




## Intertextual Synergy: traversing the controversies of the Maria Clara at Ibarra, a film adaptation of Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo

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### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the intertextual exploration of the TV series "Maria Clara at Ibarra," a cinematic adaptation of Jose Rizal's iconic novels, Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo. Positioned within the theoretical framework of intertextuality, the study aims to unravel the complex relationships between the adaptation and the source material, offering a nuanced analysis of creative choices, character dynamics, and narrative shifts. By scrutinizing the portrayal of historical facts and the infusion of modern perspectives, the research sheds light on controversies surrounding the adaptation's departure from the original novels. Methodologically, thematic analysis guides the investigation, involving primary sources of Rizal's novels and the TV adaptation, supplemented by secondary sources such as scholarly articles and literary criticism. Following a systematic analytical process, the study seeks to enhance our understanding of the adaptation's intertextual features, including the role of characters like Klay, the influence of rogue characters such as Fidel, and the empowerment of female characters deviating from traditional portrayals. The exploration also extends to changes in character deaths and sparing Elias, providing valuable insights into the adaptation's unique narrative. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on literary adaptations but also enriches our comprehension of historical narratives and cultural representations within the context of Rizal's masterpieces.

### RESUMO

Este estudo investiga a exploração intertextual da série de TV "Maria Clara em Ibarra", uma adaptação cinematográfica dos icônicos romances de José Rizal, Noli Me Tangere e El Filibusterismo. Posicionado dentro do quadro teórico da intertextualidade, o estudo visa desvendar as complexas relações entre a adaptação e o material de origem, oferecendo uma análise matizada das escolhas criativas, dinâmicas dos personagens e mudanças narrativas. Ao examinar minuciosamente a representação de fatos históricos e a infusão de perspectivas modernas, a pesquisa lança luz sobre as controvérsias que cercam o afastamento da adaptação dos romances originais. Metodologicamente, a análise temática orienta a investigação, envolvendo fontes primárias dos romances de Rizal e da adaptação para TV, complementadas por fontes secundárias, como artigos acadêmicos e crítica literária. Seguindo um processo analítico sistemático, o estudo procura melhorar a nossa compreensão das características intertextuais da adaptação, incluindo o papel de personagens como Klay, a influência de personagens desonestos como Fidel, e o empoderamento de personagens femininas que se desviam das representações tradicionais. A exploração também se estende às mudanças nas mortes de personagens e na poupança de Elias, fornecendo informações valiosas sobre a narrativa única da adaptação. Esta pesquisa não só contribui para o discurso acadêmico sobre adaptações literárias, mas também enriquece nossa compreensão de narrativas históricas e representações culturais no contexto das obras-primas de Rizal.

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## **Introduction**

The intersection of literature and film has perpetually captivated audiences, leading to ongoing debates about the relative merits of original texts versus their cinematic adaptations. Since the advent of film in the late 1890s, the adaptation of novels into movies has been a prevalent practice, sparking discussions that persist to this day. These debates have intensified with literary adaptations continually pushing the boundaries of creative interpretation. Literary adaptation, as Baldwin (2021) defines, involves the transformation of literary texts, such as poems or novels, into new genres like films or series. However, inherent disparities emerge due to the distinct nature of these mediums, encompassing variations in length, style, and the ideological chasm between the original authors and the directors and producers of film adaptations (Barmish, 2021).

This study delves into the intricate relationship between literary works and their adaptations, with a specific focus on the acclaimed novels of Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Regarded as seminal masterpieces in Philippine literature, these novels played a pivotal role in kindling patriotic fervor and inspiring a revolution against Spanish rule. However, despite their historical significance, the challenge lies in maintaining their relevance for contemporary audiences, particularly among students who increasingly question the pertinence of these works in their academic curricula.

The recent adaptation, "Maria Clara at Ibarra," has stirred both admiration and controversy by modernizing these revered novels to rekindle interest among Filipino youths. This adaptation aims to address the decline in enthusiasm for the original texts. Nevertheless, a dichotomy has emerged between proponents of creative modernization and conservative historians who fear confusion regarding the demarcation between the original storyline and creative additions in the novels.

To navigate this controversy, this intertextual essay embarks on an exploration of the connections, similarities, and differences between the novels and their adaptation. The investigation spans thematic dimensions such as parody or pastiche, the clash between modernization and tradition, the introduction of rogue characters, the vengeance of maidens, the downfall of key players, and the sparing of certain characters. The study not only aims to elucidate these intertextual features but also addresses critical research gaps by offering a nuanced analysis informed by theoretical underpinnings. By scrutinizing the complexities of adaptation and its impact on the reception of classic literature, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on literary adaptations, cultural relevance, and the evolving nature of storytelling in contemporary society.

## Theoretical Framework

The concept of intertextuality is a literary theory stating all works of literature are a derivation or have been influenced by a previous work of literature. There is deliberate intertextuality, which purposely borrows from texts, and there is latent intertextuality, which is when references occur incidentally—the connection or influence isn't deliberate—as all written text makes intertextuality possible. (Julia Kristeva, 1960 as cited in Master Class, 2021)

Some intertextual references are exact lines of dialogue or action, while others are more vaguely referenced. The definition of intertextuality includes forms of parody, pastiche, retellings, homage, and allegory. Any work of literature that is involved in the creation of a new text is considered intertextual.

### Maria Clara at Ibarra

In connection to this, the TV show – “Maria Clara at Ibarra” is adapted from the novel of Rizal of *Noli Me Tangere*. It depicts the life of a 21-year-old nursing student, Maria Clara "Klay" Infantes. She's overworked and underpaid as a barista, and she's desperate to graduate. To make matters worse, she lives with an abusive stepfather and her mother is determined to stay with him, hoping Klay won't leave either. The young woman feels like she simply cannot find the time or energy to care about classical Filipino literature. She doesn't even understand how it's relevant to her nursing course. But her professor, José R. Torres, insists that she must write a good essay about *Noli Me Tangere* by José Rizal in order to graduate. He hands her a special copy of *Noli Me Tangere*, which he says will truly immerse her within the text. She doesn't realize just how literal he's being. She reads the book and dozes off. When she awakens, she finds herself trapped inside the text of *Noli Me Tangere*. With what happened to her, she experiences life in 19th century colonial society, bears witness to the events of the novel, and meets the characters such as, Crisostomo Ibarra and Maria Clara. (Dulay, 2022)

### Noli Me Tangere

*Noli Me Tángere* (1887)—which translates to “Touch Me Not” in Latin—is a novel written by Filipino writer José Rizal. The novel tells the story of Don Crisóstomo Ibarra, a young man of Filipino and Spanish descent who returns to the Philippines after a seven-year trip to Europe. Upon his return, and because he is now old enough to better understand the world, Ibarra sees the oppression wrought on the Indigenous population by Spanish colonialism. As Ibarra attempts to do something about this, he finds himself confronting forces that view him as a direct threat to their power—and who will do whatever it takes to retain it.

*Noli Me Tángere* is predominantly narrated in the third person, with occasional shifts to first-person plural. The narrative follows a generally linear plot with occasional shifts that provide historical context. It also tends toward the satirical, especially when the narrator describes members of the wealthy ruling class. At times, the novel depicts the brutality of oppression realistically, hence it is sometimes graphic.

### El Filibusterismo

"El Filibusterismo" is a novel by José Rizal, (1897) a sequel to "Noli Me Tangere." Set in the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines, it follows Simoun, a wealthy jeweler seeking revenge against the oppressive government and corrupt friars. Through manipulation and strategic planning, Simoun aims to incite revolution. The story revolves around characters like Basilio and Isagani, who become involved in Simoun's plans. Rizal exposes social injustices and advocates for reforms, highlighting the consequences of colonization. While Simoun's revolution fails, the novel raises awareness about the struggles under colonial rule.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study employed a rigorous thematic analysis approach to intricately investigate the intertextual connections, similarities, and differences between the adaptations and the original novels. Recognizing the nuanced nature of these narratives, the intertextual lens emerged as the most fitting literary perspective to unravel the intricate relationships between the source material and its cinematic adaptation. The research process involved a meticulous combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources encompassed the seminal novels "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo" by Jose Rizal, as well as the adaptation "Maria Clara at Ibarra." Complementing these foundational texts were an array of secondary sources, including scholarly articles, literary criticism, reviews, interviews, and other pertinent materials germane to the research focus. These secondary sources played a pivotal role in providing a multifaceted understanding of the intertextual features and controversies enveloping the adaptation.

The researchers navigated through the thematic analysis by systematically adhering to the steps outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017). The analytical process commenced with a phase of familiarization, involving a comprehensive reading of the primary and secondary sources while concurrently taking initial notes to capture the essence of the narratives. Following this, a meticulous coding process was employed to categorize contents, delineating key elements for subsequent analysis. The generation of themes ensued, a phase wherein patterns were identified, allowing for the emergence of overarching concepts that formed the crux of the comparative analysis. Subsequently, an in-depth analysis of these themes was conducted, unraveling the intricate interplay between the novels and their adaptation. It is imperative to note that while similarities were anticipated, the acknowledgment of the distinct entities of Rizal's novels and the adaptation, "Maria Clara at Ibarra," remained integral. These distinct entities catered to the unique needs of viewers, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of literary and cinematic experiences.

Inherent in the chosen thematic analysis methodology are potential limitations and biases that warrant consideration. While the thematic analysis offers valuable insights into overarching patterns, there is an inherent subjectivity in the identification and interpretation of themes. To mitigate these biases, the researchers indeed maintained transparency in the analytical process, and multiple researchers were involved in cross-validating the identified themes. Additionally, the chosen methodology may not capture every nuanced aspect of the intertextual relationship, acknowledging the complexity of literary adaptation. Despite these limitations, the thematic analysis stands as a robust and well-suited approach for delving into the intricacies of the adaptation process and the interplay between literature and cinema.

## Results and Discussions

Variability of connections, similarities, and differences accentuated intertextual features within the narratives are manifested in the following themes below.

### *Parody or pastiche*

Adaptation or imitation through the use of parody or pastiche is a salient feature of intertextual criticism. A parody is a type of imitation where a text gives a negative light to the original text through mocking or distortion while a pastiche imitates the original text to give honor to it. (Literary Devices, 2022)

Maria Clara at Ibarra became one of the most viral and controversial series in the Philippines because it was based on Dr. Jose Rizal's novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* which were considered masterpieces of his time. Using the great works of the national hero as the basis of the series should anticipate a myriad of criticisms from different people from different backgrounds, especially from our historians who have strong opinions on this adaptation.

This sparked a controversy about whether the adaptation gave a fresh outlook on the hero's novels, or they distorted the historical facts of the narrative. A retired literary teacher and critic, Dr. Lakandupil Garcia expressed his distress over some of the changes in Maria Clara at Ibarra's portrayal of the novels. He was worried that since students and teachers are like the protagonist of the story, Klay, they are lazy to read and will not know what is the original content of the novels and what are creative additions in the production.

However, some historians like Dindo Balares, Suzette Doctolero, and Xiao Chua defended the show stating that the adaptation was very impactful and relevant to the modern youth for it captures the interest of the students due to how the production was framed. (Sethe, 2023).

Therefore, it will not be helpful to state that adaptations are generally better than the books or vice-versa because both of them offer similar and different features from one another. The original text provides all the information, from the full development of character arcs to the twist and turns of the entire plot. However, because of the limited time not all the elements of the story will be covered and make it to the screens of the adaptations. But book adaptations provide a more engaging experience for viewers/readers by giving visual and auditory portrayal of the story.

Instead, it will be better to look at the benefits that the book and adaptation can contribute to one another. Book adaptation draws readers to the film while the film introduces non-readers to the book because the book brings its reader fans to watch the film while the adaptation provides additional publicity for the books hence, encouraging more people to read them. (Lois, 2020)

This reality about the sustaining relations between the books and the adaptation provides a synergy which can be both beneficial for their public consumption.

In the first episode of the show, the viewers were introduced to Klay a nursing student who was not interested to read the novels of the national hero for she doesn't see the relevance of these literary works to her nursing course. Many students nowadays have the same questions about the relevance of the story to their course or even their daily lives. This problematic question was addressed firmly by the production.

In connection, with the advent of technology, also comes the emergence of the fifth skill called viewing. Using this fifth skill students can better analyze non-text or non-traditional

materials like videos to learn more about the lesson instead of being confined to the limitations of mere text materials. (Donaghy, 2019)

In application, Filipino youths who cannot read and students who find reading frustrating can still appreciate the beauty and lessons of the novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* by watching the *Maria Clara at Ibarra* series.

Truly, enabling the viewers to witness the story from the point of view of a modern youth using the tools of the modern times proved to be more impactful to them because it activates their minds to put themselves in the shoes of the character that allowed them to question not only the actions and decisions of the characters but also the traditions and status of the nation during the Spanish rule. The concept of modern views battling the traditions presented in the story will be elaborated further in the next segment of this paper.

### ***Modernization battling traditions***

Understanding the context of the original text through examining its author's background, and the period and society that inspired its creation is crucial in the eyes of the intertextual lens. Knowledge of history will give the readers an idea of how society was structured by the norms, values, traditions, and power balance that shaped the ideas of the author during his creation of the literary work.

As stated in Zengin (2016), a text does not exist in its own tradition but is under the influence of the author's historical consciousness. Therefore, it's only sensible that adaptations will also follow the historical context of its original novel to provide the viewers the same "historical immersion experience" that they felt from the book.

However, even though they provided the same time period of Spanish rule in the MCAI, the introduction of the main character, Klay in the adaptation of *Maria Clara at Ibarra* challenged these realities of norms, traditions and power dynamics which were the very foundations of why the said novels were written in the first place.

Bringing with her, her modern point of view like gender equality, freedom of expression, natural science, and other modern ideas are new to the characters of the original text. For most of her time trapped in the novels, she challenged their beliefs and the norms of their society.

In episode 35 of the TV adaptation, Klay and Maria Clara attended a gathering where Klay heard Crisostomo and Don Basilio arguing over the rights of women to education. As an educated woman, she was insulted and intervened in the conversation trying to advocate for women's cause. However, when she was ordered by Don Basilio to close her mouth, she was enraged and told them that "men don't have the right to tell women to shut up." In this period, women are only considered to be housekeepers and did not experience the same rights as men. Her modern point of view on gender equality was completely new to those men and shocked by her actions which are considered unladylike.

In episode 40, Crisostomo almost drowned after trying to help a man slay a crocodile. Being a nursing student and knowledgeable of modern medicine, Klay tried to revive him using the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Her good intention, however, would not be welcomed by the people around her. Maria Clara and her friends were confused and thought that Klay was just trying to take advantage of the unconscious Ibarra. However, her first-aid treatment proved to be effective in saving his life. In the end, she received their gratitude by explaining to them that what she did was medical treatment for drowning.

Once again, her modern knowledge and ideas challenged the norms and stereotypes during Spanish rule. Her radical actions received a lot of backlashes that put her in danger for they were completely new to the characters. Although they were out of context and place, her actions proved to have massive effects on the story. The character of Klay and another mysterious individual will be explored further in the following part.

### ***Infiltration of the rouge characters***

Characters are the main players in a story, their actions, goals, and interactions yield conflicts and alliances that enable the story to unfold. However, removing or introducing characters in the adaptation of an original text is consequential from the point of view of intertextuality because they create a massive influence in the original storyline that separates the primary source from the adaptations.

As emphasized in Moynihan (2020), the demotion of some characters or changes in their arcs and introduction of new ones can make or break an adaptation. Strategic addition of characters can provide a new perspective in the story that readers can embrace later on but too many additional characters will result to people focusing on them most of the time instead of enjoying the story.

As stated previously, we were introduced to Klay in the first episode of the show, both the protagonist and the disruptor of the story. Trapped in the novel, she has no choice but to adjust to the world of *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* which she refused to read about it in the first place. However, instead of bending to the flow of the story, her mere presence and interaction with the characters bent the plot to create twists.

On the other hand, in episode 24 of Maria Clara at Ibarra, we were introduced to a mysterious character that was meant to stop the love triangle between Klay, Maria Clara, and Crisostomo Ibarra by being Klay's partner. Fidel appeared in the production as the savior of Klay when he stopped one of the town's people who tried to hurt Klay when she stood up for Sisa. His character arc started as an arrogant yet thoughtful man in the story who offered to help Klay in treating the wounds and sprain of Sisa. Fidel's appearance being attractive because of the actor who played the role, quickly got the attention of many young women who got charmed by him and it increased the popularity of the show. His appearance in the show was a great strategy on part of the writers because he balanced the presence of Klay before the love triangle made too much damage to the plot of the original text.

However, Fidel did not exist in the books. Instead, he is also a rouge character like Klay. But unlike Klay, the show presumed that he's not a character from the real world but an unnamed character in the books that lack sufficient character arc. In the end, Klay revealed a theory that Fidel could have been a friend of Ibarra named Albino who attended the party near the lake. This was a cheap scapegoat to address the viewers asking who Fidel was and why was he not in the original texts.

In the end, Klay and Fidel are great additions to the story by making the story more relatable for many youths who want to be entertained while also learning from our history. Both of the characters balance each other's arches which enabled the story to move forward instead of disrupting the whole original plotline. However, their presence and influences in the story affected other characters heavily which lead to some scenes being different from the primary text.

### ***Vengeance of the maidens***

The dialogism in intertextual criticism is the dialogic relation between a text and other texts. (Björk & Iyer, 2023) Which means that it refers to how text responds to and interacts

with other texts that came before it. This is done to fill the gaps or address the weaknesses of the previous texts.

The character arcs of the women in the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* were not welcomed openly by the newer generations for the reasons that they appeared powerless and contented to be limited in the kitchen. Klay as the catalyst of change in the story adaptation has also affected the decisions and actions of the women characters for she set the standard of how women should look in modern times being educated, fearless, and outspoken. One of these female characters is Julie:

Juliana De Dios was introduced to us in the Maria Clara at Ibarra as Juli, the girlfriend of Basilio. Like in the story she pleaded to padre Camorra to help Basilio get out of prison. To her surprise, the friar tried to rape her. In the books, Juli chose to jump out of the window of the church tower thus, committing suicide to escape from the friar. However, in the 100th episode of the series, she was raped and was seeking revenge for what happened to her.

Maria Clara was also raped by padre Salvi in both the books and episode 94 of the show. However, in the novels, Maria Clara chose to keep it a secret to keep her dignity intact while in the show, the friar was caught with the help of Klay. She also reunited with Crisostomo however her death was inevitable after the friar escaped and accidentally shot Maria Clara. This did not happen in the novel instead Maria Clara died of illness.

The role of the women in the story was given more emphasis in the series compared to the books because of Klay's modern ideas and her active participation in the changing of the narrative. She wanted to change the story to protect the characters but no matter how she tried, the general storyline still kept moving forward with a few changes in the details of how they transpired. More of these changes in the details will be analyzed as the ink in this paper moves forward.

### ***The fall of the key players***

Although massive similarities can be expected between the adaptation and the original novel, one must consider that viewers will still expect something different from the adaptation that will make it more memorable rather than being a mere revisitation of the book read before.

Hence in order to produce these new features from the story that the viewers are looking for, adaptations must consider integrating plot twists that will make the readers wonder if that additional/ changed events are also in the books. (Edwin, 2023)

Deviations are considered to be pieces of novelty that a text has to differentiate itself from the sourced texts. These can be minor or major details that changed as the story progresses. In the series, it's notable that the deaths of some of the major characters differ from what was stated in the books. Aside from the accidental death of Maria Clara, the deaths of Crisostomo Ibarra and Padre Damaso differs from the text.

In episode 98, we witnessed how Crisostomo got his revenge on Padre Damaso by killing him during his visit. This is the final act of Crisostomo's vengeance on the evil friars for all the malice he did to him, his father, and the family of Maria Clara. However satisfying this scene was for the viewers, it did not happen in the original text. In the epilogue, the friar was reassigned to another town and found dead the next day after learning about the death of his biological daughter, Maria Clara.

Maria Clara at Ibarra's 102nd episode, has shown us that the plan was aborted and Ibarra died through suicide before being taken by the civil guards just like in the books.



However, in the novel, he died alone after confessing his sins to father Florentino while in the series he died with Fidel, Klay, and Elias mourning for him.

These changes might have been brought by time constraints in the production or intentional changes to make their deaths more impactful however their deaths were still proven to be inevitable despite the efforts of Klay to change the story which is a form of controlling the deviations not to drift too far from the meaning and conclusion of the story. However, a notable character managed to escape death when the novel was adapted to the series. His character arc will be found in the next section.

### ***Spared from the wreath***

Spared by the Adaptation refers to cases where a character who died in the source material does not die in an adaptation. This is done because of a variety of reasons that the executive producers judged that it will be more strategic for the adaptation if that character survived. (All the tropes, 2023) In connection, we may never know the reason why the producers of MCAI chose to spare the life of Elias in the series but one thing is sure:

The death of Elias in the story was a broken intertextual code when it was adapted to the series. In the novel, Elias sacrifices his life to help Ibarra escape from the authorities, and his death serves as a powerful symbol of the sacrifices made by those who fight for freedom and justice. However, in the story adaptation, Elias was spared and did not die.

National hero of the Philippines Jose Rizal's book "Noli Me Tangere" features a character named Elias. He is a mysterious and enigmatic character that appears repeatedly in the book and acts as Crisostomo Ibarra's foil. His character embodies the more radical part of Rizal and his death was meant to symbolize the revolution for Rizal was a known reformist who believes that the Philippines cannot win or need a revolution but a series of reforms that will help the Filipinos to have more voice in the church and government (Claudio, 2018)

Speaking of the writer, Rizal's intention of writing the novels and the intention of Maria Clara at Ibarra's writers must be compared and contrasted to know if this adaptation was really honoring or disrespecting the will of the original author.

### ***He who wrote the narrative***

Deviation from reality or form for aesthetic purposes is referred to as an artistic license. It can involve allowing artists to distort facts, change rules or omit details to improve their work of art. (Rivers, 2023) The writers of MCAI made an adaptation of the novels which means that there will be changes in their series. However, to justify their artistic license to do so it's important to compare their intentions to the reason why Rizal wrote the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* in the first place.

Rizal wrote the novel to expose the ills of Philippine society during the Spanish colonial era. Using his written piece, he exposed the abuse of power in the church and how Filipinos are being oppressed by the government. He wanted to spark awareness about the ills of society under the Spanish rule and what too much religiosity can do to a country. With his reasons in mind, we can assess if these reasons were also achieved in the series adaptation or not.

Therefore, given its additional contextualization, the adaptation has proved to be impactful and relevant to Filipinos in the current times. Although it created a lot of changes from the original novels. Rizal will not rise just because some of the details of his piece were changed. And although historical distortion is wrong, it is by far worse to forget.

It is forwarded in this adaptation series, Maria Clara at Ibarra that the following themes are apparent: imitations of the novel with the modernization of languages and beliefs,

introduction of new characters, difference of the writers' intentions, vengeance of the maidens, and the death of its major characters.

From these, the adaptation series affirmed its role as an *adaptation* by creatively expanding and redefining the original work into something that the contemporary audience would be impacted. There, it mainstreamed the social dispositions of Rizal during the period of which his works, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, were written and published. This is mainly through the introduction of the new characters, Klay, and Fidel—who were both absent in the original novel. Fidel epitomized the rich men during the Spanish era. While, Klay brought with her the beliefs of the present generation, and her social advocacies on equality, freedom, and human rights. They stirred the norms and traditions embedded within the text, which were captured by the reality back then.

One may argue that in order to be a true Filipina, one must possess Maria Clara's qualities and attributes. A Filipina should be peaceful, lovely, charming, and elegant. Maria Clara's portrayal as modest and self-effacing reflected an ideal image of what a Filipina should be. Yet, in order for audiences to adapt to the film adaptation, the producers employed current traits of youth to readily empathize and involve themselves in the situations that Klay-as Maria Clara, depicted in the adaptation, was in. The adaptation took a current perspective, which made it more effective for the viewers, making it a solid copy of the novels because it piqued the audience's attention. It is then concluded that the adaptation of *Noli Me Tangere*, which is Maria Clara and Ibarra, is a good representation of the novel. It is thus stated that Maria Clara and Ibarra's adaptation of *Noli Me Tangere* is an excellent portrayal of the literature.

Apart from these, modifications between the original text and the adaptation series when it comes to the plot were also observable. Suzette Doctolero, who heads the scriptwriting team of the Maria Clara at Ibarra, supplemented the old narrative of Rizal, who wrote the novel to expose the ills and abusive nature of the Spanish colony. Thriving to expose the same ills mirrored in the present time, the adaptation series eyed to educate the younger generations on the significance of the novel. Therefore, the intention of Doctolero and the series' scriptwriters tweak from that of Rizal's. These tweaks were remarked by the death of Maria Clara through accidental bullet shot, and her biological father, Padre Damaso by Ibarra's hands. Ibarra's suicide also received more impact in the series with the presence of Klay, Fidel and Elias mourning for him—who were all absent in the novel.

### ***Dialogic reshaping of literary landscapes through thematic analysis and theoretical frameworks***

In the labyrinth of thematic analysis, "Maria Clara at Ibarra" emerges as a complex intertextual tapestry, skillfully weaving the threads of parody, modernization, rogue characters, vengeance, narrative deviations, and artistic license. Through the lens of broader theoretical frameworks, notably intertextuality and feminist theory, this research illuminates the adaptation's dynamic engagement with Jose Rizal's seminal works, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

The theme of parody or pastiche within the adaptation exemplifies the delicate balance between homage and reinterpretation. The interplay of imitation, mockery, and honoring, as defined by Literary Devices (2022), positions the series in a dialogic relation with Rizal's novels. This dialogic engagement is a cornerstone of intertextuality, emphasizing how texts respond to and interact with their predecessors (Björk & Iyer, 2023). "Maria Clara at Ibarra" navigates this intertextual space, recognizing the historical consciousness of Rizal's works while injecting contemporary nuances, as illustrated in the clash of modernization battling traditions.

The infiltration of rogue characters, Klay and Fidel, reflects the strategic addition of elements to enhance narrative depth. Moynihan's (2020) emphasis on character dynamics in adaptations aligns with the adaptation's intentional disruption and augmentation of the original storyline. The series, thus, acknowledges the influence of source texts while carving distinct narrative spaces for new characters, underscoring its commitment to both fidelity and creative evolution.

The theme of vengeance of the maidens emerges as a feminist dialogue within the adaptation, illustrating how female characters transcend traditional roles. The dialogic relationship between the series and Rizal's novels is explicit in the adaptation's feminist lens, challenging stereotypes and amplifying the agency of women, a core tenet of feminist theory. By dialogically engaging with the past, the series contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality, an intersectionality that extends beyond literary adaptation to societal transformation.

The fall of key players and the sparing of Elias delve into the intricate dance of narrative deviations and artistic license. Edwin's (2023) notion of deviations as intentional novelties aligns with the adaptation's strategic introduction of plot twists. The sparing of Elias, a deviation from Rizal's narrative code, showcases the series' creative freedom and commitment to reinterpreting historical narratives. This thematic interplay elucidates the adaptation's role in both adhering to source material and contributing fresh perspectives to captivate contemporary audiences.

"He Who Wrote the Narrative" encapsulates the intentions and artistic license of Rizal and the adaptation's writers. By comparing Rizal's socio-political critique with the series' contemporary commentary, the research reveals a nuanced intersection of historical narratives and present realities. The adaptation's alterations, marked by the death of Maria Clara through accidental means and Padre Damaso's demise, manifest the intersection of artistic expression and socio-political commentary. The series' fidelity to Rizal's intentions is explored, questioning the adaptability of literature to contemporary contexts.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of "Maria Clara at Ibarra" provides a nuanced understanding of its intricate relationship with Rizal's novels. This research not only reveals the adaptation's fidelity to and departure from source material but also positions it within broader theoretical frameworks. Intertextuality becomes a bridge connecting past and present, while feminist theory serves as a guiding lens that elucidates the adaptation's transformative engagement with gender roles. By refining the clarity, depth of analysis, and synthesis of findings, this research unveils "Maria Clara at Ibarra" as a vibrant, dialogic force, reshaping literary landscapes and contributing to ongoing conversations about the adaptive and transformative nature of storytelling across time.

## **Conclusion**

In the intricate dance between historical expectations and contemporary reinterpretations, "Maria Clara at Ibarra" emerges as a transformative force challenging traditional notions of womanhood. Klay, the modern counterpart to Maria Clara, defies historical passivity, standing against sexism and seeking justice for abuse. This portrayal not only reframes Maria Clara but prompts a broader re-evaluation of gender roles and societal expectations. The adaptation becomes a lens through which the evolving narratives of Filipinas unfold, inviting critical scrutiny and reshaping historical perspectives.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings and conclusion, literary scholars and enthusiasts are encouraged to embark on a meticulous comparative analysis between Jose Rizal's novels and the adaptation series. This comprehensive examination should unravel the thematic and narrative disparities, offering a nuanced understanding of how the adaptation reimagines historical narratives and shapes contemporary societal reflections. Creating awareness among readers and viewers about these variances becomes paramount, fostering an informed dialogue on literature's role in shaping collective perceptions across different historical epochs.

A feminist literary analysis should be a cornerstone of future investigations, dissecting the women character arcs in both Rizal's novels and the adaptation. This focused inquiry can uncover the evolution of female representation over time, capturing the impact of societal shifts on the portrayal of women. By adopting a feminist lens, researchers can unveil the transformative potential of literature in challenging and reshaping gender norms.

Additionally, scholars are encouraged to explore "Maria Clara at Ibarra" as an empowering historical novel's modern anthology. This entails investigating the series as a platform for learning about past societies, ideologies, and the cultural tapestry of the Philippines. Understanding the educational value of such adaptations and their impact on historical consciousness will contribute to broader discussions on the intersection of storytelling, history, and societal values.

In conclusion, these recommendations serve as signposts for future research endeavors, urging scholars to navigate the intricate landscape of adaptation with an awareness of its transformative potential. Through a comprehensive exploration of thematic elements and the adoption of relevant theoretical frameworks, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of how storytelling transcends historical epochs, shaping and reshaping societal narratives.

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