Session B-2 Care and Femininity

Is an Ethic of Care Based on Femininity? --Focused on Noddings' Concept of 'Maternal Instinct'-- [1]

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1. Introduction

We live in various human relationships every day and they are necessary components of our daily life. The concept of care is one of the most appropriate for explaining the daily happenings which arise from such relations. At the same time, this concept shows the particularity and concreteness of human reality in particular situations. There have been many arguments about care as both social phenomenon and individual action ranging from 1980s to the present time: We see the interdisciplinary approaches to care in the fields of 'human service', such as medicine, nursing, welfare and education [3]. While there are such many approaches to care, some people think of the concept of care as a foundation for ethics. In 1982, Carol Gilligan espoused an 'ethic of care', rooted in the concept of care work and the experiences of carers [4]. 'An ethic of care' was opposed to an 'ethic of justice' [5] which underlay the developmental theory of morality advocated by Lawrence Kohlberg. And Gilligan thought of an ethic of care as an alternative to the dominant ethical theories of the time. Care work has historically been borne predominantly by women. Nel Noddings is said to argue that her own ethic of caring systematically builds on the view of Gilligan which has influenced mainly feminists. An ethic of caring criticized both Kantianism and utilitarianism: both attach too much importance to moral reasoning and judgement, consider moral problems abstractly and adopt principles in the same way. And Noddings claims that an ethical theory of care is based on caring as the 'ultimate reality of life' (Noddings 1992 p.15). Care ethicists claim, firstly that the ethical foundation of an ethic of care is the particular caring relationship between the carer and the cared-for, and secondly that we should maintain and enhance this relationship. But there is misunderstanding arising from the relation between the ability to care on the one hand, and femininity on the other. An ethic of care was founded on an analysis of 'the female voice' and early care ethicists casually assumed a connection between care ability and femininity. As a result, some people have formed the misunderstanding that an ethic of care depends on biological essentialism.

In this presentation, I shall examine whether the ability to care required in caring--the primary action in an ethic of care--is based on femininity. In section 2, I focus on the concept of 'maternal instinct' in *The Maternal Factor* (Noddings 2010) and examine why Noddings introduces this concept. And, in section 3, the concept seems to commit to her to biological essentialism, belying her claim that women are forced to learn to care by psychological account. I then show that care ethicists are

inclined towards essentialism due to their desire to give an account of the source of the ability to care. Although it is true that early works in an ethic of care have started from analyses of women's voices and have been associated closely with women's experiences, this is only because previous social structures have installed women in the caring role.

2. 'Maternal instinct' in *The Maternal Factor*

In this section, I shall examine critically the concept of 'maternal instinct' first introduced by Noddings in *The Maternal Factor*. Thereby, I want to make clear that although care ethicists know that it is dangerous to adopt biological essentialism in explaining the source of the ability to care, they are inevitably attracted to this kind of biological approach.

At first, I will look at the concept of 'maternal instinct' introduced by Noddings in *The Maternal Factor*, and show where this concept is located in Noddings' care theory (2.1). Next, I will point out two problems which arise due to the introduction to this concept. Firstly, it is likely to impart the concept of maternal instinct as an ethical foundation because we may be committed to biological essentialism, and secondly, Noddings writes in *The Maternal Factor* as if she accepts such a commitment (2.2).

2-1. What is 'maternal instinct'?

Noddings held that the source of care ability was not femininity at least until *Starting at Home* (Noddings 2002). Furthermore, she adopted a psychological account concerning the source of care ability, in order to explain the current belief that women have a higher ability to care than men. She held that the psychological account was best able to explain women's tendency to engage in care work. On this account, girls grow up by identifying with their mothers. However, Noddings introduced the new concept of 'maternal instinct' as a foundation of natural caring in *The Maternal Factor* (Noddings 2010).

In this section, I shall consider whether Noddings, or care ethicists more generally, are through the introduction of this concept, committed to the form of biological essentialism called gender essentialism. To examine this, I will draw on Nodding's description of the concept of maternal instinct in order to outline the concept, and will show the theoretical position of this concept in Noddings' care theory.

(1)'Maternal instinct'

Noddings thinks of care as the central concept of morality, and creates an ethical theory based on it. Her position does not change in *The Maternal Factor*. Noddings is 'exploring one significant source of morality—maternal instinct and the natural caring that develops from it', although she does 'not claim that it is the only source of morality' (Noddings 2010 p.32). Thus, as Alasdair MacIntyre

does, Noddings explores an approach which diverges from currently dominant ethical theories. ‘MacIntyre has argued that philosophers and others studying morality have made a mistake in moving away from rich descriptions and an analysis of social life to technical analysis of moral statements, judgments, and universal principles’ (MacIntyre 1981). Noddings agrees with him, and in addition, points out that ‘an even greater mistake was made in ignoring female experience’ (Noddings 2010 p.17). According to Noddings, such a mistake is corrected by considering caring, which starts from maternal instinct.

Then, what is maternal instinct? In *The Maternal Factor*, Noddings argues ‘the evolution of morality through female experience and how that morality might be described. It makes sense, then, to start with a maternal instinct, infant bonding, and the empathic capacities developed through the basic experience of mothering’ (Noddings 2010 p.10). Noddings gives ‘the dyadic connection consisting of mother and child’ as one example of instinctive caring (Noddings 2010 p.34). And she writes that ‘the mother-child relation, as the original condition, is the primary example of natural caring, but unlike other relations of natural caring, it still has firm roots in instinct’ (Noddings 2010 p.58). But she does not define maternal instinct as inherent character of females. She speaks about ‘a likely story’ as to how women learn to acquire this character. See in detail (Noddings 2010 pp.10-16).

According to Noddings, women had survived by utilising the capacity of maternal instinct. The maternal instinct leads mothers to care for their infants. ‘The earliest human mothers had to ‘read’ their infants and respond to their expressed needs’ (Noddings 2010 p.12). Females had learned to use elementary empathy in order to read the needs of their children. Those children whose mother had the propensity to care had an easier life than those whose mothers did not have it. ‘A mother might assume a need without considering the child’s expression’, and ‘having decided what the child’s expression of need means, the mother must respond to meet the need’. In responding, ‘the mother is not obeying some moral principle; she is responding quite naturally to the child’s need, for the child’s sake’ (Noddings 2010 p.13).

In addition to such mother-child relations, women developed the ability to care in relation with males. On the one hand, ‘perhaps permanent affiliation with one strong male gave more protection for a woman and her babies’. On the other hand, males might accept such responsibility in return for the ready availability of sex and the assurance that resulting offspring were his own. Females and males are connected by such an interest. ‘It is almost certain that the female had to keep the male satisfied if she wished to retain his services as protector and provider of some resources. Thus, in addition to learning to read her infant, she also had to read her mate’. For this reason, the female developed the abilities to care and sympathise (Noddings 2010 p.13) [6].

Thus, ‘in caregiving driven by maternal instinct, females are concerned with the survival of their infants’ (Noddings 2010 p.73) so that they need males in order to respond to their infant’s needs and protect them. This is ‘a likely story’. The first caring relation described here ‘is our original

condition’. So, ‘people do not choose their sex, race, or ethnicity’ and ‘their stature, physical strength, or susceptibility to disease’. And ‘it is extremely difficult to make choices in opposition to one’s immediate culture’, and ‘individuals are both developed and limited by’ social groups (Noddings 2010 p.37). Therefore, Noddings explains the development of the ability to care because females have been in such an original condition and, as such, have been subject to many constraints.

(2)Theoretical position of maternal instinct in care theory

Where is the maternal instinct, which is source of the ability to care, located in care theory? The basic structure of care theory which Noddings describes is the same with one. It is natural caring and ethical caring that is the fundamental sentiment of caring, and when natural caring fails, we need ethical caring (Noddings 2010 p.36, p.66). The main point that differs from the structure given in *Caring* and *Starting at Home* is that Noddings introduces maternal instinct as a former stage of natural caring in *The Maternal Factor*. Here, I shall deal with the relationship between the maternal instinct and natural caring, putting aside the move from natural caring to ethical caring. There is difference in the way in which empathic responses are seen in men and women from their first manifestations, and such differences are strengthened by socialization. The 'maternal instinct’--the source of the ability to care in care theory—‘in females is accompanied by biological responses that encourage empathy. For example, a crying infant—even one unrelated to the mother—will induce a letting down of milk in a lactating female and a tingling in the breasts of those who are not lactating. This biological response may well be accompanied by the customary feelings of sympathy and urgency a woman has for her own child, and it may provide a basis for the development of natural caring beyond maternal instinct’. In addition, ‘females likely developed concern for other females who were nourishing their babies’ (Noddings 2010 p.15). Such maternal instinct is a foundation of natural caring, and ‘a setting characterized by natural caring is widely (perhaps universally) regarded as good’ (Noddings 2010 p.42).

Noddings used the expression ‘natural’ in natural caring in three senses. Firstly, natural caring is ‘natural’ in the sense of being done out of the ‘spontaneous’ motivation of the carer ('Because I want to’). Secondly, 'natural caring is ‘natural’ in the sense that it is exercised with no need for reference to moral principles or direct reasoning from such principles’. Instead of drawing on principles and rules, carers concentrate ‘on relationships and response’ (Noddings 2010 p.38). Third, ‘natural caring is ‘natural’ in that it exists prior to formal moral thought; it is there, in the empirical world. It is found in families and in other face-to-face circles of interaction’. ‘Although natural caring is usually found in family and small group situations, there are such groups (usually on their way to extinction) in which natural caring is absent, and in most groups natural caring sometimes fails. We might call groups that regularly fail to exhibit natural caring defective; they are lacking in essential human qualities’ (Noddings 2010 p.45).

Thus, ‘although natural caring grows out of instinctive caring, it is clearly not merely instinctive’. ‘Female humans, like virtually all mammalian females, have had and continue to have major responsibility for mothering, but human female thinking is not confined to the tasks of mothering’. Of course, ‘it is reasonable to suppose that female and male minds have evolved somewhat differently’, but Noddings does ‘not suppose that one is generally superior to the other’. But although Noddings admits that ‘this is a risky claim because, as many feminists have warmed, admission of difference in the past has almost always resulted in a declaration of superiority favoring the male’, she nevertheless maintains that there are differences between male and female. Rather, Noddings writes, ‘we should ask how best to acknowledge and use the differences to benefit everyone’ (Noddings 2010 p.43).

Here, I wonder whether Noddings explains the source of the ability to care from biological essentialism. At least after *Starting at Home*, Noddings explains the source of ability to care from maternal instinct as a ‘nurturing and caring instinct’ (Noddings 2010 p.11) which is important for all species. She also holds that females learn to care due in part to historical context, and in part to the psychological differences between them and males. Thus, does Noddings’ account commit to her to biological essentialism? I shall consider this problem.

2-2. Does Noddings commit herself to biological essentialism in *The Maternal Factor*?

As we saw above, in *The Maternal Factor*, Noddings says that natural caring—the fundamental ethical sentiment in care theory—is based on a feeling of maternal instinct. However, I wonder whether introducing such a concept makes the source of the ability to care a matter of gender, so that care ethicists are thereby committed to biological essentialism. In order to resolve this question, I will see what Noddings says about this concept in *The Maternal Factor*.

Michael Slote claims that women are 'more moral’, or empathic than men, but Noddings holds off on this claim. Noddings agrees that it is true that ‘evidence currently available suggests that women are more empathic than men’. However, ‘their increased capacity for empathy has come at a cost—acceptance of subordination and sometimes enthusiastic endorsement of their own subservience’ (Noddings 2010 p.57). So, Noddings thinks we should not simply accept the assessment by care ethicists that women are more moral than men. However, Noddings introduces the concept of ‘maternal instinct’ as the source of ability to care into care theory in *The Maternal Factor*. As she said, before *Starting at Home* Noddings confines her explanation about the source of ability to care psychology. Such a concept is very risky in the sense that the word ‘instinct’ gives us the impression of committing her to biological essentialism. In addition, her description of the concept seems to commit her to biological essentialism. Is that proof which Noddings comes to adopt a biological as well as psychological account, at least in *The Maternal Factor*? Noddings tries to show from the following reasons that she does not necessarily commit herself to biological essentialism even though

she introduces the concept of ‘maternal instinct’.

First, Noddings claims that ‘although natural caring is usually found in family and small group situations, there are such groups (usually on their way to extinction) in which natural caring is absent, and in most groups natural caring sometimes fails’. ‘We might call groups that regularly fail to exhibit natural caring defective, they are lacking in essential human qualities’ (Noddings 2010 p.45). We can interpret from this expression that Noddings thinks natural caring—and the maternal instinct which is its source—as a foundation of human nature. In addition, after empathizing that human beings are relational, Noddings says ‘as the relation is basic to biological life, the caring relation is basic to moral life’ (Noddings 2010 pp.45-46).

Against such view, Noddings gives the followqing defence. While women have learned to gain the ability to care through the likely story, Noddings does ‘not believe that women were created with an eternal, unchangeable nature’ and could change (Noddings 2010 p.57). She does not claim that ‘women’s superior capacity for empathy makes them morally superior. Other factors are involved’. Noddings is thinking that we can ‘find more evidence of genetic and chemical/hereditary influences on behavior’, and ‘new and more realistic ways to promote a more just and caring world’ (Noddings 2010 p.58). Therefore, Noddings thinks that ‘neither would we regard her as a ‘defective female’, although we acknowledge this one defect’. ‘Complete rejection of essentialism may not be possible’, and ‘on the one hand, maternal instinct is not an essential characteristic of human females, one that separates fully human females from ‘unnatural’ females, on the other hand, it is an essential characteristic of human females as a class on that it is clearly essential to the survival of their species’ (Noddings 2010 p.35)[7]. Thus, ‘part of what has developed through a combination of biological and cultural evolution is a human capacity to reflect upon and sometimes to change our own nature’ (Noddings 2010 p.25).

And, as for the reason why most care work is pushed on women, Noddings writes as follows: ‘to ensure protection for their young, females accepted a position of subordination to their male partners. This has been, at best, a mixed bargain’. ‘There are some women even today who welcome their subordination as a good bargain. But for most women, staying at home has involved unpaid labor of some sort from morning until night’. ‘In today’s occupational world, women often earn less than men doing the same work’, and this tendency is remarkable in professional care work. Of course, Noddings wants to say neither that all care labor is not well, nor that women should henceforth not engage in such an occupation. Noddings notes only that ‘it has long seemed ‘natural’ for women to work in occupations similar to homemaking and child-rearing—that is, in occupations that require caregiving’ (Noddings 2010 p.75). This tendency is furthered by forcing women to engage in care work. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, ‘it is subordination—not the nature of the work—that results in lower pay and scant occupational prestige’. ‘The closer a woman’s work is to that long identified with mothering, the lower its worth our society. This pattern is part of a larger system in

which traits are genderized, and those associated with males are granted a higher value—provided they are exhibited by males' (Noddings 2010 pp.75-76).

Second, 'the empathic capacities of women often lead women to consider the welfare of others over their own'. 'Oddly, this is not, as some critics have claimed, because women are poor negotiators', but 'it turns out that many women are exceptionally good at negotiating—but they negotiate for others, not for themselves. This other-orientation in women presents a paradox. On the one hand, empathy and emphasis on relations lie at the foundation of care ethics; on the other, the subordination accompanying the growth of empathy has encouraged women to be complicit in their own oppression' (Noddings 2010 p.76).

Although it is proper in some sense to worry about the 'caring trap' (one form of the exploitation of women) written above, 'this worry has some legitimacy, but the legitimacy rests on two mistakes: first, that 'carer' applies permanently to a person by virtue of her gender; and second, that *caring* as it is used in care theory is identified with caregiving'. Noddings claims that 'if we eliminate these two misunderstandings, there should be no fear that care theory will set a trap for women'. She does not 'deny the reality of a caring trap, and we'll have to discuss how it was set and how it continues to be baited', but does 'deny that care theory, properly understood, contributes to the maintenance of the trap' (Noddings 2010 pp.46-47).

Furthermore, we need to look at the task described by Noddings in *The Maternal Factor* in order to make sure that she does not adopt at least simple biological essentialism. She writes: on the positive side, 'women are, in general, significantly more concerned with social issues than are men', on the negative side, 'females do not do as well as males on mathematics tests and like measurements of ability in science and engineering'. As for the reason for the negative side, Noddings points out that this is not simply because women have been deprived of the opportunity for education in society. But she is concerned not with gender differences in mathematics and ability in science and engineering, but trait differences between males and females, different assessment of their abilities and different ethical notions between them in *The Maternal Factor* (Noddings 2010 pp.3-4). In addition, according to her, 'care theory has developed in strength and popularity, but it is still too often thought to be just a branch of feminist ethics. The object of continued analysis and argumentation is to establish care ethics (or to show that it has been established) as a major alternative to traditional moral theories' (Noddings 2010 p.9). So, we can conclude that Noddings is conceives of care ethics not as the research of actual gender, but as a normative ethical theory.

Therefore, I admit that it is true that the concept of maternal instinct is problematic and misleading, but I cannot conclude only from this point that Noddings commits herself to biological essentialism. Then, why do care ethicists, involving Noddings, tend to speak as if they are committed to biological essentialism? Finally, I will examine this briefly.

3. Conclusion

Finally, I shall show again that although care ethicists know that it is dangerous to adopt biological essentialism in explaining the source of the ability to care, they feel the appeal of such an account and tend to approach towards it. And I will consider how this is proper when one's interest is an attempt to locate the source of morality in care ethics.

First, one of the main questions in this presentation was whether the ability to care is based on femininity. To recapitulate, the ability to care is needed in caring which is the primary act in care theory. As I have shown so far, it seems that at least in *The Maternal Factor* Noddings changes more or less from her previous position that the word 'femininity' was used symbolically. For especially in *The Maternal Factor*, the concept of 'maternal instinct' being the foundation of natural caring is described as if women have this instinct biologically. I think, in some sense, we have to admit that Noddings commit herself to biological essentialism in *The Maternal Factor*. But we can interpret the concept of maternal instinct as a psychological concept. There are three reasons. First, I can read that Noddings sees the maternal instinct as the ability acquired by mothers who have nurtured and cared for their children. Childcare has been pushed upon women historically as well as much other care work. In this way we may see that Noddings indirectly criticizes traditional social structures. And second, she thinks that this instinct is the sort of trait that can change as the social structures around women are improved. Therefore, she does not think that this instinct—in other words, the ability to care—is a fixed quality of females. Third, it is possible to claim that Noddings does not commit herself to femininity in a biological sense in theoretical contexts, because her argument procedes from the normative aspects of care theory. Therefore, in *The Maternal Factor* as well as in *Caring* to *Starting at Home*, Noddings is trying to provide a psychological answer to the question of the source of the ability to care. Since *Starting at Home*, Noddings began to be interested in sociological accounts that criticize the social structure by virtue of which women tend to be pushed towards carework. As a result of this, she has tried to expand care theory to social policy.

Thus, while most care ethicists know that it is very risky to base the source of an ability to care on femininity in a biological sense, they sometimes use misleading expressions in this regard. For example, we can find such a description in Gilligan, and Shinagawa makes the following point concerning Noddings:

> [...]Noddings does not posit sex difference consistently. In the beginning of *Caring*, she says explicitly that she does not argue the experiential problem of connecting biological sex difference with care orientation (Noddings 1984: 2). But we can find some descriptions equating the experience of women as proof roughly (ibid.: 28, 95 etc). Noddings denies at first the sociological account which regards the cause as social role pushed childcare upon women, although there are three accounts concerning the

> tendency to push childcare upon women: biological account, psychological account and sociological account. Although Noddings, similar to Gilligan, adopts Chodorow's psychological account which girls are willing to come to engage into childcare from identifying with their mothers, she sees biological account as convincing (ibid.: 128-129). (Shinagawa 2007 pp.189-190)

Thus, Noddings has from the beginning not held a clear position about the source of the ability to care. But, as I showed above, care ethicists such as Noddings often tend to commit themselves to biological essentialism when they speak about such problems. I think there are at least three reasons for this tendency. Firstly, it is problematic theoretically to admit in care theory that there can be people who are defective in terms of the ability to care. Therefore, it seems that many care ethicists come to insist that the source of ability to care is based firmly on something like human nature. Secondly, there is the influence of the fact that care works have historically been engaged in by women, in other words, that care ethics has deep connections to feminism. For example, many care ethicists have continued to argue their care theory in *Sign* and *Hypatia* which are known as feminist journals, and so it is feminists in various fields who actively argue for care theory. Therefore, when they speak about their care theory, they tend to develop their argument in terms of a care perspective whose expression is easy to understand for feminists. But on the other hand, this makes it hard for dominant ethical theorists who continue to use male central words and thinking—Kantians and utilitarians--to understand such a care approach. Thirdly, I can point out that care theory is interdisciplinary across various fields. As I said in the introduction, many care theorists refer to care, because the concept of care is useful for describing various relationships in daily life. This is why many people refer to the concept of care, even though a consensus about the concept of care is conspicuously lacking. Of course, here I do not want to claim that it is wrong for people in various fields to speak about care. I want to emphasize that it is difficult to discuss care theory constructively unless we provide a clear sense to the term. For example, I think that we need to make clear in what sense the word of care is used—for example, focusing on the aspect of taking care of people, arguing about care as an ontological foundation, or dealing with care work and care labor as practical issues, and so on. Care has many senses and aspects. A significant task which remains for care ethicists is to clarify the various senses and aspects of care, and to provide an indication of how we ought to use the concept of care.

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Endnotes

[1] I want to thank Michael Campbell (JSPS postdoctoral research fellow) who has read and checked this paper and provided helpful and encouraging comments.

[2] This presentation is a part of research result used by the subvent of JSPS in 2014.

[3] It is well known that the pioneering research of care is On Caring written by Milton Mayeroff (Mayeroff 1971). This work gave great influence to many fields. For example, in field of nursing, see *The Primacy of Caring* (Benner & Wrubel 1989) and in field of education, see 'On Pedagogical Caring' (Hult 1979). But we need to keep in mid that Hult had adopted different approach Noddings did because he emphasized the role of care rather than caring itself.

[4] As for the assessment of Gilligan's *In a different Voice*, Professor Okano (Doshisha University) has given me an interesting comment as following: we can question whether this book had treated with care work directly, because her argument brought about the developmental psychology. So, this expression here may be too rough. I will want to consider this point in other opportunity.

[5] It is difficult to define an 'ethic of justice'. Some theorists like Kuhse (Kuhse 1997 p.136) think that ethic of justice involves only Kantianism. Others like Blum (Blum p.472) hold that both Kantianism and utilitarianism is involved in ethic of justice. In this paper, I regard both theories as ethics of justice. Gilligan challenged the developmental theory of morality suggested by Kohlberg and early care ethicists criticized moral action as appealing to moral principle.

[6] However, on the one hand, females had fallen into subordinary relations. We must keep in mind that Noddings does not intend to endorse the subordinary status and exploitation of women. Instinctive caring, natural caring and ethical caring 'should not be considered stages in moral development. Certainly natural caring has incorporated instinctive caring and, because it seems to have evolved from instinct, it represents a next step' (Noddings 2010 p.33). But as we saw in section 2.1, ethical caring is not necessarily better than natural caring. This is the same with instinctive caring.

[7] Barnett and Rivers discuss this and insist that it leads to a 'caring trap': women are forced to engage in care work again. That is why women in the present day often face a conflict between their career and care work. So, Noddings points out that we need to distinguish 'caring' applying to all moral life from 'caregiving' which is one important form of care work. Caregiving can be both forms, with caring or without caring (Noddings 2010 p.25).

[8] See as following:

Title and contents

http://www2.ipcku.kansai-u.ac.jp/~tsina/research.htm

Abstract

http://www2.ipcku.kansai-u.ac.jp/~tsina/AbWBJ.htm

Construction and Deconstruction of Maria Clara: History of an Imagined Care-Oriented Model of Gender in the Philippines

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"*The majority of feelings are traditions.*
We experience them because they came before us"
Napoléon Bonaparte

1. Introduction

In December 2011, the « *stock estimate* » of Overseas Filipino Workers abroad represented 10.455.788 people, that is, about one tenth of the country's population. Amongst them, a 59 % were women (C.F.O. 2013). Even if the Commission on Filipinos Overseas does not publish statistics about their occupation abroad, it can be affirmed that amongst those more than 6 million women, a lot are employed as nurses and domestic helpers (Parreñas 2003). If to some extent we could add here the category of spouse migrants[1], who were officially 206.278 from 2003 to 2012 and possibly far much more in reality, the Philippines is certainly the most involved country in the care activity in the widest sense of the expression.

Long time considered as belonging to women's "natural" competences and recently globalized through a transnational process of extraction, care activities are still associated in the collective imagination with psychological traits and qualities such as "patience", "mildness", "dedication", "loyalty". In the Philippines, all those qualities, as applied to women, do have a name: Maria Clara.

In order to illustrate the overwhelming diffusion of this local archetype, let us quote a non-scientific source, the Philippines issue of the series of books Cultural Shock! A survival guide to customs and etiquette (2006), in its opening chapter dedicated to People:

> "*Filipino women*
> *In a study of Psychopathology, Filipino psychiatrist Lourdes V. Lapus writes: 'The Filipino culture, for all the increasing signs and protests on the contrary, still has a large hangover from its ego-ideal for women of many bygone years. This is the so-called 'Maria Clara' image of a woman who is shy, demure, modest, self-effacing and loyal to the end*."

But who is Maria Clara?

The original bearer of this luminous name is the main female character of Noli me tangere

(1887), the Philippine National Hero José Rizal's first novel.

The researcher will hardly find a study related to women in the Philippines that will not mentioned Maria Clara as a model to refer to or as a bias to fight with. Nevertheless, the process of creation of this peculiar national model, myth, stereotype, paragon or whatever it might be called had not been yet the object of a specific study. Hence, in the restricted limits of this paper, we will modestly try to map the context of the historical and social construction of this crucial component of Philippine gendered national imagination, trying at the same time to take in consideration the whole parameters for a non-specialist public and to sketch out the new zones to be explored.

2. Mapping the origins

Obviously, this article does not aim at recounting the whole History of the evolution of women's status in the Philippines. Nevertheless, it appears necessary to set down the reflection on a long-term scale in order to fully understand the mutations that took place later. On the other hand, as we study an ideological phenomenon, we need to understand the origins of the different *topos* that will be mobilized in the debate about "the true identity of the Filipino Woman" in which Maria Clara will occupy a significant place.

The sources available to determine what could have been the status of women in the Philippine archipelago prior to the arrival of the Spaniards suffer not so much from scarcity than partiality. Most of them come from religious informers. They bore a specific agenda determined by the absolute necessity of transforming the social behaviors they observed in order to bring the population to the Catholic values and social patterns. Given those previous impassable limitations, those sources have been carefully studied among others by William Henry Scott (1968, 1994), Teresita Infante (1969) and more recently and specifically to our preoccupations regarding gender models, by Carolyn Brewer (2004).

In order to give an overall picture of the pre-European situation, we would like to emphasize four aspects of the place occupied by women in the native societies that will form in the future the group of the lowland Christian Filipinos (Phelan, 59).

First of all, while men monopolized the functions of warriors and political leaders, the execution of religious ceremonies and more generally the communication with supernatural forces was assumed by women called *babaylan*s in the Visayan region in the center of the archipelago and *katulunan*s around the Tagalog region in Luzon. The hold of women on spiritual matters was prestigious enough to lead some men to cross-dress in order to be able to occupy their functions (Garcia 1995, Brewer 1999).

Secondly those pre-Hispanic societies were based on a rather bilinear model of kinship, still observable today (Kikushi 1991, Dumont 1992, Cannell 1995) and more specifically on an interdependency system heavily based on the notions of contract, regardless of the gender of the

individual involved. As for the women, they could dissolve marriage without losing her rights to the child and her personal patrimony.

Thirdly, the sexual discipline seems to have been generally loose and unproblematic among pre-Hispanic Tagalog and Visayan societies. Virginity was not valuated and pre-nuptial deflowering was apparently common (Morga 1601). Visayan men used penis pins or rings (Carletti c. 1610) to maximize theirs partner's pleasure while adultery was common and ordinarily only sanctioned by a fine to the exterior offender and not to the husband or wife[2].

A final aspect to emphasize here, because of its linkage with the Care question, is the way the process of engagement between the groom and the bride was dealt with in the context of the bride-price system. Especially in the Visayan region, the norm was that the girl should first coldly refuse the proposal of the groom. Negotiations with the bride family, when the groom's family was not prominent, often implicated for the latter to work in his potential family-in-law house as a servant for several years. Therefore, we can say that, prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in the archipelago, domestic work was mostly among Tagalog and Visayan society a men's activity.

Without doubt, the societal beliefs and imagination as well as the concrete social system brought by the Spaniards in the 16th century deeply differed from the model formerly exposed. In 1565, date of the arrival of Lope de Legazpi at the shores of Cebu, Spain was involved in a defensive and offensive, external and internal policy of affirmation of the Catholic dogma. While the Council of Trent recently reaffirmed the model of the Virgin Mary and the sanctity of marriage as sacrament, Spain was sending warriors and missionaries to impose those truths all around the World, especially in those islands who beard the name of the Catholic King.

Consequently, the *babaylan*s would be the main blank of the missionaries, who would work hard to impose a new model of womanhood among the Natives. In this context, the perfect script, repeatedly exemplified by the Jesuit priest Francisco Combes (1667), would be the struggle with the native priestesses, discursively converted into witches, who, thanks to the compelling attraction of Ave Maria prayers, would be eventually touched by Grace and decide to retreat from society in order to expiate their sins in never-ending praying.

As C. Brewer (2004) put it in light, this frontal attack against women's spiritual and social power resulted in Northern Luzon in movements of opposition in which those priestesses took a great part in the last quarter of 17th century. More generally, the same priestesses, then converted in mere healers, were often involved in the uprising that punctuated 17th and 18th century local life. Still, we would argue that, beyond those unquestionable but punctual episodes of resistance, some native women intended to relocate themselves into the new categories proposed by the Catholic order in terms of feminine spiritual activity. Hence, the phenomenon of beatas or recogidas among native women who decided to seclude themselves from civil life and the insisting demand for the opening of lay religious congregations or beaterios (Santiago 2006, Cruz 2009) seem to have been part of an

authentic agency for numerous native women.

3. The 19th century turn

However, after the whirlwind of conversion passed, and apart from exceptional cases of women resistance, outrageous heterodoxy or on the contrary exceptional implication in Catholic life, the information available is scarce. The missionaries logically do not linger over the description of practices and behaviors that are supposed to be seen as perfectly orthodox. Generally, our knowledge about the transformation of feminine models in the Philippine society suffer from a critical lack, if not of data, at least of studies about the situation in the 18th and first 19th centuries.

Then, how could one determine to what extent the moral and behavioral transplant was effective and interiorized among Philippine society? More precisely, how could one evaluate the general success of subjugation of women under men's social authority as required by Catholic Mediterranean model of gender hierarchy?

In 1893, Isabelo De los Reyes published in the *Biblioteca de la Ilustración Filipina dedicada al bello sexo* an essay titled La mujer Filipina, The Filipino woman. The author's profile is particularly interesting here. De los Reyes was part of *La Solidaridad*, the association created by Rizal in Madrid in 1887. He is the first Filipino folklorist (*El folklore Filipino*, 1889), and he wrote about the ancient religion of the Filipinos. As a left wing militant, he founded the first labor union of the country and, in apparent total contradiction with the former stand, he is also the co-founder of the schismatic Filipino Independent Church in 1902, in which he will assume the functions of a bishop.

Indeed, De los Reyes emphasizes on the decency of Filipino women of all classes, an affirmation which he actually documents with quotes of Murillo Velarde, a 18th century Jesuit missionary, and the report of Sinibaldo de Mas (1842), underlining that this critical and rather racist Spanish author admited the noticeable reserve of women in the street, even amongst prostitutes. In fact, this reserve, rather than a behavioral integration of Catholic moral, could be better linked with the indigenous modalities of prenuptial behavior exposed above[3]. Besides, it does not exactly match the impression left on travelers like Guillaume Le Gentil (1779), Paul de la Gironière (1855) or even Father Joaquin Martinez de Zuñiga (Doran 1993)

But the importance of this essay lies in its first affirmation: "*it is a general opinion that the woman is superior to the man in the Philippines, morally speaking. She is more intelligent. That is why the husband is always seen as dominated*". Then, the author stands that the essential of the economic activity rely on women while "*the husband stay at home dealing with domestic tasks, proper to the woman*". Thus, the description of the supposed typical Filipina proposed by a Filipino at the end of the Spanish period still greatly defers from the model Maria Clara is supposed to exemplify.

And yet, the 19th century, especially in its second part with the opening of the Suez canal and the subsequent deeper integration of the island's economy in world economy, was a period of great changes regarding women's position within Philippine society. In the province, particularly in Luzon, the development of a capitalist export agriculture greatly contribute to develop, aside from the domestic work held at home, waged work among countryside women (Eviota 1992). In Manila, many women came from the Province in order to incorporate the exportation industry, particularly in the sector of tobacco where the *tabacaleras* formed a female proletariat quick to fight for its rights (Camagay 1986, 2010). Also, the advent of a local bourgeoisie who adopted patterns of consumption and behavior proper to its European counterpart draw to Manila downtown women proceeding from the surrounding suburbs and provinces (Camagay 1995, 2010a). Last but not least, even if it was certainly a marginal phenomenon in numerical terms, the prostitution, sometimes articulated with the previously mentioned women activities seems to have been a growing concern in the capital of the colony (Camagay 1988, Camara Dery 2006).

Anyway, if the values of women from the "popular class" in the Province and even in Manila during the 19th century remains difficult to determine, the ideological evolution of native, mestizo - mixed-blood - or *criollo* - white people born in the Philippines - upper class is rather unambiguous. The bourgeoisie tended clearly to adopt behavior pattern similar to European standards in the same period, that is, to withdraw women from the public sphere, to form them in order to comply and remain amongst the circle of a retrained domestic life (Eviota 1992).

This evolution implicated the diffusion of a model of feminine behavior of reserve and decency following the Spanish model of the manuales de urbanidad - manuals of urbanity -, particularly exemplified though the book *Ang Pagsusulatan ng Magkapatid na si Urbana at Felisa* by Filipino Priest Modesto de Castro, published in 1864 and certainly intended for the middle class. The book aimed at "civilizing" or colonizing (Quindoza Santiago 2007) women's body through the teaching of a strict pattern of good manners and etiquette focused on the reproduction of desirable behaviors such as religious devotion, motherhood and domesticity, chastity and virginity, perseverance and submission to men (De los Reyes 2012).

One year before, in 1863, the Decree on education launched the opening of public schools for boys and girls in every town on a sex segregation system which made necessary the training of *maestras*, women teachers, initially formed with their male colleagues by the Jesuits until the opening of a specific Superior normal School for Women in 1892. The examination, organized by a Commission in which the friar-curate of Binondo participated, consisted in questions in Spanish grammar, metric and decimal system, arithmetic's, but also on Christian doctrine, Religion and Moral, Sacred History, rules of urbanity, and duties of the female teacher (Camagay 2010a).

In the same time, a great campaign of hygiene implicated a struggle against the traditional midwives - c*omadronas* - and their doubtful practices involving abortion (Camagay 2010b). This women's activity was professionalized with the creation in 1879 in the Dominican University of Santo Tomas of a School of midwives (Camagay 2010a). In the same way, the book *Lagda cun suludnun sa tauong Visaya…*, written by the Jesuit priest Pedro de Estrada in 1734 and focused on a code of behavior and regulation of body care was republished in 1850, 1865 and 1893 (Zaide 1990, Bautista & Planta 2009).

Then, we can conclude that in the second half of the 19th century, a strong shift towards the shaping of a feminine identity and behavior largely determined by bourgeois values is on the move. This model is already the one that would be exemplified by Rizal's Maria Clara and was already descending to lower social classes.

This tendency neatly observable in the Philippines cannot be delinked from a wider movement stimulated from the very head of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, as a form of counterattack against the 19th century liberal and secular society and in order to halt the growing lack of interest of men for religious practices, especially in the working class, Rome tended to reevaluate the status of Woman in order to put her in the center of its strategy of reconquering society. Starting with the renewal of the cult to Mary with the proclamation of the Dogma of Immaculate Conception in 1843[4], it would continue in the 1870s, with a particular intensity in Spain as an answer to the six years long liberal experience – from 1868 to 1874 - through the launching of numerous Marian's reviews and associations of Catholic maidens, spouses and women workers. The objective was clearly expressed by father Ventura Raulica in a book title The Apostolate of the woman: "*to implant firmly Catholicism in her spirit and her heart, so that in front of the religious disaster which could pull down everything, the woman could conserve Catholicism at the end of the 19th century in Europe*" (Hibbs-Lisorgue 2007).

4. The invention of Maria Clara

This last consideration about European context in the late 19th century leads us naturally to José Rizal, the official inventor of Maria Clara. In her book Love, Passion and Patriotism, Raquel Reyes (2008), greatly contributed to break the direct assimilation between Maria Clara and an unquestioned and univocal Spanish origin. The subject of her work, the Propaganda generation, was a group of well-to-do young people who, in a typical Latin-American elite tradition, completed their education in Europe, and who reflected from and through their European experience about their country as well as their country's women.

Juan Luna, the painter, who killed his white (Filipino creole) wife and mother-in-law in Paris

out of jealousy, seemed to have been fascinated by late 19th century Madrid and Montmartre feminine fauna. In *La Mestiza en su tocador* (1887), he represented the mixed-blood Filipina in the guise of a tantalizing young woman gazing at herself in the mirror, in what we may call a Toulouse-Lautrec style. This canvass greatly defers from *La Bulaqueña* (the Woman from Bulacan, a Manila suburb), painted in 1895 in the Philippines, and which is actually often referred in the archipelago as Maria Clara, as it represents a mestiza woman standing humbly in a typical 19th century native upper-class dress.

The Propaganda movement, organized in 1887 around *La Solidaridad* group and newspaper, was aimed at promoting awareness in Spain about the faraway Asian colony. It also searched for responsibilities for the island's incapacity to progress. Obviously, the friars, as can be seen in José Rizal's *Noli me tangere* and in Marcelo del Pilar's *La Frailocracia Filipina*, had been the main blank of the critics. But for those young intellectuals, Filipino were also responsible for their enemy's hegemony, especially Filipino women, harshly criticized by Graciano Lopez Jaena for their collaborationism with the enemy through their bigotry, "processions and novenas", and even their shameful and dishonest compromises with friars sensuality (Reyes 2008).

However, at the same time, those men were intending to build a nation and, in fact, they were the first to use the term Filipino to refer to native *indios* and not to white creole as it was the case before them. Women had to be integrated in some way in this construction of the sons and daughters of Mother Filipinas, as Mother Spain had unfairly abandoned them.

And here comes José Rizal's contribution.

A first aspect of Rizal's production to consider here is his historical work, that is, his edition of Morga's *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas* (1890). In this study, Rizal deconstructed the 16th century Spanish point of view of the natives, in the same perspective of rehabilitation of the Filipinos he developed in the articles he published in *La Solidaridad*. Nevertheless, this work of rehabilitation, when it comes to native women described and criticized by the Spanish administrator, consisted not in a valorization of pre-Hispanic women's social power and freedom of the native women in front of the men but rather in a moralization of her image.

Regarding now the proper construction of Maria Clara, we will not retake here the fascinating developments of Reyes about Rizal's obliteration of women's sexuality and fascination for feminine hysteria, in the same time when Charcot-influenced nerves therapy arrived to Manila (Reyes 2012).

Maria Clara, which also appears in the Noli's sequel *El Filibusterismo* (1891), is supposed to incarnate the perfect equilibrium between the two races, as her mother got pregnant after being sexually solicited by the Spaniard Father Damaso, her hidden procreator and the main evil character of the novel. She had been waiting for her fiancée, Cristomo Ibarra, the hero of the book, during his stay in Europe. She is a "*pure soul*", modest, self-effacing, long-suffering, and would eventually enter a nunnery because she believed that her lover, persecuted by the friars for his reformist ideas, was dead. There, she would reproduce her mother's sad destiny and be abused by a young friar in her

convent.

Clearly, Maria Clara is a romantic figure, following a European literary model more than a Filipino tradition, and she is relatively close to characters like Colombian Jorge Isaacs' Maria for example. Even if we do not want to enter here in considerations about Rizal's private life influence on the construction of the character, she could effectively be, as a woman from the Philippines, the idealized teenage love of the author, bitterly regretted while confronted in Europe to other feminine realities.

But Maria Clara is not a native woman and, as a matter of fact, the real model of typical Filipina proposed in *Noli me tangere* is Sisa, a poor woman totally dedicated to her sons, to the extent she became mentally deranged when she lost them. More than an archetype of *filipinas*, the women, the *mestiza* Maria Clara might have been in Rizal's thinking and political novel an allegory of the very *Filipinas*, the country, born from native flesh and Spanish colonization, suffering patiently in her pristine innocence the loving reforms needed from her tutelary mother.

And yet, the author and future national hero had an agenda for Filipino women, clearly expressed in his Letter to the women of Malolos (1889). In this text, which he sent to his sister, he granted them the mission to educate the future Filipino citizen in the love of his motherland. Women were then supposed to maintain themselves in their suffering role of loving mothers, sisters and wives of the male heroes entitled with the virile mission of nation building. They were supposed to be inspirers, caring providers, not instigators and even less actors (Rafael 1984 and 1995, Roces 2002).

5. The United State agenda and its need of compromise

Without doubt, the question of determining the precise context and steps of the Maria Clara cliché is particularly uneasy, all the more so since, paradoxically, it was built in the very period when women are supposed to have been largely liberated from former limitations by the new political, educational and cultural American system. We do not pretend here to reconstruct completely and precisely a process whose intelligibility would require an exhaustive study of the political and administrative literature, the feminine and general press as well as the literary production of the period, especially in native languages. Nevertheless, we will intend here to give the reader a reasonably clear mapping of the issues and stakes brought into play in this matter.

First it musts be stressed that the United States entrance in the war against Spain in 1898 was deeply marked, as Kristin Hoganson (1998) argued with an emphasis on the Nation's maleness. This can be verified in the speeches, like the declaration of Indiana senator Albert Beveridge in 1900 (Barreto Velázquez 2010) as well as for the iconographic production (Halili 2006), particularly through the figure of Uncle Sam. Consequently, there had been a subsequent tendency to infantilize, castrate, and even feminize symbolically the newly occupied Philippines (Holt 2002).

The 1898 conflict and the further decision to remain in the archipelago made a large debate arouse between anti-colonialists and supporters of the exceptionalism of the United States. In all cases, the upholding in the islands needed to be justified by a double and contradictory stance. On the one hand, it needed to affirm and prove the incapacity of Filipinos to govern themselves. On the other hand, it necessitated the existence of a capacity to improve, the lack of which would make the benefits of the presence of the United States useless, or at least of a group of population in need of protection and support in its development, as could be the poor, the non-Christian tribes, or the women.

A large number of American suffragists condemned the American intervention and former project of colonization in the name of equality and in opposition to the maleness warlike policy of the country. However, some others defended on the contrary the American patronage in the name of Our Duty toward the Women of our New Possessions, title of the paper read by Garlin Spencer of Providence, Rhode Island, in the annual suffrage convention in 1899. In her speech that she concluded by a quote of the Kipling's poem The White Man's Burden, she assumed that "savage tribes can now be elevated chiefly through their women" (Holt 2002).

Even if the white women's burden bearers got somewhat deceived by the 1902 patriotic speech of the Filipina Clemencia López, this line of argumentation was maintained later. In her famous political essay The Isles of Fear, the truth about the Philippines (1925), Catherine Mayo, after recognizing that "the position of the Filipino woman is in many ways good", *affirmed that "women, it is generally held, show, on an average, stronger moral natures, greater moral courage and more stability of character than men, constituting the sounder element of the population*". Advocating the right to vote for women despite her deep conviction of Filipino incapacity for self-government, she quoted the declaration of Governor Wood, affirming: "*one of the strongest influences for building up interest in proper municipal and provincial government comes from the numerous women's clubs*".

Undeniable is the fact that American occupation of the Philippines brought an important number of new opportunities for women, especially for those from the upper class, the *Transpacific women* studied by Denise Cruz (2012). As previously mentioned, the clubs and associations of women, feminist or not, played a crucial role in the animation of the intellectual life of the country. Young women could graduate in the newly founded University of Philippines or in the United States, appropriating the use of English language and impose a women Filipino literature in English. In another register, they even saw their beauty acknowledged in the Manila Carnival / Miss Philippines event, founded in 1908. In this event, a lot of women's relatives of the Filipino political elite participated in "Maria Clara's dress" (Nuyda 1980), including Pura Villanueva Kalaw, President of the Ilonggo Feminist association (Kalaw Katikbak 1983) and daughter of one of the most prominent intellectual of the period.

In lower social levels as well the development of women education in a massive scale, the learning of a new language taught through the discovery of new realities, the access to a new press and particularly to a new feminine press, to new feminine products of consumption, to new employment possibilities in new forms of services, consistently modified the lives of many urbanized or semi-urbanized women. Amongst those changes, certainly the most interesting for our present topic is, in the context of an ambitious hygienic policy, the formation, starting in 1907, of young women in order to become nurses for the local needs but also to migrate to North America (Choy 2003). But in our point of view, this urge for creating new categories of care activities for Filipino women, as well as the demand for women and not men domestic helpers according to the American standard, contributed also to confirm the gender models of domesticity and care developed in the second half of the 19th century in Catholic Europe and Philippines.

Therefore, United States Policy regarding women in the Philippines cannot be seen exclusively as a unilateral liberation agenda.

First of all the white Anglo Saxon Protestant individuals in the Philippines kept their own bourgeois and puritan moral, which clearly appears in the testimony of American women, mostly teachers and soldiers wives, in their description of the Filipinos and the Filipinas. As a matter of example, one of them, Mary Helen Fee (1910) wrote:

> "*The result of general freedom of speech and the process of safeguarding a girl from its results is to make a Filipino girl regard her virtue as something foreign to herself, a property to be guarded by her relatives […] she feels herself free from responsibility in succumbing* […] *Among the lower classes there is no idea that a young girl can respect herself or take care of herself*.".

Here, the author clearly reproached the lack of personal internalization of the notion of responsibility and potential guilt, a decisive element in the protestant ethics. The same moral perspective can be seen in the multiple American books of urbanity and good manners circulating during that same period and, in some way, in the quick development of girl scouts (Hernandez 2000).

However, the affirmation of the protestant perspective quickly had to refrain itself while facing a double Catholic opposition: one in the homeland, which resulted in a "textbook war" that ended with the victory of the Catholic lobby (Raftery 1998), and another in the Philippines, due to the opposition of the population to Protestant missions in the dangerous context of the birth of the Philippine Independent Church (Schumacher 1981, Maggay 2011). Then, aside from a few missions in which Filipino women might have enjoyed profitable opportunities (Prieto 2014), the Catholic retained a great part of its monopoly on Filipino ethics.

On the other side and from the beginning, the United States critically needed to create a Filipino nationalism under its patronage in order to maintain its image of benevolent Empire. Hence, the figure of José Rizal logically appeared as the most convenient to be converted in "*the greatest man of the brown race"* (Craig 1909), for he was already being considered as a martyr (Ileto 1979) and opportunely enough, a martyr who was executed by the Spaniards before the start of the revolution of 1896. The American patronage agenda as well as, on the part of Filipinos, the need for "*relief to some of their patriotic emotions*" as Mrs. Dauncey wrote it (Quibuyen 1999) soon imposed Rizal statues, Rizal day and Rizal parks as the ubiquitous symbols of the new era. Then, logically, his main female character would also occupy a disproportioned space in the discursive landscape of the islands.

6. The polyphony of the woman question and the never-ending fight with Maria Clara

In the 1920s and 1930s, the debate around Filipino women was intense, and yet highly multifaceted.

On one side, in continuity with the first builders of "modern Filipino woman" such as Emma Sarepta Yule, Guadalupe Quintero de Joseph and M. P. de Veyra (Cruz 2012), who had to struggle at the same time against national and American biases regarding Filipino women, a second generation composed by women such as Sofia de Veyra[5], Asuncion Perez and Maria Paz Mendoza Guazon, author of *The development and progress of the Filipino women* (1928) and *My ideal Filipino girl* (1931), struggled in the battlefield of the women's vote fight, who was finally won in 1937. In their struggle, they received the help of male personalities such as Rafael Palma (*The woman and the right to vote*, 1919), Maximo Kalaw (*The Filipino Rebel*, 1930) or the somewhat surprising Hilario Moncado (Divinity of woman, 1926).

On the other side, an important sector of the masculine political class denounced the misleading evolution of women under the American regime. Young women students were denounced for their immoral behavior while women's vote possibility was discarded for it would destroy traditional feminine values. Then, as convincingly argued by Cruz, "*Elite Filipinos turned to Maria Clara, extracted her idealized traits, and transferred them to the barrio girl and the Malay woman*".

Unfortunately understudied, at the same period, in articulation with the continued process of national "canonization" of Rizal[6], were published literary works such as *Maria Clara, a play in two acts* (1927), and the short writings *A patriot and a mother* (1930), *Our hero's mother* (1939), *The widow of Rizal* (1939), *Rizal's Better half, Rizal's First Love* (c. 1930). This kind of production contributed greatly to the confusion between fiction and reality. In parallel, a Tagalog moral production, through cheap periodical publications like the *Dalaga* magazine and books such as *Ang malinis ng Susana* (*Susana the pure*, 1926) was emphasizing on the sane values of the good simple girls from the countryside.

Another element to be considered here is the evolution of women's dress in that same period

(Roces 2005). The traditional costume known as *traje de mestiza*, or mixed-blood woman dress, evolved to become the paragon of Filipino woman attire, and eventually be known as terno or Maria Clara dress. Interesting enough, the suffragist themselves strongly contributed to this move, as they adopted it systematically in their society meetings.

This last point illustrate fairly well the certain ambiguity of modern and even feminist women of the 1930s. Being part of the elite, they were moving in the same male social groups who were caricaturizing them and progressively forging the Maria Clara statue. This ambiguity is perfectly illustrated in *Lo que ellas dicen* (*What they say*), a compilation of interviews made by social columnist Marina, M. Luga de Ferrer, and published in *La Vanguardia* from 1934 to 1937. This late Spanish-speaking production, as long as we know, has not been studied so far. And yet, it shows the great contradictions of an upper class at the crossroad between its passed references and values and new standards of living and cultural wealth, with interviews of Mendoza-Guazon and De Veyra, some promoting divorce, and next to them titles like "*because of her weakness, woman cannot equal man*", or old ladies regretting that "*Rizal's Maria Clara already died in this civilization*".

And yet, she did not. On the contrary, from then on, Maria Clara's shadow has always been present in most speeches on Filipino women.

In the 1950s, from time to time, an article dedicated to Maria Clara would appear in the middle of a feminine or all-public magazine, for example, in June 22nd 1958 *Sunday Time*, a magazine whose covers mostly consist in representations of women. In this issue was published an article from Adrian Cristobal titled "*Maria Clara: The tragedy of innocence*" where it could be read the rather impacting formula: "*No man is an island. And in a corrupt and corrupting society, innocence is a virtue that cannot exist. But is true that Maria Clara existed*". Five years before, Salvador Lopez had written an article whose title was asking to the reader: *Maria Clara, Paragon or Caricature?* It declared:

> "*For decades since Maria Clara was created by the genius of the great patriot, we have heard the name of this heroine spoken, now in reverent whispers, now in a gush of romantic idealism. She has been celebrated in song and oratory as the paragon of Filipino womanhood. Whenever it seemed that the modern Filipino girl was becoming too vital, too progressive, or too daring, prophets of execration and doom were not lacking to hold up the figure of Maria Clara anew and to whisper her name as if it were an incantation to drive away an evil spirit*."

Next, the author develop the idea, retaken many times after him by many feminists in order to redeem the hero from his Maria Clara's sin, that Rizal created a satire of the weaknesses of the women of his time, "*as Cervantes used the character of Don Quixote to laugh the romantic knight out of court forever*".

Still, things changed with the firm installment of Ferdinand Marcos on the presidential seat. The first lady Imelda Marcos, who proceeded from the provincial upper class, recuperated and customized the traditional *terno* dress (whose respectability she finally ruined) while presenting herself as totally devoted to her husband's agenda. But still, in a period when prostitution was booming next to the US military bases in Luzon, she emphasized on a rather sensual form of expressing womanhood. In the same sense of a relative "de-maria-clarizing" tendency of the period, it has to be emphasized that the Marcos intended to develop a State planed policy of birth control (Rivera, Lopez, Osorio 1974) that arose a massive opposition on the part of the Catholic Church and its vision of women's sexuality. On their side, the women involved in the left wing resistance to this violent and dictatorial regime could integrate political activism and experience new forms of participation amongst society (Hilsdon 1995).

After the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino in 1983, the Church started leading the opposition while US President Ronald Reagan was trying his best to take distance from his former friend. And here lies the ambiguity of the 1986 People's Power Revolution, with its world famous Filipino nuns facing the soldiers. It restored democracy, but certainly did not enhance the position of women amongst Filipino society (Roces 1998). The new president, the long-suffering and modest-looking widow Corazon Aquino, concretely installed as President by Cardinal of Manila Jaime Sin, would soon glorify the sacrifice of the *bagong bayani*, the new national heroes, as she called them in 1991 in her speech to domestic helpers in Hong Kong.

Without doubt, things changed since the beginning of the 1990s. Nevertheless, as we saw it, the course of Filipino women History, or better said, the History of their symbolical place in society, as the proper life of migrants who more and more exemplifies the contemporaneous Maria Clara, is submitted to movement of back and forth.

In *woman enough* (1999), the essayist Carmen Guerrero Napkil, which is ironically the sister of Leon Maria Guerrero, the translator of Rizal who, by systematically changing the word *mestiza* to *Filipina*, definitely assimilated Maria Clara to a general feminine model (Anderson 1998) wrote in a chapter titled Maria Clara:

> "*The greatest misfortune that has befallen Filipino women in the last one hundred years is Maria Clara. I mean this in a very real sense for, in trying to live up to the pattern set by Rizal's beautiful heroine, millions of Filipinas became something other than their real selves.*
> *They forced their persons into the narrow mold of Maria Clara's maidenly charms and became effete and exceedingly genteel caricatures. They affected modesty to an absurd degree and became martyrs to duty and familial love*".

But if Maria Clara is just a ghost, why insisting in recalling it?

Perhaps because Maria Clara edification as a powerful national myth displaced the late 19th century martyrdom model, so important in the psyche of the last country to perform real crucifixions, and consequently allowed them to occupy symbolically a paradoxical hegemonic position within the process of nation building.

7. Conclusion: Being Maria Clara today

As we have seen, the construction of Maria Clara archetype is the fruit of a long-term process. Yet, it is essentially a complex and ambivalent combination of circumstances at the beginning of the 20th century that put Rizal's heroine in the center of the national debate about Filipino women. And it still stands on that central place almost a century later. In this work, we essentially evoked debates, essays, literary works, that is, a sphere of considerations certainly located far away from Filipinos and Filipinas everyday' s preoccupations. Therefore, as a short conclusion, we would like to reorient our attention to the ordinary today.

What is, then, the present influence of the Maria Clara model in concrete ordinary women's life?

In the Sixth edition of the Philippine History and Government by Gregorio and Sonia Zaide (2004, republished since then), are included short chapters dedicated to establish a balance of the Spanish and American contributions to Filipino women's condition. Under Spain "*The position of women in society was improved*" as they were "*respected and honored by men*" and "*did not mix freely with men* […] *Many young women entered the nunnery and became nuns. The beautiful Maria Clara in the novels of Rizal is a good example of womanhood in Spanish times*". Under the American "*Filipino women made history* […] *The first Asian women to vote were the Filipinas*". But "*People prayed the rosary and the angelus less* […] *Young people could now go out without a chaperone*".

In a country that largely rejected its Spanish heritage, Peninsular contribution to the making of the perfect Filipina exemplified by Maria Clara is highlighted here. Moreover, this valorizing discourse is produced in contradiction with historical facts and even at the cost of renouncing to a nationally gratifying myth of Eden regarding the position of women in the pre-Hispanic origins. Then, it is certainly no coincidence if the only statue with a frontispiece written in Spanish in the Rizal Park is a 1912 creation dedicated *A la Madre Filipina*, *to the Filipina Mother*.

In addition, we conducted a very limited survey (10 women from 19 to 35 years old) in Visayan language that consisted in asking five words about Filipino women and their idea about Maria Clara. Interestingly enough, about half of them said they did not remember who Maria Clara was, and one of them, on hearing the name of José Rizal, said Maria Clara was his girlfriend. This shows fairly well how reality and fiction got mixed by the way the story had been made History. Of course, even without remembering who the "historical character" was, all of them knew and used Maria Clara as a common

name to refer to the attributes mentioned in our introduction. The five others said that she represented the faithful image of the traditional Filipina. Regarding their ideas about Filipino women, the answers were generally very conventional. The most repeated word were "*mabait*" (good in Tagalog), loyal, faithful, beautiful, modest, religious and conservative. Only one of them said "*isug*", meaning with strong character.

Finally, we made a quick research on a dating website between Filipinas and Foreigners, *Cebuanas.com*, which we are using as a fieldwork for almost 3 years. The first observation that we could evaluate, by comparing Filipinas with women from other Asian countries through the site *Asiandating.com*, was the abundance of profiles with the keywords caring, patient, conservative and even submissive, which does not indicate necessarily the personality of the person but the image she wants to give. Far more surprising, 16 of them even put the name of Maria Clara in their profile, knowing that there is little chance that a foreigner will understand the reference. By using the expression Maria Clara, they describe their physical aspect (one "*Maria Clara complexion*"), their clothing habits, but mostly their conservative behavior. One of them even chose as her announcing message: "*Maria Clara reaches out for Joe*"[7].

Finally, it seems that, largely due to a massive work of ideological conditioning, not necessarily effective in terms of concrete knowledge but rather efficient in terms of inculcation of general concepts, many working or middle class women seem to assimilate themselves with this fictitious and apparently backward model of womanhood. Backward, but also tactical in their search for a way-out from their country as care workers, domestic helpers or spouses for Western males who failed to find the right spouse amongst their emancipated western women counterpart.

And yet, the Maria Clara archetype doesn't fit very well with the lives of hundreds of thousands of women who, alone, leave their country to work abroad. In Singapore, Hong-Kong and particularly in countries where Filipinas presence is specially linked with the sex industry, like Japan[8], Filipina women's image can be significantly different. Apart from this exterior vision, the proper reality of many of those women, who are often single mothers, contradicts the virginal image of their supposed model. For whom then, is Maria Clara model today? Realistically, for only a few and increasingly fewer individuals. However, and unfortunately, in terms of prefixed behavior pattern which, if not fulfilled, becomes moral fault and social guilt, still for many Filipino women.

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Notes

1 By proposing to include the category of spouse migrants in the care activity, we do not negate affectivity or postulate a general duplicity amongst the women involved. Following authors like Pei-Chia Lan (2003), and based on our own fieldwork we observe a frequent continuity between different forms of departure agencies. Furthermore, the frequent difference of age between bride and groom and the specific agency of the latter in terms of care demands (So 2006, Chia Wen Lu 2012) seems to justify in some way this assertion.

2 This was still observed by Juan Alvarez Guerra at the end of 19th century in Bicol Province. In that case, the woman was losing her dowry in case of adultery.

3 Significantly, the word *kundiman*, the traditional Filipino love serenade means literally: "*if you don't want*".

4 The cult to the Virgin of Lourdes was officially recognized in 1862 and would quickly spread to the Philippines.

5 Sofia de Veyra (Ancheta & Beltran-Gonzales 1984), curiously not mentioned by Cruz, could be considered as the transitional figure: she was the cofounder of the first training center for nurses in 1907. She then married, studied in the United States, organized the Manila Women's Club in 1925, became one of the leader of the suffragist movement and wrote in 1932 a schoolbook about Character and Conduct, whose first page in a representation of Joan of Arc in armor.

6 As a sample of this disconcerting but interesting production, let's mention Manuel Lopez's *Si Rizal at ang mga Diwata* (1913), Rizal and the Spirits, a sacramental play (called by the author a zarzuela) consisting in a dialog between 14 years old Rizal and allegories such as envy, necessity, Minerva and the Philippines.

7 Joe is a common name to refer to Westerners in the Philippines.

8 During our stay in Kyoto, we saw no less than four Go Go bars signs adorned with the Philippine flag during a 10 minutes' walk in the Gion district entertainment zone.