *Katipunan nang manga A. N. B.-Sa may nasang makisanib sa katipunang ito* or better known as *Kartilya*. Apolinario Mabini's *The Philippine Revolution* also talks about women's respect. While these sources mentioned women's rights and roles, none of them specifically focused on women as their main topic.

In 2013, Jim Richardson published his comprehensive work on the Katipunan, *The Light of Liberty: Documents and Studies on the Katipunan, 1892-1897*. As a generous historian, Richardson made public all the primary documents that he used for his study, which are now available on his website, *Katipunan: Documents and Studies* or <http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info>.

In *Katipunan: Documents and Studies*, the researchers found a literary piece that was written by a certain Lino "Labong" Villanueva and edited by Emilio Jacinto with the title, *Para sa Babai*. This poem is an unconventional source in *Katipunan* historiography for this is a literary piece that was a product and addressed to women in 1896, at the height of the Revolution. The poem also centered on women and did not mention them in passing. It is a work that highlights women who have an active role in society and not as supporting actors for men. Hence, the researchers decided to make an in-depth analysis of the source as a historical document, and in its proper context, the Revolution of 1896.

The paper is divided into four sections. The researchers discussed the methodologies used in examining the poem from a historical and literary

perspective in the first section. Here, the researchers used the feminist perspective in analyzing the poem and an intertextuality approach in comparing and contrasting it with other sources. The second section narrated the state of the women in colonial society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century via a concise survey of Filipino women and their contribution to society and later, to the revolution as they joined the struggle for independence. The third section gave the necessary context for the poem, a brief biography of Lino Villanueva, a short background on the Katipunan, and an assessment of the poem as a historical document. In the fourth and final section, the researchers examined the poem through an intertextual approach, comparing it to contemporary documents that mentioned Filipino women such as Rizal's *To the Young Women of Malolos* (1889), Jacinto's *Kartilya* (1896), Mabini's *La Revolucion Filipina* (1931), and Laktaw's *Our Cry* (1899).

### Methodology: An Intertextual Approach and A Feminist Perspective

The intertextual approach methodology of this study required that the researchers analyze Villanueva's poem vis-à-vis its contemporary texts. Intertextuality, which was first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, is a literary theory. As Robert Pope further defined it, it is the relation of one text to another text.<sup>1</sup> It is an approach where the interpretation of the text focuses on the idea of the text being borrowed from other texts. The approach presupposes that the writer of the text is also a reader of all text written before his text.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in this paper, the researchers traced the writer's references to other texts, along with the concepts that are similar and different from the already existing texts, and even those written after the text. To be more specific, the researchers approached the poem with inferred intertextuality as a text produced by the actual responder, encompassing texts that had yet to exist during the writing of the text<sup>3</sup> being analyzed.

The researchers used other texts to interpret Lino Villanueva's *Para sa Babai*. First, the poem was read in light of other primary sources as the said sources was also read in light of the poem. Some of the historical documents used to read

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<sup>1</sup> Rob Pope, *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 245.

<sup>2</sup> Mevlüde Zengin, "An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators," *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute* 2016, no. 50 (2016): 301, <https://doi.org/10.5505/pausbed.2016.96729>.

<sup>3</sup> Pope, *The English Studies Book*, 246.

the poem are Jose Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos* (1889),<sup>4</sup> Emilio Jacinto's *Teachings of the Katipunan (The Kartilya)* (1895),<sup>5</sup> Apolinario Mabini's *The Philippine Revolution*,<sup>6</sup> and lastly, the poem *Our Cry* by a group of women that was published in *Heraldo Filipino* in 1899.<sup>7</sup> The researchers examined *Para sa Babai* to show its distinct features while showing its similarities with all the cited documents.

The researchers deem it appropriate to use a feminist perspective in studying the Filipino women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, Lilia Quindoza-Santiago's discussion on feminism in her book, *Sa Ngalan ng Ina: Sandaang Taon ng Tulang Feminista sa Pilipinas, 1889-1989* (1997) was utilized in giving a feminist perspective and assessment of its historical background, the poem, and its author. Quindoza-Santiago elaborates,

Feminism is an organized thought held by women from time to time in a certain social formation...it emerges as an ideology when women collectively experience a similar experience in a certain order and time and they have to act to fight for their right.<sup>8</sup> (Researchers' translation)

The researchers examined the two similar and collective experiences of the women that pushed them to fight for their rights—Spanish colonialism and the women's roles to the revolutionaries: as wives, mothers, sisters, and cousins.

Quindoza-Santiago further defined feminism more functionally when she remarked that a feminist is someone aware of the oppression and exploitation of women in society and its different units. A feminist is not only for women but also for men, as long as they are aware of the struggles of women.<sup>9</sup> In this paper,

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<sup>4</sup> Jose Rizal, "To The Young Women of Malolos" in *Jose Rizal: Life, Works, and Writing of Genius, Writer, Scientist, and National Hero*, Gregorio Zaide and Sonia Zaide, (Quezon City: ALL NATIONS Publishing Co., Inc.), 323-332.

<sup>5</sup> Emilio Jacinto, "Katipunan Nang Manga A.N.B. – Sa May Nasang Makisanib sa Katipunang Ito' (the Kartilya)" in the *The Light of Liberty: Documents and Studies on the Katipunan, 1892-1897*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 126-129.

<sup>6</sup> Apolinario Mabini, *The Philippine Revolution*, trans. Leon Ma. Guerrero (1BC; repr., Manila: Republic of The Philippines, Department of Education, National Historical Commission, 1969), <https://www.univie.ac.at/Voelkerkunde/apsis/aufi/history/mabini2.htm>. This was written in his exile years, but published only in 1931.

<sup>7</sup> Ma. Luisa Camagay, "Women in the Text and in Reality," *Review of Women's Studies* 6, no. 1 (1998): 11-18, <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/rws/article/view/3089>.

<sup>8</sup> Lilia Quindoza Santiago, *Sa Ngalan Ng Ina: Sandaang Taon Ng Tulang Feminista Sa Pilipinas, 1889-1989* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Quindoza-Santiago, *Sa Ngalan ng Ina*, 9.

such a definition will be applied to Lino Villanueva. Is Villanueva a feminist? Did he acknowledge the oppression and exploitation of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

Women in this study refers to Quindoza-Santiago definition of women (as a sex), a woman (as a gender), and womanhood. Woman as sex is called *babae*, *babaye*, *babai*, or *bai* in other indigenous languages. Quindoza-Santiago noted that this definition pertains to the physical, sexual, and biological aspects of the woman. Woman as gender or *ang pagkababae* is the social construct. This is where sociocultural roles and expectations are created such as the concept of virginity and motherhood. Lastly, womanhood or *kababaihan* pertains to women in totality. This is where the collective experience of women is expressed through social movements<sup>10</sup> or how the Women Chapter of the Katipunan was formed. These definitions were used to analyze if Villanueva viewed women as a sex (physical and object of pleasure), as a gender (social rules of women were mentioned many times), and as womanhood (Villanueva called for women in totality and as a sector to join the struggle for independence).

### Context: Filipino Women in the 19th Century

In the accounts of Jean Mallat, the native women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were women who did physical labor through the cultivation of the land, management of the harvest and livestock and sometimes putting up a *carinderia*.<sup>11</sup> Midwifery continued to be dominated by women and experienced midwives are called *mabuting gilot*.<sup>12</sup> Camagay further elaborated on the industry as there were many types of midwives. Some remained to be as traditional *hilot* and there are the *matronas titulares* (licensed midwives) who were in constant rivalry with each other.<sup>13</sup>

Women were not just busy in the fields or any occupation related to motherhood but they were also found in tobacco factories. Camagay observed that women who are called *cigarreras* (female cigar makers) were dominating the tobacco industry in the Philippines. This is because the Spaniards believed that

<sup>10</sup> Quindoza-Santiago, *Sa Ngalan ng Ina*, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Mallat, *The Philippines* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983), 282.

<sup>12</sup> Mallat, *The Philippines*, 283.

<sup>13</sup> A review essay of Dr. Ma. Luisa Camagay's *Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press), 1995 mentioned the rivalries between the *hilot* and *matronas titulares*. Patricia Arinto, "Working Women and Their Abrogated Lives," *Public Policy* 2, no. 2 (1998): 140-45.

women were more particular and more patient with their work and less likely to commit fraud than their male counterparts.<sup>14</sup> If they do not like the work on the farms or in the factories, women become domestic workers or *Las Criadas*. In this work, the women do the typical domestic work that they usually do for free in their household. In 1892, the rate of a *criada* was two or three pesos a month. However, the problem with these women was that they often commit theft and flee their master's house.<sup>15</sup> Women were also found in schools as teachers. With the Educational Reform of 1863, the secularization of education began. It is usually young women who enter the teaching profession. In 1892, a certain Doña Mauricia Mariano, a 13-year-old girl applied for a teacher's certificate.<sup>16</sup>

The Filipina can be found everywhere in colonial society. They were so diverse in their work but their presence was mostly felt in the activity that they loved during the precolonial times but prohibited then regulated by the Spaniards later: sex work. Women sex workers were called *mujeres publicas* or prostitutes, and there are different kinds of these *mujeres publicas*. Some are found in prostitution houses which were abundant in the areas of San Jose de Trozo. Some sell themselves in the streets like Calle Iris of Quiapo, Paseo de Azcarraga, Meisic, and Santa Elena in Tondo. Other prostitutes have loyal customers who go to the home of the client directly, while others provide service in their own homes.<sup>17</sup>

Mallat and Camagay provided in-depth studies on the socio-economic roles of the Filipino women yet their contribution to the Katipunan cause can be gleaned from Gregoria de Jesus' (Oryang) account during the Revolution:

Nang ako ay kasama ng mga kawal ng naghihimagsik sa parang ng digmaan ay wala akong pangiming sapagkat wala akong nais nang panahong yaon kundu mawagayway ang bandila ng kasarinlan ng Pilipinas; at palibhaysay kasama ako at sumaksi sa maraming laban, *upang maging ganap na kawal, ako'y nagsanay ng pagsakay ng kabayo at nag-aral ng mamaril...*<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis is ours. -Authors)

<sup>14</sup> Ma. Luisa Camagay, *Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995), 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Camagay, *Working Women*, 45-56.

<sup>16</sup> Camagay, *Working Women*, 61-69.

<sup>17</sup> Camagay, *Working Women*, 108-110.

<sup>18</sup> Mentioned by Mary Jane Rodriguez-Tatel, "Ang Kababaihan Sa Himagsikang Pilipino," in *Kababaihan Sa Kalinangan at Kasaysayang Pilipino*, ed. Mary Dorothy dL. Jose and Atoy Navarro (C&E Pubushing, Inc., 2010), 136-137.

It is evident that the women of the Katipunan were not viewed as wives, helpers, and relatives of the male revolutionaries. They were treated as an equal and fellow revolutionary. The women studied how to use different weapons, how to mount a horse, and how to hold a gun, just like their male counterparts.

In the Katipunan, women became a vital and integral part of the organization during the revolution. It was them who led the different counter-espionage against the Spaniards. While espionage is important, for the historians Augusto de Viana and Regino Paular, how the Katipunan will react will depend on the counter-espionage system of the organization which usually determines the victory or defeat of the battle.<sup>19</sup> Aside from Oryang, a certain Marina Dizon Santiago, a remarkable intelligence and keeper of documents of the Katipunan, took her oath seriously, to the point of the death of her father and the arrest of her husband. It was said that instead of surrendering the documents in exchange for the life of her loved ones, Marina Dizon Santiago burned all of them.<sup>20</sup>

To some extent, one can say that Villanueva's call for women to join the revolution and liberate the country from Spanish colonialism was not just successful but women took crucial and significant roles inside the organization. To give a bigger perspective on how many women joined the revolution, a brief list of the Filipino women revolutionaries and their known relatives or contribution:

1. Lorenza Agoncillo - daughter of Felipe Agoncillo
2. Filomena Almeida - wife of Joaquin Luna
3. Teodora Alonzo - mother of Jose Rizal
4. Melchora Aquino - Mother of the Revolution; wife of Fulgencio Ramos, a *cabeza*.
5. Florentina Arellano - writer at the *La Independencia*
6. Espiridiona Bonifacio - wife of Teodoro Plata; sister of Andres Bonifacio
7. Josephine Bracken - wife of Jose Rizal
8. Conching Calvo - daughter of a revolutionary officer
9. Camila Castro - sister of Fr. Juan Castro
10. Nicolasa Dayrit - wife of Dr. Vicente Panlilio
11. Gregoria De Jesus - wife of Andres Bonifacio
12. Simiona De Remigio - wife of Tomas Remigio

<sup>19</sup> Tatel, "Ang Kababaihan," 138.

<sup>20</sup> Tatel, "Ang Kababaihan," 138-139.

13. Carmen De Rodriguez - wife Doroteo Rodriguez
14. Hilaria Del Rosario - founder and President of *Asociacion de Damas de Cruz Roja*
15. Lucia Del Rosario - sister of Fr. Agustin Calvo
16. Carmen De los Reyes - sister of Isabelo de los Reyes<sup>21</sup>

## Context: The Katipunan, Lino Villanueva, and His Poem

### The Katipunan

Four days after the exile of Jose Rizal to Dapitan, Andres Bonifacio, together with Ladislao Diwa, Teodoro Plata, and Deodato Arellano founded a secret society on July 6, 1892: the *Kataastasan Kagalang-galang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (Highest and Most Honorable Society of the Sons of the Country) or the *Katipunan*. Its aim, according to Zeus Salazar, was to spread the concept of *bayan*. This concept was different from the *nacion* view of the propagandists. The goal of the Katipunan, then, was to complete the *Inang Bayan* and found the *Haring Bayan Katagalugan*.<sup>22</sup>

While the Katipunan tried its best to use indigenous concepts, the masonic influences were evident in the secret organization.<sup>23</sup> Katipunan applied the formulas of Masonry in the organization. Regardless, the Katipunan readjusted these formulas and made them simple, considering the early members of the organization who belong to the lower social and economic classes.<sup>24</sup> Some of the occupations of the early members of the Katipunan were draftsman, master tailor, railway baggage master, playwright, printer, mechanic, physician, clerk, customs guard, and salesman. The Katipunan follows a strict triangle recruitment method called *hasik*. Katipunan underwent a reorganization after its first Supremo. By 1896, the Supreme Council would be composed of Andres Bonifacio as Katipunan's *Supremo*, Emilio Jacinto as Secretary of State, Teodoro Plata as Secretary of War, Briccio Pantas as Secretary of Justice, Aguedo del

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<sup>21</sup> For the full list, read Tatel, "Ang Kababaihan," 146-155.

<sup>22</sup> Zeus Salazar, *Kasaysayan Ng Kapilipinuhan: Bagong Balangkas* (Lungsod Quezon: Bagong Kasaysayan, 2004), 26.

<sup>23</sup> Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 109-11.

<sup>24</sup> L. W. V. Kennon, "The Katipunan of the Philippines," *The North American Review* 173, no. 537 (1901): 210, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105201>.

Rosario as Secretary of Interior, and Enrique Pacheco as Secretary of Finance.<sup>25</sup> At this point, women were not accepted in Katipunan. Nonetheless, the wives of the members were given some responsibilities. An example of this is Perfecta Simeon, who was entrusted to the finances of *Balangay Maluningning* (San Nicolas, Maynila).<sup>26</sup>

### Lino “*Labong*” Villanueva, A Katipunero

Unlike the famous Katipuneros like Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto, there are only a few documents that mentioned the name of Lino Villanueva. Jim Richardson researched that he lived in Calle San Pedro, Santa Cruz, and was a *tabaquero* (tobacco farmer) at El Oriente factory by profession, and an owner of a *carinderia*. In August 1894, it is believed that he joined the secret organization *Kataastaasan, Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (KKK AnB) and chose the name *Labong*<sup>27</sup> or *Labon* or Swamp.<sup>28</sup> He became a treasurer (*Tagaingat-yaman*) of the Katagalugan council of Katipunan, and by 1895, he was elected to become the president (*pangulo*) of By. Kabuhayan, a branch of the former council.<sup>29</sup>

Villanueva was first mentioned as *Labong* in the minutes dated November 30, 1895, where he was introduced as the president of By. Kabuhayan.<sup>30</sup> On Christmas Day of the same year, when the Supreme Assembly of Katipunan met at Bonifacio's house, Villanueva was also present.<sup>31</sup> Only again on March 22, 1896, when the Katipueneros met again for a meeting that Villanueva was present.<sup>32</sup> He was last mentioned in the minutes of the meeting held on April

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<sup>25</sup> “The Founding of the Katipunan,” Presidential Museum and Library, accessed May 30, 2022, <http://malacanang.gov.ph/4304-the-founding-of-the-katipunan/>.

<sup>26</sup> Hermenegildo Cruz, *Kartilyang Makabayan: Mga Tanong at Sagot Ukol Kay Andres Bonifacio at Sa Kataastaasan, Kagalanggalang Katipunan Ng Mga Anak Ng Bayan / Sinulat Ni Hermenegildo Cruz.*, 1922, 36, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/adt3553.0001.001>.

<sup>27</sup> Lino Villanueva, “Pinipintuho’ kong mga kababayan na mga babae’ nacadalagahan,” 1896, leg.1.90, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

<sup>28</sup> Jim Richardson, “Table 1: Katipunan Activists in Manila, 1892-96,” Katipunan: Documents and Studies, last modified March 31, 2013, <http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/studies/notes-on-the-katipunan-in-manila-1892-96/table-1-katipunan-activists-in-manila-1892-96>.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, “Table 1: Katipunan Activists in Manila, 1892-96.”

<sup>30</sup> Emilio Jacinto, “The Supreme Council: Record of Meeting Held on November 30 and December 1, 1895,” leg.141 bis, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

<sup>31</sup> Emilio Jacinto, “The Supreme Council: Record of Meeting Held on December 24, 1895,” leg.4.4, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

<sup>32</sup> Emilio Jacinto, “The Supreme Council: Record of Meeting Held on March 22, 1896, in Mandaluyong,” leg.1.79, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

18, 1896, but this time, only as a brother and not as the president of By. Kabuhayan.<sup>33</sup> Aside from his work and his name appearing in the minutes from 1895 to 1896, there are no more documents mentioning him. Thus, the researchers do not know if he died in the Revolution of 1896 or survived until the 20th century.

More than being an officer of a council in Katipunan, Villanueva was known for his contribution to *Kalayaan*, the organization's newspaper. He wrote a poem entitled "*Pinipintuho' kong mga kababayan na mga babae' nacadalagahan*" (Young women, my cherished compatriots). However, the poem was heavily edited by Emilio Jacinto, and the title was shortened to "*Sa mga Babai*" (To women).<sup>34</sup> Richardson noted that the poem was a product of the Katipunan's call for literary and non-literary submissions for the second release of *Kalayaan*. To Pio Valenzuela's dismay, only a few contributed, and among them was the poem of Villanueva. In the poem, Villanueva exhibited prejudices that manifested as concerns to the church and the country where he wrote "*sapagka't ang tumba't altar ng simbahan ay siyang bibitayan nitong ating Bayan.*"<sup>35</sup> Villanueva's view of anti-church and anti-frailocracy is evident in the poem where he directly blamed the sacraments of the church for subjugating the natives and the continued oppression and discrimination towards them. These anti-sentiments can be explained through the masonry principles he subscribed to. Although there is no direct evidence to show that he was a mason himself, the poem gives us clues about such influence. The same Villanueva also used Biblical women as models for the Filipino women where he wrote, "*Ang pagkababa'y huag isasaisip, narian si Esther, narian si Judit, ito'y mahihinang inyo ring kaparis.*"<sup>36</sup> While he called them to act and join the Katipunan, Villanueva's notion of womanhood remained Christian and 19th-century where he wrote in the opening stanza of the poem, "*aliw ng lalaki*" and a direct "*...mahihinang inyo ring kaparis.*"

<sup>33</sup> Emilio Jacinto, "The Supreme Council: Record of Meeting Held on April 19, 1896," leg.1.59, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

<sup>34</sup> Jim Richardson, "L.V. (Lino Villanueva), 'Sa Mga Babai' - Katipunan: Documents and Studies," [www.kasaysayan-kkk.info](http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info), 2016, <http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/kalayaan-the-katipunan-newspaper/l-v-lino-villanueva-sa-mga-babai>.

<sup>35</sup> Lino Villanueva, "Para sa Babai" in the *L.V. [Lino Villanueva]*, "*Sa mga babai*," ed. Emilio Jacinto, leg.1.90, *Caja 5677*, Archivo General Militar de Madrid.

<sup>36</sup> Villanueva, "Para sa Babai."

### *Para sa Babai, 1896* as a Historical Document

As mentioned above, the poem was written by Villanueva as a contribution to Kalayaan for its second release. It was edited by Emilio Jacinto, who made changes that will be discussed later. As a historical document, it is crucial that we first establish the provenance of the source. The document is digitally accessible and available. The Katipunan historian, Jim Richardson, in his website, Katipunan: Documents and Studies, compiled and made available all the sources he used for his book, *The Light of Liberty: Documents and Studies on the Katipunan, 1892-1897* published in 2013.<sup>37</sup> But going deeper into the source, the poem was dated to be written around April 1896, months before the discovery of the secret organization. The document is considered to be relatively new and was only discovered at the Archivo General Militar de Madrid, Caja 5677, leg.1.90 by Richardson. It was handwritten in Tagalog in the old orthography using “c” for “k” and “ua” for “wa.”<sup>38</sup>

There are two versions of the poem: one personally written by Villanueva, and one edited by Emilio Jacinto. Both have twenty-five stanzas, with four lines in each verse, and twelve syllables in each line yet, the first version, which bears its original title, should be considered the original poem.

In a move to “modernize” the poem, Jacinto drastically changed the orthography of the poem and abridged the title to “Para sa Babai.” Jacinto also removed some metaphorical descriptions of Villanueva on Filipino women. For instance, Villanueva wrote “*kayo nga ang Angel nating tagalupa*” but in the edited version, it was “*kayo nga ang araw naming tagalupa*.”<sup>39</sup> In addition to Jacinto’s version, there was no imposition to use the Katipunan’s preferred name for the nation, which is Katagalugan. In the original version, although Villanueva had no consistent orthography for the nation, he used both “Filipinas” and “Pilipinas” when mentioning the colony (i.e., there is one mention for the former and two for the latter, but Jacinto removed the last two). As observed by Richardson, any reference to “Pilipinas” was removed, but “Filipinas” was retained. In its last part, Jacinto also removed the alias of Villanueva and only used his initials.

<sup>37</sup> The document is available here: <http://www.kasaysayan-kkk.info/kalayaan-the-katipunan-newspaper/l-v-lino-villanueva-sa-mga-babai>.

<sup>38</sup> “L.V. (Lino Villanueva), ‘Sa Mga Babai’ - Katipunan: Documents and Studies.”

<sup>39</sup> Villanueva, “Para sa Babai.”

While the edited title has a direct address to whom it was written, Villanueva was more specific about the kind of race of women his poem refers to. In his title, he used the word “kababayan,” indicating that Villanueva wrote the poem to the Filipino women who want to fight for the prosperity of their nation. The poem, more than a call for action, can also be considered recruitment propaganda of the Katipunan to encourage women to join the secret organization. Moreover, if the goal of the poem was really to recruit women or the wives and relatives of the male members of the Katipunan, it can be said that it successfully did so with the likes of Gregoria de Jesus (wife of Bonifacio), Carmen de Rodriguez (wife of Doroteo Rodriguez), and Marina Dizon (wife of Jose Turiano Santiago and cousin of Jacinto) who became prominent members of the organization.<sup>40</sup>

### Reading *Para sa Babai* vis-à-vis Other Primary Sources

Christianity has profound effects, especially on the life of women. As inscribed in literary and non-literary discourses, women became a convenient construct that helped perpetuate stereotyped images of women in texts.<sup>41</sup> As a character that became a formulaic pattern to an image whose aspirations and goals have reduced to answering the needs of her family, society, and God, women have been made to act out roles that society has traditionally imposed on them, and follow the path trodden by their literary antecedents such as Maria Clara whose words and deeds have been canonized in literature.

In the Philippines, men’s works constitute our great classics and their work is always read. This is one of the reasons why feminism appeared in literary criticism because the representations they give to women are unjust. Additionally, women are usually portrayed in a simplistic and biased way whereas printed works continue to use images of women as passive, fearful, unintelligent, sentimental, and unreliable in any intellectual work. The relationship between literary texts and history is complex because, upon closer inspection, gender representations are derived from the firm belief of society that women cannot be considered equal to men. Therefore, the women's movement is the main source of the principles of gender-conscious analysis because it confronts gender issues in society. The women's movement in the

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<sup>40</sup> Ma. Luisa Camagay, “Women in the Text and in Reality,” *Review of Women’s Studies* 6, no. 1 (1998): 15, <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/rws/article/view/3089>.

<sup>41</sup> Soledad Reyes, “The Subversive Role of Female Characters in the Early Novels,” in *The Romance Mode in Philippine Popular Literature and Other Essays* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1991), 199.

country continues to formulate a clear social agenda to be a strong support for criticism, especially in historical literary production.

Indeed, the generated images of women were confirmed and affirmed by literature written mostly by men. Such a series of letters, poems, proto-novels, and many other texts during the 18th and early 19th centuries manifested itself as a set of ideal norms that assumed the power and influence of a society ruled by the church. Through literary conventions revolving around the construct of women, texts about women are proof of the dominant ideology of the period, that is, a Church-inspired, religious, anti-individualistic, and placing much emphasis on the sacredness of family life and values.<sup>42</sup> However, changes began after the rise of a new consciousness for cultural autonomy against the Spaniards. Philippine literature in the Revolutionary period entered a new phase and acquired a national "Filipino" literature,<sup>43</sup> emphasizing the experience of the Filipino masses, particularly the subversive roles taken by women. The codified behavior of women should be turned into women driven by love for the country as she pursues their political responsibility to interrogate the dominant beliefs subscribed by society in protecting the status quo.<sup>44</sup>

*Para sa Babai* or its original title *Pinipintuho' kong mga kababayan na mga babae' nacadalagahan*, enforces an image that women who were once hailed as submissive can be revolutionary in an attempt to subvert forces of repression and tyranny which aggravated the condition of the Filipinos. Serving as recruitment material addressed to Filipino women, the poem's essential message is to prove that women are capable of defending themselves and their country.

As the poem consists of the role of women during the colonization, it goes further to describe misconceptions and misleading teachings of the church, along with the abuses, corruption, and oppression afflicted by the Spaniards through the church's activities. Moreover, the poem also described the sufferings of the Filipino people and the *bayan* around the time. Thus, the poem ends with Villanueva inviting the Filipino women to act from the darkness delivered by the Spaniards.

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<sup>42</sup> Reyes, "The Subversive Role of Female Characters in the Early Novels," 200.

<sup>43</sup> Resil Mojares, "The Early Colonial Narrative," in *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1998), 46.

<sup>44</sup> Mojares, "The Early Colonial Narrative," 46.

## Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos*

The last decade of the 19th century witnessed the transformational and empowering role of education against obscurantism, colonization, and ecclesiastical submission to the church. Women, however, were at the forefront of educational struggles. The education ingrained in the colonial women turned them into weak and docile individuals and submissive tools of the priests.<sup>45</sup> They are purposely kept in ignorance, equipping them to read nothing but extraordinary *awits* and *novenas*.<sup>46</sup> Male views on education are embodied by the likes of Jose Rizal whose concern for education was evident in his poems, diaries, novels, essays, and letters. On February 22, 1889, upon the request of Marcelo H. del Pilar, Rizal wrote a letter in Tagalog to the women of Malolos where a group of twenty young women petitioned Governor-General Weyler for permission to open a “night school” to study Spanish under Teodoro Sandiko. With the women of Malolos’ defiance, they succeeded and caused a great stir in the Philippines and Spain.<sup>47</sup>

Considered one of the most authoritative letters from a male perspective on women’s education, Rizal said that Filipino women no longer bow their heads and bend their knees to every unjust order as their hope for the future is robust. Rizal iterates on women’s liberation from their humble fears of moral annihilation, where the highest form of their wisdom is to bestow what is given to them:

We shall not feel any fatigue if you help us: God, too, will help to scatter the mist, because He is the God of truth: He will restore to its pristine condition the fame of the Filipina in whom we now miss only a criterion of her own because good qualities she has enough and to spare. This is our dream; this is the desire we cherish in our hearts; to restore the honor of woman, who is half of our heart, our compassion in the joys and tribulations of life. If she is a maiden, the young man should love her not only because of her beauty and her amiable character but also on account of her fortitude of mind and loftiness of purpose, which quicken and elevate the feeble and timid and ward off all vain thoughts. Let the maiden be the pride of her country and command respect...<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Charita Delos Reyes, “Women and Educational Reforms during the Revolutionary Period,” in *Women’s Education in the Philippines, 1565-1898*, 2004, 221.

<sup>46</sup> Resil Mojares, “The Early Colonial Narrative,” 77–80.

<sup>47</sup> Rizal, “Letter to the Young Women of Malolos,” 323–32.

<sup>48</sup> Rizal, “Letter to the Young Women of Malolos,” 328.

It is clear how Rizal derided habits of blind obedience and cowardice. He encouraged women to be strong, give assertions, and develop a free mind to analyze everything around them. In describing the role women should play in the struggle for reform, Rizal in this letter recapitulated that women should assume the virtues of being a maiden who should value her strength of character and sense of honor; as a wife who should become a partner to her husband; and as a mother who should raise her children to love their fellow humans and their country. As part of the formulation of a Filipino nation, Rizal reiterated that women should understand she is equal to men, assume their social responsibility, and unite with all who uphold human rights.

These messages can also be seen in Villanueva's poem, first, in the line where he treats women as partners of men, shouldering the half of their travails:

Kayo rin ang talagang dapat pumatnubay  
sa mga lalaking ngayo'y naglalamay,  
sa dilim ng lungkot buhay ang puhunan  
sa pagmamalasakit ng naabang Bayan.<sup>49</sup>

Second, Villanueva also pointed out that as a Christian woman who was trained to be ethical and follow rituals like murmuring prayers and wearing scapulars should also uphold her social responsibility. It can be seen in the lines:

Narito sa huli't inyo ngang isipin,  
ang naging ugali sa bait ay itakwil,  
nababaguhan man sa ganitong hiling,  
bawa't pangungusap inyong unawain.<sup>50</sup>

and on the latter part of the poem:

Kaya nga kilos na, kayong tagalangit,  
mga binibining salaming malinis,  
timpuin ang pusu't imulat ang isip,  
piliting umiiral ang banal na matuid<sup>51</sup>

### Jacinto's *Kartilya*

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<sup>49</sup> Villanueva, "Para sa Babai."

<sup>50</sup> Villanueva, "Para sa Babai."

<sup>51</sup> Villanueva, "Para sa Babai."

Emilio Jacinto's *Kartilya* and Villanueva's *Para sa Babai* were published in the same year in 1896. Considered both an important document and text that shows Katipunan's ideals, values, beliefs, and causes, both texts manifest the influence of the Enlightenment Movement in Europe. An example of this is the explicit mention of the words "reason" and "enlightenment" or "light." In Villanueva's *Para sa Babai*:<sup>52</sup>

Sagayo,i, ang sinag nalubhang maningning  
ng inyong cariktan ng di manga limlim  
narito sa huli,t, inyong pairalin  
ilao ng *katuiran* pamaui' ng dilim.<sup>53</sup> (*n.b. Emphasis is ours - Authors*)

While in Jacinto's *Kartilya*, the reason was mentioned twice. Here is the first time it was mentioned:

Ang kabagayang pinaguusig ng katipunang ito ay lubos na dakila at mahalaga; papagisahin ang loob at kaisipan ng lahat ng tagalog (\*) sa pamagitan ng isang mahigpit na panunumpa, upang sa pagkakaisang ito'y magkalakas na iwasak ang masinsing tabing na nakabubulag sa kaisipan at matuklasan ang tunay na landas ng *Katuiran* at Kaliwanagan.<sup>54</sup> (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*)

For the second time, "Ang tunay na kabanalan ay ang pagkakawang gawa, ang pagibig sa kapua at ang isukat ang bawat kilos, gawa't pangungusap sa talagang *Katuiran*."<sup>55</sup>

This clearly shows the influence of the Enlightenment Movement's philosophy on the Katipunan's principles and teachings as seen in the above lines. It goes further to use light or enlightenment as a symbol of the organization's desire to have and give to its members. In *Para sa Babai*, the light was also used from the same verse mentioned:

Sagayo,i, ang sinag nalubhang maningning  
ng inyong cariktan ng di manga limlim  
narito sa huli,t, inyong pairalin

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<sup>52</sup> The poem quoted in this section is from the unedited version of Villanueva's poem. Villanueva, "Pinipintuho' kong mga kababayan na mga babae' nacadalagahan." Lino Villanueva, "Pinipintuho

<sup>53</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>54</sup> Jacinto, "Kartilya."

<sup>55</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

*ilao ng katuiran pamaui' ng dilim* <sup>56</sup> (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*)

In the *Kartilya*, same as mentioned above:

Ang kabagayang pinaguusig ng katipunang ito ay lubos na dakila at mahalaga; papagisahin ang loob at kaisipan ng lahat ng tagalog (\*) sa pamagitan ng isang mahigpit na panunumpa, upang sa pagkakaisang ito'y magkalakas na iwasak ang masinsing tabing na nakabubulag sa kaisipan at matuklasan ang tunay na landas ng Katuiran at *Kaliwanagan*.<sup>57</sup> (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*)

Another time, it was mentioned in the *Kartilya*, it says:

Paglaganap ng mga aral na ito at maningning na sumikat ang araw ng mahal na Kalayaan dito sa kaabaabang Sangkalupuan, at sabugan ng matamis niyang *liwanag* ang nangagkaisang magkalahi't magkakapatid ng ligaya ng walang katapusan, ang mga ginugol na buhay, pagud, at mga tiniis na kahirapa'y labis nang natumbasan.<sup>58</sup> (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. Authors*)

Both texts specify the abuses and oppression experienced by the Filipinos during the time. In *Para sa Babai*, the unjustness was coming from the church's doctrines and church obligations to Filipinos that were taken advantage of by the Spaniards. Meanwhile, in Jacinto's *Kartilya*, oppression and abuses were pointed out using words such as *kalupitan*, *kalikuan*, and *kasamaan*, but did not point out who or what institution caused such injustices.

In addition, both texts elucidate representations of women. Words such as *alio* (from *Para sa Babai*) and *libangan* (from *Kartilya*) were used to describe women. In *Para sa Babai*, Villanueva wrote, "*Kayong mga mutiang **alio** ng binata*" (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*). While in the *Kartilya*, Jacinto wrote, "*Ang babai ay huag mong tignang isang bagay na **libangan** lamang, ...*" (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*). Although it is not clear whether the word *alio* (or *aliw*) was used to describe women as a source of entertainment for men, the use of such words reflects the dominant view of society of women during the time. Contrary to

<sup>56</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>57</sup> Jacinto, "Kartilya."

<sup>58</sup> Jacinto, "Kartilya."

this dominant view is what Jacinto wrote in the *Kartilya*, he expressed a different view of women as he urged the members to view women as partners and companions. This same sentiment would be observed in Villanueva's poem as he invited women to be part of a great cause:

Kaya nga kilos na kayong tagalangit  
mga bini bining salaming malinis  
timpuin ang Puso,t, imulat ang isip  
upanging umiral ang Santong matuid

Halina halina isip ay idilat  
ang mga mata ninyong mapanihag  
at tuloy damutin ang ganting salamat  
nitong humahalik si labong sa yapac<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, women as part of a family (i.e., mother, sister, or daughter) played a role in the principles of the organization, especially in how they value and view women. For example, in *Kartilya*, the respect that a man gives to women is based on the respect he has for his mother who raised and nursed him:

Ang babai ay huag mong tignang isang bagay na libangan  
lamang, kundi isang katuang at karamay sa mga kahirapan  
nitong kabuhayan; gamitan mo ng buong pagpipitagan ang  
kaniyang kahinaan, at alalahanin ang inang pinagbuhata't  
nagiwi sa iyong kasangulan.

Ang di mo ibig na gawin sa asawa mo, anak at kapatid, ay  
huag mong gagawin sa asawa, anak, at kapatid ng iba.<sup>60</sup>

Villanueva also used Biblical figures such as Esther and Judith to compare the participation of women in the organization. Judith was a Jewish widow who contributed to the victory of the Jews against the Assyrians. Meanwhile, Esther is the wife of the Persian King, Xerxes I, who, along with her cousin Mordecai, convinced the King to reject the first decree declaring the extinction of the Jews in the empire. Despite the said decree, the Jews turned victorious against their enemies. Two Biblical women chosen by Villanueva were both parts of a family, that is, a mother and a wife, and both contributed to the victory of their nation, Israel. With this, Villanueva implies two things in his poem. First, Filipino women can contribute to the cause of Katipunan. Second, the poem was clear

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<sup>59</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>60</sup> Jacinto, "Kartilya."

about its anti-Church sentiment, but it does not stray away from Christianity or the concept of God.

Another interesting view of Jacinto and Villanueva on women is about women's innate weakness. In Villanueva's poem (*n.b. Emphasis is ours. -Authors*):

Ang pagcababae huag y saisip  
narian si Ester narian si Judit  
itoy *mahihinang* inyo ring kaparis  
dapuat sa bayan siyang nag tang quilik <sup>61</sup>

While in Jacinto's *Kartilya*:

Ang babai ay huag mong tignang isang bagay na libangan  
lamang, kundi isang katuang at karamay sa mga kahirapan  
nitong kabuhayan; gamitan mo ng buong pagpipitagan *ang*  
*kaniyang kahinaan, at alalahanin* ang inang pinagbuhata't  
nagiwi sa iyong kasangulan.<sup>62</sup> (*Emphasis is ours. -Authors*)

Christine Doran views that women's weakness can be explained through the revolutionaries and even in the historiography of the Revolution. Women were more represented in domestic or supportive acts. Likewise, any direct participation of women in the military campaign was downplayed and neglected. Popular figures such as Trinidad Tecson and her direct participation in the military campaign were overlooked.<sup>63</sup> An examination on how women were mentioned in the period of the Philippine Revolution in Teodoro Agoncillo's *A History of the Filipino People*, revealed that the women fulfilled their domestic and supportive acts for the Katipunan cause. For example, Melchora Aquino, also known as Tandang Sora, was given the popular title of "Mother of Katipunan." She is more remembered and associated as the mother of Juan A. Ramos, whose yard was of key importance in the Cry of Pugadlawin.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Marcela Agoncillo, together with Lorenza Agoncillo and Delfina Herboza, was memorialized for their role in making the Philippine flag as their contribution to the cause of the Revolution.<sup>65</sup> This gives a strong implication

<sup>61</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>62</sup> Jacinto, "Kartilya."

<sup>63</sup> Christine Doran, "Women in the Philippine Revolution," *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 3 (1998): 370, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634272>.

<sup>64</sup> Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 8th ed. (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1990), 171-72.

<sup>65</sup> Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 221.

that despite the high regard of Katipunan for participation of women, the organization and its members also confine women to certain perceptions.

### Mabini's *Philippine Revolution*

Only within a decade apart, the *La Revolucion Filipina* was the memoir of Apolinario Mabini of the whole revolution. Writing from Guam during the early years of the 1900s, Mabini called for high regard for women. Mabini condemned the prevalent raping of women and argued how we expect foreigners to respect our women when we are the first to violate them. Comparing it to the medieval concept of knighthood and chivalry, he wrote, "*In the chivalrous tradition of ancient times the principal virtue of the knight without fear and without reproach was respect for womanhood.*"<sup>66</sup> In the same way, Villanueva, with a more indigenous view of womanhood, also highly regarded women in his poem by calling the Filipino women:

*puri ng magulang na mapagkalinga  
kayo nga ang araw naming tagalupa  
na dapat alayan ng inyong sagana.*<sup>67</sup> (n.b. *Emphasis is ours.* -  
Authors)

While both acknowledged that respect must be given to women, Mabini and Villanueva admitted that women are weak. Mabini continued his remark, "because of the custom of *protecting the honour and life of the weak and defenseless...*" (n.b. *Emphasis is ours.* -Authors). However, respecting this weakness produces "greatness of the soul and nobility of the heart."<sup>68</sup> To give context to Mabini, he wrote this with the medieval concept in mind where he mentioned the "chivalrous tradition of ancient times," pertaining not to the pre-colonial concept of chivalry and womanhood, but the European medieval period by using the words like "knights" and "chivalry."

But if one thoroughly observes Mabini's concept of respect and womanhood, one can observe that he viewed the woman in light of her weakness. For him, she is subject to respect and not because she is strong, but because the woman is weak. Hence, respect supplements whatever makes the woman frail. Accordingly, what makes the woman worthy of respect is her weakness. The object of respect, therefore, is the woman's weakness.

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<sup>66</sup> Mabini, *The Philippine Revolution*.

<sup>67</sup> Villanueva, "Kartilya."

<sup>68</sup> Mabini, *The Philippine Revolution*.

Villanueva also directly confessed that the Filipino woman is weak:

*Ang pagkababa'y huag isasaisip,  
narian si Esther, narian si Judit,  
ito'y mahihinang inyo ring kaparis,  
datapua't sa Bayang siyang nagtankilik.*<sup>69</sup>

Villanueva advised women not to think of their lowliness. Instead, they should be like Esther and Judith as an example of serving the interest of their nation. While both considered women innately weak, Villanueva differed from Mabini as women can fight for their liberation regardless of frailty. Here, Villanueva's respect for women comes from their actions and not the realization of the woman's lowliness. The object of respect, therefore, is the woman's action.

### Laktaw et. al.'s *Our Cry*

Filipinos experienced tyranny anew at the hands of the Americans after they failed to acknowledge the Philippines' declaration of independence and instead took over the Philippines from Spain. On February 4, 1899, fighting erupted between the United States and the Philippine Republic forces, with the American conquest characterized by raping Filipino women, outright torture, killings of civilians, and burning of villages.<sup>70</sup>

On February 17, 1899, during the early days of the war, a group of Filipino women like Victoria Laktaw, Feliza Kahatol, Patricia Himagsik, Dolores Katindig, and Victoria Mausig collectively wrote the poem *Hibik Namin* or *Our Cry*. The poem was published in the underground newspaper, *El Heraldo Filipino*. The poem was a call for Filipinos to take action against the rape of women at the hands of American soldiers, as can be seen in the opening stanza:

Halina at tayo'y  
Manandatang lahat  
itanghal ang dangal  
nitong Filipinas.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>70</sup> Priscelina Patajo-Legasto, "The Politics of Representation and Location: Women-Centered Theater in the Philippines," accessed June 3, 2022, <https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescl/article/viewFile/4772/4306>.

<sup>71</sup> Laktaw et al., "Hibik Namin."

Similarly, Villanueva's poem was also a call to action, as indicated in the previous parts of this paper. Even so, unlike *Our Cry*, the poem was addressed more to the women during the colonial period of the Spaniards,

*Kaya nga kilos na, kayong tagalangit  
mga binibining salaming malinis*<sup>72</sup>

Although Villanueva's poem focuses on women and even describes them positively, his use of language suggests that he subscribes to the stereotypical view of women being passive and motherly due to his description of women having warm and communal traits.<sup>73</sup> It is evident in the stanza below, where he describes women as a guide who should look after grieving men.

*Kayo rin ang talang dapat pumatnubay  
sa mga lalaquing ngayo, naglalamay  
sa dilim ng lungcot buhay ang puhunan  
sa pag mamasakit ng naabang bayan*<sup>74</sup>

Withal, he views men as the agent or the one who takes action that he thinks as the one who can cure the nation's ills:

*Sa gayo'y kung hindi magiging masaklap  
sa magandang puso ninyo, mga perlas  
nitong Silanganang sagana sa dilag,  
namamin ang aming handog na panglunas.*<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, Laktaw and the other women do not view themselves as stereotypical women. Instead, they actively fight for the country's independence:

*Ang pagsasarili'y  
ating ipaglaban  
hanggang may isa  
pang sa ati'y may buhay  
At dito'y wala na  
silang pagharian  
kung hindi ang  
ating manga dugo't bangkay*<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Laktaw et al., "Hibik Namin."

<sup>73</sup> Michela Menegatti and Monica Rubini, "Gender Bias and Sexism in Language," September 26, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.470>.

<sup>74</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>75</sup> Villanueva, "Pinipintuho."

<sup>76</sup> Laktaw et al., "Hibik Namin."

It is worth noting that the women use the inclusive pronouns *atin* and *tayo* which suggests that they do not view themselves as inferior to men but as equal to them. This can especially be observed in their role in fighting for the liberation of the country. It can even be assumed that the names they took, such as Katindig, Kahatol, and Himagsik, symbolize the ideals they shared with the revolution.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, in Villanueva's poem, he describes women only in terms of their beauty but describes men as being agentive. It can be seen in this stanza, wherein he likens women's beauty to sun rays:

Sa ngayo'y ang *sinag na lubhang maningning*  
*ng inyong kariktan*, nang di mangalimlim,  
narito sa huli't inyong pairalin  
ilaw ng katuiran, pamawi ng dilim<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusion: Some Insights and Interpretations

From deconstructing *Para Sa Babai* and other primary sources, three main insights can be discerned. First, Villanueva's *Para sa Babai* was written by a man. Even the other primary sources analyzed like Emilio Jacinto's *Kartilya*, Jose Rizal's *Letter to the Young Women of Malolos*, and Apolinario Mabini's *Philippine Revolution* were all written by men addressing Filipino women in their period. This is how 19th-century Filipino men perceived and viewed women. Meanwhile, *Our Cry* written by Laktaw and her companions is to be set apart as women wrote them for themselves.

Second, Villanueva explicitly expressed his anti-church sentiments by narrating the chronic corruption and oppression afflicted by the Spaniards. Although it is not clear if the God mentioned in the poem is God believed by the Catholics or by the Masons (it must be mentioned again that the ideas and philosophy of Freemasonry had an immense influence on the Katipunan), the poem did not renounce God. Additionally, Villanueva would go further to compare Filipino women to Biblical women like Esther and Judith which implies that despite Katipunan possessing and advocating radical reforms and ideas to the society, the members understood the nuance that the women they want to recruit in their cause are still believers of the Catholic faith. In reconciling this interesting characteristic of both the author and the poem, we can say that

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<sup>77</sup> Bienvenido Lumbera, *Sa Sariling Bayan: Apat Na Dulang May Musika* (Malate, Maynila, Filipinas: De La Salle University Press, 2003), quoted in Patajo-Legasto, "The Politics of Representation and Location."

<sup>78</sup> Laktaw, "Hibik namin."

although Villanueva saw the Church as an institution to subjugate the natives and exploit their resources, what he despised were the friars. Thus, what we have in the poem is an attack on the frailocracy of the Philippines, and not on Christianity itself.

Third, in the opening verses of *Para sa Babai*, Villanueva provided the perception of society to women. It presumed that women were a source of joy, comfort, and consolation for men. It seems, then, that women during this period had been highly regarded in their roles as mothers, sisters, and wives. However, women as part of a family are always connected and associated with their heroism. Thus, the poem also sends a message that women can be a symbol of the revolution. And so, Villanueva reminds his readers that women can join the movement towards real liberation.

The present study attempted to contribute to women's study and discourse, especially on the progress of representation by analyzing Lino Villanueva's *Para sa Babai*. The researchers recommend a more thorough study of women's representation during the 19th-century Philippines since only a few texts give an empowering approach to women. Although there are sources delineating the rights and roles of women, most sources were written by men from a moralizing and didactic viewpoint. Like Villanueva's poem, there might be a possibility that other primary sources are yet to be discovered. Additionally, the researchers recommend that primary sources such as Villanueva's poem can serve as a guide on how women are depicted in today's literature.

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## Acknowledgements

*The researchers would like to acknowledge and thank Instructor Emmanuel Jayson Bolata and Mr. Micah Perez of the Department of History for the invaluable advice and the materials they provided which were crucial in writing the paper. To Mr. Jose Alberto Jimenez III and Mr. Wogie Pacala, graduate students in the same department, for helping the researchers with their insights for the improvement of this paper.*