



Marco, Darrel Manuel Oreta (2021) *The bakla in Filipino children's picturebooks: the intersectionality of sexual orientation, gender expression, class, and societal expectations*. [IntM]

Copyright © 2021 The Author

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author(s)

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author(s)

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, institution and date must be given

<http://dissertations.gla.ac.uk/524/>

Deposited: 05 April 2022

Enlighten Dissertations  
<http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/>  
[research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk)

ERASMUS MUNDUS INTERNATIONAL MASTER

# CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, MEDIA & CULTURE

**The *Bakla* in Filipino Children's Picturebooks:**

*The Intersectionality of Sexual Orientation, Gender Expression, Class, and Societal Expectations*

**Darrel Manuel Oreta Marco**

Word count: 22,966

This extended study is presented in part fulfillment of the requirements of the International  
Master of Children's Literature, Media and Culture

2021

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to thank myself for doing my best and finishing this research project during a pandemic. How I wish I could document how hard it was to ideate, implement, and write a thesis and at the same time take care of my mental health amidst all the lockdowns and isolation. Of course, my sincerest gratitude, too, to my supervisor, Dr. Mateusz Świetlicki, for not giving up on me, and guiding me to the right path in this exploration of queerness in Filipino children's literature. I would also like to acknowledge my partner, Dirk Verzijl, who is always ready to extend his unconditional support and loving arms, especially during my anxiety attacks. Thank you my friend Ayee Macaraig, who borrowed books from the University of Amsterdam for me. Likewise, gracias mi amigas, who made this program enjoyable and bearable while all being away from our homelands: Jessica, Cami, Toti, Tarn, Yuyu, Lilit. Lastly, to my family and friends back in the Philippines: Mama Solita, Papa Manuel, Tina, Kuya Lemuel, Ate Val and Luna, Jing, Angelle, Mother Z, Anne, and Audrey; thank you for always having my back, devising all the means to send me the picturebooks and providing all the moral support I needed for this research.

## Summary

This study addresses the paucity of research on Filipino queer-themed children's literature. Scholarship on queer-themed children's literature is dominated by analyses of English children's books that often feature White, middle-class, Christian, and able-bodied queer characters. As such, academic discussion about queerness has become paradoxically limited.

To enrich existing discourses about queerness, this thesis offers an exploration of the representations of the *bakla* in select Filipino children's picturebooks. In contrast to the Western framework of separating gender identity from sexual orientation, the construct of *kabaklaan* in Filipino culture is a conflation of both gender and sexuality. It underwent numerous redefinitions and reappropriations from precolonial to contemporary Filipino society, leading to a multitude of assumptions that simultaneously invoke pride and discrimination for the Filipino gay community.

Guided by an analytical framework built on Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, and J. Neil Garcia's extensive work on the construct of *kabaklaan*, the author of this thesis subjected the following children's picturebooks to critical content analysis: *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* by Rhandee Garlitos (2013), *Uncle Sam* by Segundo Matias (2014), and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* by Michael De Guzman (2018). These three picturebooks were selected from a corpus built on queer children's books identified in various Filipino literary journals, university and publishing house catalogues, and online resources based on the criteria of being works of realistic fiction that explicitly mention the word *bakla* in the story.

Analysis of the three picturebooks shows various representations of *kabaklaan* embodied in a *parloristang bakla*, an effeminate *beki* child, and a homonormative *bakla* couple. These characters perform gender through clothing, behaviors, and language use that present relatively stable and singular gender identities. Notably, the picturebook *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* is particularly different compared to the other two because it anchors the definition of *kabaklaan* (being gay) on sexual orientation and it introduces bisexuality. The latter is a theme that none of the children's books analyzed in relevant studies featured. From an intersectional lens, the *bakla* characters are ostensibly middle class and able-bodied.

All three stories claim to promote a wholehearted acceptance of *bakla* individuals. However, some of the approaches employed and resolutions asserted imply varying degrees of

problematic acceptance. The stories highlight queerness and attribute certain prejudices to discrimination directed at a collective identity but conclude with a form of acceptance that only covers individuals who are able to demonstrate their specific capabilities. Such narratives emphasize individualism and exceptionalism instead of endorsing a more fundamental change of attitude towards queer people in general.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Heteronormative Sexuality and Innocence in Childhood .....	7
1.2. Pedagogical Value of Children’s Literature in Teaching Queerness.....	8
1.3. Including a Filipino Perspective on the Queer Spectrum .....	10
1.4. Methodology .....	13
1.4.1. Building the Corpus .....	13
1.4.2. Critical Content Analysis .....	15
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1. Gender Performativity .....	18
2.2. Intersectionality.....	20
2.3. Prevalence of Queer-themed Children’s Books: From Heteronormative to Queer-Inclusive.....	21
2.4. Depictions of Families with Same-Sex Parents in Children’s Literature .....	22
2.5. Discourses on Sexual Identification and Gender Expression in Queer Children’s Literature .....	25
2.5.1. Heteronormative Queerness.....	25
2.5.2. New Queer Children’s Literature.....	27
2.5.3. Intersectionality in Representations of Queer Characters.....	29
2.6. Construct of <i>Bakla</i> .....	31
Prevalence of Queer Themes and Characters in Philippine Literature and Cinema.....	33
2.7. Queerness in Filipino Literature .....	33
2.8. Representations of <i>Bakla</i> in Filipino Films .....	35
<b>3. Analysis of Primary Texts .....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1. <i>Uncle Sam</i> by Segundo Matias (2014).....	38
3.2. <i>Ang bonggang bonggang batang beki</i> by Rhandee Garlitos (2013).....	48
3.3. <i>Dalawa ang Daddy</i> ni Billy by De Guzman (2018) .....	56
3.4. Discussion.....	62

3.4.1. Implied Reader.....	62
3.4.2. Definitions and Portrayals of <i>Kabaklaan</i> .....	63
3.4.3. The <i>Bakla</i> 's Visible Invisibility.....	65
3.4.4. The Oppression of the <i>Bakla</i> .....	66
3.4.5. The <i>Bakla</i> Conversion and Acts of Resistance.....	66
<b>4. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>5. Works Cited.....</b>	<b>71</b>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Heteronormative Sexuality and Innocence in Childhood

Innocence is a notion usually used in Western discourses to describe children and childhood. Yet innocence is discursive and the child is constructed as a being that needs protection from certain dangers, including knowledge about sexuality, as claimed by several scholars, most notably Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, B.J. Epstein in *Are the Kids All Right?*, and Allan Prout in *The Future of Childhood*. Michel Foucault relates that the child is constructed as non-sexual, and discussions surrounding childhood and sexuality are always bounded by disavowal and restrictions (7-8). However, as Gary Cross observes, the regulation of childhood innocence concerns adults' moral conflicts more than children's needs (qtd in Pugh 17). Adults assume, then, a feeling of individual responsibility in mitigating risks; hence, they elect themselves to become the gatekeepers of "childhood innocence" and adult-child relations of power (Pugh 4).

The construct of innocence is characterized by the absence of sexuality. Yet as James Kincaid observes, "the idea of innocence and the idea of 'the child' became dominated by sexuality – negative sexuality, of course, but sexuality all the same" (55). This issue becomes more complicated when questions about children's understanding of adult sexuality collide with the proscribed issue of childhood sexuality as a matter unto itself (Pugh 8). When children gain access to knowledge of sexuality, moral panic sets in amongst adult gatekeepers, especially if such knowledge transgresses heteronormative values and practices (Bruhm and Hurley xiii).

One way adults restrict children's access to knowledge about sexuality and its related subject of gender is through the regulation of children's books. Caitlyn Ryan and Jill Hermann-Willmarth note in their article "Already on the Shelf: Queer Readings of Award-Winning Children's Literature" that reading only about heterosexual people and censoring books that discuss nonnormative identities may seem common sense in early literacy education (143). However, this very tension between protecting children's innocence from sexuality and enforcing the normalcy of heterosexuality in children's literature is ironic. Garreth Matthews contends in *A Philosophy of Childhood* that children's books are used to justify what gender and sexuality are while often discouraging children from further exploring these notions (69). Tison



Pugh also argues that children can hardly preserve their supposed innocence while being brought up in heteronormativity (4). For him, a fundamental paradox exists in the tension between innocence and heterosexuality that renders children's literature queer, especially when the denial of sexuality through the celebration of innocence is apparent in such texts (4). Bruhm and Hurley, as quoted in Pugh, relay these suppositions about children's sexuality: "There is currently a dominant narrative about children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual" (4). This assumed innocence of sexuality in children's literature often includes the denial of aging and the eternal celebration of childhood, to the point where heterosexuality exists as a phantom figure within its pages, no less strong and coercive due to its invisibility (Pugh 4). This construction of the child, who is both innocent and presumed to be heterosexual, is therefore not fully sheltered from the discussions of gender and sexuality (Pugh 6).

## **1.2. Pedagogical Value of Children's Literature in Teaching Queerness**

Rudine Sims Bishop in her 1990 essay on multiculturalism and diversity promotes the pedagogical value of children's literature as it offers children the capability to view and investigate the "multicultural nature of the world" from multiple perspectives (ix). She compares its function to that of windows, doors, and mirrors:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (ix)

Children's books can be opened like "windows" that provide children with a way to see the lived experiences of other people outside of their own reality and context. These "windows" can also serve as "sliding glass doors" that invite them to come into the world that the writers

and illustrators have created, enabling them to witness different realities beyond the boundaries of their immediate surroundings and social space. These functions allow children to see representations of people who are not like them in terms of physical appearance, inclinations, mannerisms, and culture. The experience of reading allows them to expand their understanding of the diversity that exists in our world. More importantly, children's books can also serve as mirrors that reflect not only their experiences but also their identity and the spaces they occupy in this world. Children's literature contains visual and textual representations of faces and experiences that young readers can identify with and validate their place as recognizable community members.

Given this pedagogical value of children's literature, several scholars such as B. J. Epstein, Jennifer Miller, Caitlyn Ryan, and Jill Hermann-Willmarth have recommended using queer-themed children's literature to avoid the internalization of a narrow, binary, heteronormative understanding of sexuality and gender expression at a young age. For instance, in her book *Are the Kids All Right*, Epstein surveyed children's literature published in the United States and the United Kingdom from the 1970s to the 2010s to explore how the portrayals of LGBTQ+ characters in children's books facilitate discussions of the supposed difficult and taboo topics such as gender and sexuality in entertaining and informative ways.

In another article, "We're Here, We're (Not) Queer," Epstein emphasizes the special role of children's literature in reflecting diversity in a globalised world. Echoing Bishop's view, Epstein wrote:

Children's literature in particular has a special role to play in our ever-more globalised world by giving children the opportunity to read and learn about various kinds of people, backgrounds, and perspectives, and of course it also offers them the chance to read about other people like themselves, so the texts can serve as both mirrors and windows. (287-88)

She stresses how these books act as mirrors through which queer children can see their reflections and validate their existence. Kathryn Bon Stockton similarly argues in her book *Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* that "fiction uniquely nurtures ideas of queer children" (17) because fiction provides queer children spaces, although imagined, for this

sideways growth—that is, finding ways to grow through imagination amidst adult intervention and other restrictive norms surrounding childhood.

Queer-themed children's books are also equally important even to presumed heterosexual children as these provide them access, a “window,” to witness the lives of non-heterosexual people, thus, helping them gain a better understanding of sexual and gender diversity (Epstein “We’re Here, We’re (Not) Queer” 288).

Another scholar who acclaims the role of children's literature is Jennifer Miller. In her analysis of picturebooks published between 1970 and 2018, she highlighted the role of picturebooks as a powerful socializing agent that can help children “form self-image, develop a sense of cultural expectations, and imagine inhabiting social roles” (“Profile: LGBTQ Children's Picture Books” n.p.). She argues that children's picturebooks can counter the dominant socio-cultural constructions of gender and sexuality by offering children a wide range of stories that feature people with different backgrounds, thus, helping them nurture compassion by exposing them to an inclusive and diverse worldview (n.p.).

Similarly, Ryan and Hermann-Willmarth highlight the power of children's literature to promote a healthy, inclusive, and compassionate view towards everyone who belongs to different points in the sexual orientation and gender spectrum. Citing Halberstam's metaphor of “archives of alternatives,” they offer a queer reading of popular children's literature to demonstrate how these books can show various ways of “being, living, and loving” that resist social norms (146).

### **1.3. Including a Filipino Perspective on the Queer Spectrum**

The abovementioned scholars have demonstrated how children's literature can be used as a pedagogical tool for children, especially for queer children who are often marginalized and othered. The explosion of books with queer characters in the last thirty years (Epstein “We’re Here, We’re (Not) Queer” 297) is, therefore, a considerable positive change because such narratives serve as “mirrors” to queer people and “windows” and “sliding doors” to heterosexuals.

However, in this study, I argue that we must caution against presenting a narrow set of stereotypical representations of queer identities viewed from a limited perspective. Currently, most of the existing scholarships on queer-themed children's literature focused on text-based books, published in the English language, viewed from an Anglo-American perspective, that feature Western notions of sexuality and gender expression, and often portray White, middle- to

upper-middle class, Christian, able-bodied characters (cf. Epstein; Lester; Miller; Ryan and Hermann-Willmarth). Epstein posits that this “lack of diversity implies that it may not be possible to be queer and something else” and that “multiple diversity(ies) may be too much for children’s literature to handle” (“We’re Here, We’re (Not) Queer” 296).

Jasmine Lester also echoes a similar argument, noting the prevalence of stereotyped queer characters. Citing Wesling’s findings, Lester writes, “White queer people enjoy more political and media representation, a privilege that upholds White supremacist notions of what types of bodies are worthy of taking up space, which has distinct repercussions in the lives of queer people of color” (246). The notion of a “gay collective identity” (Valocchi qtd. in Lester 255) dominated by White, middle to upper-class, queer people whitewashes children’s literature where queer people of color are rendered rare or completely invisible.

Therefore, it is in this gap that I situate my research by presenting other versions of queerness beyond the Western notions of gender and sexuality to avoid a limited view on visible, recognized, and acceptable representations of queer. From this point forward, I am adopting Kerry Mallan’s definition of the term queer for this study. According to her:

Queer [...] is often used as an umbrella term that refers to a range of “nonnormative” sexualities and genders—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (GLBTIQ). In other contexts, queer is a term that resists identity categorizations based on sexual orientation (including heterosexual). As a theoretical strategy, queer reveals the social and historical constructions of identity formation and dualistic concepts that govern normative notions of gender and sexuality. (n.p.)

In this study, I conduct a critical content analysis of three Filipino queer-themed picturebooks that feature representations of the *bakla* (homosexual male) to explore how non-normative sexual and gender identities are understood in contemporary Filipino society, and what children and young adults are told about queer issues through the medium of fiction.

In her article comparing Western and Filipino notions of gender and queer culture, Vonne Patiag writes that *bakla* is a Filipino word that refers to the practice of male cross-dressing in Filipino culture. *Bakla* denotes a man who possesses “femininity” in his mannerisms, clothing

style, or the way he identifies as a woman. More than just a category of sexual identity, the *bakla*'s identity is built on performative cultural practice. Often considered a Filipino third gender, *bakla* can be either homosexual or heterosexual, and is regarded as one of the most visible queer cultures in Asia (n.p.). Patiag further adds that:

Historically, the *bakla* were renowned as community leaders, seen as the traditional rulers who transcended the duality between man and woman. Many early reports from Spanish colonising parties referenced the mystical entities that were “more man than man, and more woman than woman.” Even today, many *bakla* in the Philippines retain high status as entertainers and media personalities. (n.p.)

Problems arise, however, with the mistranslation of *bakla* to the term “gay” in English. *Bakla* is an identity that is not specifically limited to characteristics about sex, hence, it does not strictly adhere to Western terminologies of LGBTQ+ identities, and is situated somewhere between gay, that is, homosexual men, and transgender women. Notably, Filipino is a less restrictive language that does not limit people to gendered pronouns and is always gender-neutral; unlike the way the English language refers to people in terms of gendered identities (Patiag n.p.). *Bakla* and similar identities, such as hijra in India and the Native American concept of two-spirit, promote other ways of viewing the fluidity of identity that can exist in humanity, often suppressed by the Western ideals imposed upon them.

Knowing the pedagogical value of children's books and having an interest in promoting the inclusion of a Filipino perspective on queer culture leads me to ask how is the *bakla*, a Filipino queer identity, portrayed in select children's picturebooks? To answer this question, I created a corpus of published Filipino queer-themed children's picturebooks that include representations of *kabaklaan* (being *bakla*) in the Philippines using the lens of gender performativity theory, intersectionality, and J. Neil Garcia's characterization of the construct of *bakla*.

Judith Butler first introduced gender performativity theory in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler uses a social constructivist approach in analyzing how the concept of gender changes from one society to another and how it can change over time (5). Because of this

socially constructed nature of gender, I am also including J. Neil Garcia's construction of the Filipino *bakla* and male gender crossers gleaned from his extensive study published in *Philippine Gay Culture: The Last 30 Years* to add a Filipino perspective on male homosexuality in the ever-widening sexuality and gender spectrum. Further, inspired by Garcia's characterizations of the Filipino *bakla* that is fraught with complex expectations about his sexuality, gender identity, social class, and profession—which in part is influenced by changing notions about gender and sexuality throughout different periods of Philippine history (Garcia “Male Homosexuality in the Philippines: a short history”)—I also employ Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. I argue that depending on the configuration of a *bakla*'s sexual identity, gender performance, social class, and profession, the *bakla* may be viewed favourably or unfavourably.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

To reiterate, I aim to explore how the *bakla* is portrayed in select Filipino children's picturebooks. For this reason, I created a corpus of Filipino queer-themed children's picturebooks that discuss *kabaklaan* and analyzed the featured narratives using critical content analysis as described in the subsequent discussion.

##### **1.4.1. Building the Corpus**

I choose Filipino children's picturebooks that discuss *kabaklaan* for two primary and related reasons. One, the format of picturebooks, similar to that of television and films, allows young individuals to immerse themselves in stories from which they learn knowledge and beliefs about matters such as gender and sexuality. As Sunderland and McGlashan argued, the visual and textual elements in picturebooks interact to co-present meanings (192). Moreover, the format of picturebook lends itself well for reading aloud and for training children in reading various types of text through a queer lens (Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth 149). Two, picturebooks are also among the most accessible format of Filipino children's literature in schools, libraries, and bookstores. According to Virgilio Almario, Filipino National Artist for Literature and an advocate of Filipino children's literature, picturebooks play a culturally significant role in the Filipino reading culture because these are derivatives of the 1960s *komiks* culture that was prevalent in the Philippines at the time (184). *Komiks* stories were written and read as a combination of text and images printed on cheap newsprint papers, which made these affordable to most Filipinos and appealing to both children and adults (186).

I use several criteria in selecting the picturebooks for this research. The category of picturebooks here is defined as “books in which both the visual and the verbal aspects are both essential for full communication” (Nikolajeva and Scott 226), which entails that the interaction between text and image are of equal importance in meaning-making and filling in narrative gaps. It is to be differentiated from illustrated books in which text can exist independently and illustrations are considered secondary. Further, I only considered books with single-story narratives that may be used for read-aloud or independent reading.

The first round of selection included the books described in relevant research on Filipino children’s literature. The second round involved reading literary reviews published by Philippine institutions such as the University of the Philippines’ *Humanities Diliman*, *Diliman Gender Review*, and *Likhaan: The Journal of Contemporary Philippine Literature*; De La Salle University’s *Ideya*; Ateneo de Manila University’s *Katipunan*; and Samahang Pilandokan. The third round involved an online search using terms such as “picturebooks,” “picture books,” “LGBTQ+ “*bakla*,” “*bata*” (child) in Google search and in browsing through online catalogues of various Filipino publisher websites such as Adarna House, Tahanan Books, and Lampara Books.

My search yielded a total of eleven Filipino picturebooks with queer themes published between 2012 and 2020. Five of these books were published by the mission-oriented press, Mulat Sulat, in 2018 to promote “equality and inclusivity of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions” (Cruz n.p). These books were launched during the 36<sup>th</sup> National Children’s Book Day in the Philippines through read-aloud activities (Cruz n.p.) including *Bukas na si Cajon* (written by Jesh Alberto and illustrated by Gabbi Ramirez); *One of the Boys (or How Kenny Saved the City of Toyland)* (written by Arkin Frany and illustrated by Fides Balmaceda), *Si Chowchow* (written by Angelo P. Benavidez and illustrated by Aiko Shimizu); *What’s My Power Gear?* (written by Mondie Ruedas and illustrated by Ruthie Genuino); and *Dumating na Si Manang Elisa* (written by Godfrey T. Dancel and illustrated by Gabbi Ramirez). Similarly, Bernadette Neri and CJ de Silva’s *Ang Ikaklit sa Aming Hardin* (2012)—winner of 2006 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for the Children’s Short Story Category and considered as the first Filipino picturebook that features a lesbian couple as parents—was also independently published (cf. Lee). Other books found include *Ang Nanay ni Erwin/ Ang Tatay ni Klara* (written by

Eugene Y. Evasco and illustrated by Tokwa Peñaflorida in 2018) and *Ang Nanay Kong Drayber* (written by Reina P. Peralta and illustrated by Pepot Z. Atienza in 2020).

I further limited the selection to picturebooks that feature stories as realistic fiction, thus, characters must be humans instead of anthropomorphized ones. Moreover, because my research focuses on the portrayal of *bakla* in Filipino picturebooks, I further limited the selection to books that explicitly label the character as *bakla*. These criteria limited the selection to three picturebooks: *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki (The Fierce and Fabulous Boy in Pink!)* written by Raymund “Rhandee” Magno Garlitos and illustrated by Tokwa Salazar Peñaflorida (2013); *Uncle Sam* written by Segundo D. Matias and illustrated by Jason Moss (2014); and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy (Billy has Two Daddies)* written by Michael P. De Guzman and illustrated by Daniel Palma Tayona (2018).

Coincidentally, all three books received recognition in various literary awards. The first two titles were among the National Children’s Book Awards’ Kids’ Choice Finalists for 2014 and 2016, respectively (cf. Lejano; The Philippine Board on Books for Young People). The third book, on the other hand, was awarded honourable mention in the Philippine Board on Books for Young People’s Salanga Prize for short story in 2003 and was eventually published as a picturebook by Tahanan Books in 2018 (cf. CNN Philippines; De Guzman).

Although I tried to search exhaustively, given the linguistic diversity in the Philippines with over 150 regional languages, there may be other queer-themed Filipino picturebooks that feature *bakla* characters but are neither available in Filipino or English, nor indexed or mentioned in any online resource. Thus, I am unable to include such children’s picturebooks.

#### **1.4.2. Critical Content Analysis**

I employ critical content analysis in the examination of the depictions of *bakla* in Filipino children picturebooks. Kathy Short relays that critical content analysis is critical because it “often includes questioning the concept of ‘truth’ and how it is presented, by whom, and for what purposes. Other questions also emerge around whose values, texts, and ideologies are privileged or considered normative” (5). Richard Beach et al. also explain that critical theories such as postcolonial, queer, feminist, and critical race theories serve as frameworks for critical content analysis (130). Short further points that:



[Critical content analysis] reflects a hermeneutic, reader-response oriented research stance and so meaning is not in the text but in the reading event, which is translated between an analyst and a text (Rosenblatt, 1938). Texts thus have multiple meanings that are dependent on the analyst's intentions as a reader and the context of the study because the purpose for the reading influences the meanings that are constructed as research findings. (4)

Hermeneutics entails the reiterative reading of each picturebook: from holistic reading, then towards the analysis of its component elements and details, and back to its holistic interpretation again. For this research, I read each book multiple times and took note of codes and themes that relate to the narrative of *bakla* as portrayed in the picturebooks. Each new rereading of the textual element with its accompanying illustration creates a better and more adequate interpretation of the whole. I also included the paratexts in the analysis to provide additional information that may further clarify or explain the themes found in the main story.

Reader-response, as a critical content analysis position, with its core concept of textual gaps, is often helpful in assessing picturebook dynamics. Words and images can be independently evocative, but these can also fill each other's gaps in meaning-making, wholly or partially. But both words and images can also leave space for readers to make interpretations using their prior knowledge, experience, and perceptions, thereby, resulting in potentially endless possibilities for word-image interaction.

Critical content analysis of words and images has been used as a functional and relevant method for scholars who examine a single text using various theoretical approaches (Beach et al. 140-142) and for independent scholars who analyze multiple texts using a single theoretical perspective (cf. Crawley; Johnson et al.). Furthermore, content analysis can be used as a method for investigating norms conveyed in textual and visual narratives (Lushchevska n.p.). Investigating how some facets of gender and sexuality are included or omitted by words and/or images in an attempt to normalize certain beliefs is especially important to this research because challenging notions of what is considered 'standard' or 'normal' is fundamental to queering (Warner xxvi).

In Anglo-American literature, queer issues in children's books started to appear and become prevalent in the 1960s and 1980s (Jenkins and Cart xii; Miller "Profile" n.p.). In

contrast, Filipino gay literature that featured mostly adult narratives only started to grow in the 1990s (Toledo 105). However, this trend began to accelerate in both Anglo-American children's literature (Taxel 146) and Filipino cinema (Clidoro 67) in the 2010s.

In terms of scholarship on queerness, numerous studies on English-language children's books were found, in which researchers observed the prevalence of portraying nuclear families headed by same-sex parents and representations of queer characters that still conform with heteronormativity (cf. Chick; Epstein *Are the Kids All Right*; Lester; Miller "Profile"; Naidoo; Sunderland and McGlashan). Moreover, there was observed scarce representation of bisexual, transgender, and gender-creative characters in children's literature (Knopp-Schwyn and Fracentese; Miller "For the Little Queers"). Despite this abundance of scholarship on queerness, there is still a lack of research that examined the intersection of multiple systems of oppression that interlocks with the issue of heteronormativity.

On the other hand, research on Filipino queer-themed children's literature is almost non-existent. By analyzing select Filipino children's picturebook that discuss *kabaklaan* (being *bakla*), I hope this current study will contribute to filling this gap and make way for the inclusion of a Filipino perspective on queerness that is arguably dominated by Western notions of gender and sexuality. With this intention in mind, I use the integration of Butler's take on queer theory, Garcia's observations on the construct of the Filipino *bakla*, and intersectionality as discussed in the following section.

We need to understand what children and young adults are taught about queerness because it will impact how they will construct their identity and relate to other people. Children's literature as a socializing agent must reflect the diversity of identities and realities in the world. It must provide a space for questioning dominant ideologies and understanding discourses that are considered non-normative or otherwise queer. This investigation into representations of the *bakla* in Filipino children's literature will hopefully help promote a more inclusive view about queer identities that exist in non-Western cultures.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Gender Performativity

Queer carries a broad definition encompassing non-normative gender identities characterized by identity markers that are not fixed and always in flux. According to Sara Ahmed, queer is concerned about what disrupts and denaturalizes our ideas about reality, as well as what is oblique (565). Although I understand that the term queer has connotations that may or may not completely reflect the complexities of gender in the Philippines, I use it in the research in its broadest sense: to refer to any person or identity that lies beyond heteronormative (sexual and gender) standards, those who are non-cisgender, or any combination of those. A queer approach, then, offers other possibilities of viewing gender, while at the same time disrupting heteronormativity (Sullivan 81) and making the “unthinkable thinkable” (Greteman 258). As a result, a queer theoretical framework is useful for investigating normative and non-normative conceptions about gender in literature, including children’s literature.

Judith Butler is the scholar most often identified with prevailing understanding about sexual and gender identity in queer studies. She draws her claims from Michel Foucault’s works but focuses more attention on assumptions about gender that are lacking in Foucault’s model. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), she argues that gender, just like sexuality, is not something ‘given’; gender is something that we do rather than what we are (1). According to Butler, “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (33). This means that gender is historically performed, in which every single act performed by an individual to assert their identity becomes sedimented acts that define their gender. As Butler further suggests in *Undoing Gender* (2004), “gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed ... a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (1). This notion of gender performativity is the central and most influential aspect of Butler’s work:

As a consequence, gender cannot be understood as a role which either express or disguises an interior ‘self.’ whether that ‘self’ is conceived sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an ‘act,’ broadly construed,

which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority ... I am suggesting that this self is not only irretrievable 'outside,' constituted in social discourse, but that ascription of interiority is itself a publically [sic] regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication. Genders, then, can neither be true nor false, neither real nor apparent. (*Undoing Gender* 528)

In other words, gender is a regulatory fiction, not an intrinsic reality arising from the materiality of the body. Something performative produces a series of effects. Individuals act, walk, and speak in different manners, which consolidates into an impression of one's gender identity. Gender, therefore, is not an essential truth obtained from one's body, but something that is acted out and portrayed as "reality." In Butler's view, gender reality is performative, which simply means that it is real while it is performed. This view of gender as performativity is essential to my research.

Furthermore, focusing on the discursive production of gender, Butler argues that because of the belief of the "truth" of sex, as Foucault ironically coins it, heterosexuality becomes the only *de facto* outcome—the norm—resulting from the reiterative acts producing the binaries of "feminine" and "masculine," and thus creating the only logical outcome of either being a "female" or a "male." Gender trouble occurs when an individual's identity falls outside of this heterosexual matrix. However, Butler emphasizes that performativity is not to be taken as equal or the same as performance. Performance is a deliberate act. Gender performativity, on the other hand, is not exactly a voluntarist enterprise but is a reiterative mechanism that defines the subject as a subject. "In this respect, performativity is the precondition of the subject" (Jagose 86). In other words, we are unwilling subjects to this motion of gender through time and space. Thus, it can be argued that our gender is socially constructed—a set of actions and presentations by individuals that designate them to a specific gender identity as influenced by social, political, cultural forces acting on one's gender performativity. Butler's work has been utilized critically in queer theoretical investigations of non-heteronormative subject positions making room for "new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms" (*Gender Trouble* 145).

Butler's two main ideas can be summarized as (1) gender is not only socially constructed or established, but is also performed, and thus is fluid/in flux/always already an imitation, and (2)

since we perform gender through repetition, our agency comes in when we vary that repetition, or when we attempt to critique and transform normative performances.

Literature can be regarded as a site of gender representation, that is, space where the constructed nature of gender is most clear because the characters of the text do not have bodies; everything readers know about the characters are the way the author/illustrator want(s) to portray it (Ryan and Herman-Willmarth 150). Literature is a site for the construction and performance of gender that brings forth and structures gender into existence. Literary devices can help establish, maintain, contest, and/or problematize gender “norms.” Children’s literature can function similarly to literature written for adults: it can be a vehicle for carrying, as well as exposing, ideologies about the hierarchical arrangements of society (Culler 39). For instance, one can inquire who has the voice to narrate and when, whose point of view is privileged, or who is the implied reader.

However, Butler also warns of the universal or common usage of “gender” as these universalizing practices can be “a cover for a certain epistemological imperialism, insensitive to cultural texture and difference” (*Undoing Gender* 182). Gender binaries, after all, are part of the “prevailing, binarised categories in Western thought that privilege one term over the other (mind over body; reason over emotion; self over other; male over female; ‘white’ over ‘non-white’; human over machine)” (Mallan 6). I therefore argue that while performativity may be used as a framework for my research, a theory that focuses more on Filipino queer culture is also needed. Martin Manalansan relates that in the Filipino society, third gender embodiments, colloquially known as *bakla*, have been influenced by the Western models of globalization and capitalism (ix). As such, the *bakla* as a Filipino queer identity has a unique construction comprised of both unique and familiar characteristics compared to Western notions of queerness.

## **2.2. Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is considered as “a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool” with theoretical roots in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory (Carbado et al. 303). The term intersectionality was first used in Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 essay titled “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (Carbado et al. 303). In the essay, Crenshaw problematized the isolated treatment of race and gender as “mutually

exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (139). She argues that race and sex discrimination cases tend to be viewed from isolated and different lenses of privilege, thus, those who simultaneously experience both forms of discrimination may be unable to get the justice they deserve (140). Crenshaw’s argument is succinctly explained in the following quote:

This focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination. I suggest further that this focus on otherwise-privileged group members creates a distorted analysis of racism and sexism because the operative conceptions of race and sex become grounded in experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon. [...] Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (139)

Just as Crenshaw hoped in her 1989 essay to initiate the discussion of the intersectionality of discrimination discourses (167), Carbado et al. in 2013 were able to map the broadening utilization of intersectionality across disciplines and beyond the United States (305).

Aligned with the intersectionality movement, this study on Filipino queer-themed children’s books aims to follow a similar trajectory to Lester’s research: to uncover and make explicit the portrayal of themes about *kabaklaan* (gayness) based on the intersection of sex, gender, class, and race. As can be elucidated from Garcia’s work, the Filipino *bakla* is not just a queer sexual and gender identity, but is also an identity replete with expectations and presumptions about his social class and behaviors.

### **2.3. Prevalence of Queer-themed Children’s Books: From Heteronormative to Queer-Inclusive**

According to Christine Jenkins and Michael Cart (xii) and Jennifer Miller (“Profile” n.p.), since the introduction of gender and sexuality in literature in the 1960s, the canon of books that discuss queer issues has expanded into various genres, including picturebooks and young adult literature. In the 1980s, non-heterosexuality began to appear in children’s books more

frequently (Miller “Profile” n.p.). Jenkins and Cart found that among the estimated 200 LGBTQ+-themed picturebooks and young adult novels published since 1969, the majority were published in the United States, with 66 titles published between 2000 and 2004 alone. Many of these books featured White, middle-class protagonists and involve themes and plots that perpetuate homophobic stereotypes and end in violence and death (xiii).

The publication of queer-themed children’s books accelerated post-2010 in the Anglo-American literary world, contributing to the increasing visibility of non-heteronormative identities in children’s books (Miller “Profile” n.p.). According to Joel Taxel, in his article “Children’s Literature at the Turn of the Century: Toward a Political Economy of the Publishing Industry,” authors and illustrators brought a “new realism” that dramatically veered away from the previous generations’ long-standing conventions. This “new realism” was characterized by more exploratory and progressive stories that introduced themes that were previously deemed taboo or unacceptable, such as alcoholism, sex, and violence (146). Some of the factors that Taxel deems to have contributed to this evolution in children’s literature include: (1) a shift in how younger people are seen in society, allowing them greater agency over their bodies; (2) increased understanding of sexuality in society as a whole; and, (3) a growing understanding of what children’s literature is and what it can achieve (148).

Moreover, in their article “Radical Children's Literature Now!,” Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel also observe the rapid production of picturebooks that challenge the status quo (464). These include books that contain representations of non-heteronormativity, which can be grouped into (1) books with gay characters not dwelling on the fact that they are gay; (2) stories in which the parents’ (homo)sexuality is presented as a matter of fact; and (3) stories that are centered on the child’s gender and sexuality—a topic that was formerly reserved for young adult novels (464).

#### **2.4. Depictions of Families with Same-Sex Parents in Children’s Literature**

As with the first lesbians and gays who appeared in English-language picturebooks, non-heteronormative individuals are still majorly portrayed as same-sex couples and parents in nuclear families, sometimes with the extension of a gay uncle relates Jamie Campbell Naidoo in her book *Rainbow Family Collections* (45).

Miller attributes this reality to the growing discourses of same-sex marriage primarily in the USA and the UK post-2010 and the possibilities of adoption by non-heterosexual couples.

She also argues that this increased representation of gay parents in children's texts is intended to address a conflict when apparently heterosexual children are affected by queerness and feel different from their peers. Such children's texts can safely construct and establish "normalcy" in an otherwise traditional and nuclear family structure ("Profile" n.p.). These books aimed at young readers and often published in a picturebook format are presumed to be read aloud by gay parents with their children to assure them that their family is "normal." Epstein also explains that the goal of depicting same-sex parenting is two-fold: first, to show to children that their family setup is reflected in literature, and second, to demonstrate a non-heteronormative family setup "not as a shock to anybody" (*Are the Kids All Right?* 238). Expectedly, numerous studies have been conducted concerning the portrayal of families headed by non-heterosexual couples that include observations on this attempt to normalize the idea of queer families.

Kay Chick performed an intersectional analysis of children's picturebooks with gay and lesbian characters and found three common plots and themes. One, these books often feature the experiences of children—who either belong to a non-normative family headed by a same-sex couple or have a non-heterosexual relative—as they try to deal with the reactions of other people about their non-normative family setup or non-heterosexual relatives, which in turn, triggers confusion and uncertainties in their own perceptions about their own families (18). Two, these books also feature the adoption experiences of same-sex couples, highlighting the characters' yearning for a child to complete their family (19). Three, some books involve stories that do not directly address issues about gay and lesbian families, but feature characters who just happened to be of the same sex and long to be together (20). Chick concludes with an observation that most of these picturebooks that feature same-sex couples "preserve a positive, upbeat tone" (20). These books illustrate how non-normative families can also live happily and "normally" just like a traditional family. She also notes that most families depicted only feature one child in the story. She proposes that stories about non-normative families with multiple children that discuss issues between siblings or highlight their differences in managing their problems and emotions would be significant in representing the diversity of family structures in children's literature (21).

Jane Sunderland and Mark McGlashan also focus on the portrayal of families headed by same-sex couples, prompted by their observation that despite the growing number of same-sex parenting in both the USA and the UK from early 2011, children are still exposed to books and media where portrayals of families headed by same-sex couples come across as overwhelmingly



heterosexual (190). In an initial exploratory study, they analyzed twenty-nine children's stories that feature same-sex parents and identified three common strategies used to discuss the experiences of families headed by same-sex couples in a positive way (193). One, the "Gay" or "Upfront" strategy, where an explicit explanation of the family setup is communicated to the child, including the use of the word gay itself (193). Two, the "Different" strategy where interactions between the same-sex parents and their child or between a schoolmate and the child of a same-sex couple involve the contention with the idea of a "normal" family without explicitly using the word gay and simply appreciating that having same-sex parents is "different" (193, 194). Three, the "Backgrounding" strategy where the family lives a typically 'heteronormative' life without mentioning the word gay or contending with the idea of same-sex couples, and simply focusing on family life through issues that are not specific to same-sex headed families (193, 194).

They then conducted a more in-depth multimodal analysis of twenty-five picturebooks that feature families with same-sex couples and focused on comparing the differences in portrayals of families with lesbian ("two Mum") and gay couples ("two Dad"). They found that titles more often explicitly indicate two mothers than two fathers, which suggests that gay men as co-parents may be deemed as more problematic than lesbian co-parents (196). They attributed this to the prevailing notion that women are seen as "natural carers," thus, lesbians as mothers are considered "less societally threatening" (202). They also noted that mothers were more often referred to with categorization (such as mama and mommy), while fathers were nominalized (such as Eric and John) (196-197), which they suggest indicates unequal distribution of parental responsibility between gay men couples (202). Further, they found that gay men parents were depicted with more frequent physical contact than lesbian parents (199). The nominalized reference to gay men may indicate that "*Dads* means partners more than parents" and the frequent depiction of physical contact aligns with the gendered stereotype that men and by extension, gays, are more promiscuous (202). Sunderland and McGlashan conclude that although these picturebooks portray non-heterosexual characters, the stories still convey heteronormative gender norms (202).

In contrast, Epstein notes that there were more children's picturebooks that featured gay men than lesbian parents. Epstein in *Are the Kids All Right?* surveyed and analyzed sixty-eight picturebooks from United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden to

investigate how non-heteronormativity is portrayed (3). Epstein found that nearly all of the picturebooks only featured same-sex (gay and lesbian) parents, while transgender or bisexual parents were absent (221). She argues that perhaps the societies where these books were published are more comfortable with monosexual and cisgender couples (223). Notably, most of these featured gays as the main character (223).

She also observes that despite the growing number of queer characters featured in children's literature, their portrayals are not straightforward, that is, they are neither explicitly labelled as gay or lesbian nor do they try to explain what gay or lesbian is (242). Most of the books dwell primarily on the experiences of same-sex parental characters who demonstrate to their oftentimes heterosexual child that their family is no different from other heterosexual families (222). She suggests that many of the picturebooks seem to comfort children of same-sex parents by confirming their 'normality' (237). She also noted that Dutch and Swedish picturebooks assume the "normality of homosexuality," but the English-language picturebooks "portray homosexuality as something that has to be confirmed as normal" (237).

## **2.5. Discourses on Sexual Identification and Gender Expression in Queer Children's Literature**

### **2.5.1. Heteronormative Queerness**

In addition to the portrayal of same-sex couples, another trend is the depiction of young males who defy gender norms, most often portrayed as "sissy" boys (Epstein "We're Here, We're Not Queer" 294; Miller "For the Little Queers" 1645). Stories like these focus more on the identity of a character and tend to ignore the social processes that render them as sissies (Miller "Profile" n.p.). "Sissy" characters, that is, male characters who do not act as stereotypical masculine male (Epstein "We're Here, We're (Not?) Queer" 294), are also oftentimes read as gay or protogay (meaning future gay) (Sedgwick as qtd in Miller "For the Little Queers" 1646). The usage of the "sissy" boy trope highlights the difficulties of expressing less simple or less concrete identities (such as gender-queer) and the propensity to allocate sexuality based on gender cues, especially in children's environments (Lester 248).

Similarly, one of Lester's findings asserts that even children's books that feature transgender characters use binary, heteronormative gender-conforming descriptions, such as "that of a girl trapped in a boy's body or, less commonly, vice versa" (251). She also observed a common plot in children's books that feature "sissy" boys: "sissy" characters must do something

courageous or extraordinary before they are accepted for who they are. Being “sissy” is regarded as a form of gender transgression and a “sissy” character must demonstrate their value to compensate for not conforming with traditional masculinity, to be “forgiven,” and “to prove himself worthy of respect” (Lester 248).

Epstein also observed the same gender normative conformity in Anglo-American children's books where queer characters are depicted with gender presentations that resemble those associated with heterosexuality, which can be regarded as less disruptive and non-threatening to hegemonic culture (*Are the Kids All Right?* 40). Lesbians are often portrayed aligned with a butch-femme polar opposite: as feminine lesbian mothers who have long hair, use lipstick, and wear dresses or stylized clothes, or as serious lesbians who are hardcore feminists (Epstein *Are the Kids All Right?* 63). Gays, on the other hand, are often presented humorous, witty and at times, campy, displaying the flamboyant performance of gender on a discernible pre-homosexual figure (Epstein *Are the Kids All Right?* 63). Epstein argues that though such stereotypes may appear harmless, putting gays and lesbians into binary boxes of socially ascribed feminine and masculine features may only harm genderqueer individuals because identity, including its gender component, is dynamic and constantly in flux (67).

The prevalence of monosexual (gay and lesbian) couples who are portrayed with heteronormative characteristics as observed by Naidoo, Miller, Sunderland and McGlashan, and Epstein may be attributed to the simpler appreciation of gays and lesbians as gender binaries (Butler *Gender Trouble* 6), as opposed to the more complex notion of “trans” or “bisexual” (Butler *Gender Trouble* 8).

Heteronormativity in children's books can also be enforced by using characters who embody dominant masculinity and force the subjugation of subordinated masculinities that oppose them. In their article “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt argue that hegemonic masculinity “embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (832). Using this logic implies that there is a certain hierarchical order on how masculinity is performed; dominant masculinity is embodied through heterosexuality and thus, is seen as the norm while subordinated masculinity personified through homosexuality is its opposite. Connell and Messerschmidt propose a framework on how to view hegemonic masculinity, which Nathan

Taylor uses in his analysis of three children's picturebooks, namely *Chocolate Me!* (2011), *Thunder Boy Jr.* (2016), and *10,000 Dresses* (2008):

Dominant masculinities is an idealized version of masculinity only achieved by a small minority of men. The dominant masculinity is approved and rendered viable and valuable through a patriarchy system. Complicit masculinity may not have access to dominant masculinity but ensures its viability by not challenging the status quo of patriarchy or masculinity. Marginalized masculinity is those rendered unviable for access to dominant forms of masculinities due to external factors such as race or class. [Lastly,] subordinated masculinity [embodied by] gay or effeminate men is a lesser version of masculinity, seen in direct opposition to dominant masculinities. (Connell and Messerschmidt as qtd. in Taylor 3)

This process of subordination is particularly highlighted in Taylor's analysis of *10,000 Dresses* where he argues that the protagonist, who is a transgender, embodies subordinated masculinity. She is surrounded by her father, who embodies dominant masculinity, by asserting that "boys don't wear dresses" (as qtd. in Taylor 7), and threatening the protagonist with physical violence should she insist on what she wants. Furthermore, her brother embodies complicit masculinity by enforcing dominant masculinities and not challenging it. Connells claims further in *Masculinities* that this subjugation process is "marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse: wimp, milksop, nerd, turkey, sissy, lily liver, jellyfish, yellowbelly, candy ass, ladyfinger, pushover, cookie pusher, cream puff, motherfucker, pantywaist, mother's boy, four-eyes, ear-'ole, dweeb, geek, Milquetoast, Cedric, and so on. Here too the symbolic blurring with femininity is obvious" (79). Connell then suggests that instead of focusing our attention on how to define masculinity as an object, that is, as a natural character type, or as a norm, we should pay attention to the "processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives" (Connell *Masculinities* 71). In other words, "masculinity" should be viewed simultaneously as a place in gender relations, and its effects to practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture.

### **2.5.2. New Queer Children's Literature**

The dominance of the trend of commonly heteronormative representation of characters may be coming to an end with the publication of queer-themed children's books that explicitly

identify some characters' sexual orientation. Miller notes that some recent children's books in the United States and the United Kingdom feature queer characters who, while not expressly expressing their desires, are explicitly labelled as lesbian, transgender, or questioning ("Profile" n.p.). She refers to this growing subgenre as "new queer children's literature" that is differentiated by the increased visibility and presence of "gender-creative" children and transgender children (Miller "For the Little Queers" 1645). She further adds:

New queer children's literature constructs children as decision makers, aware of their desire and deserving of respect and support. This is a far cry from the adultist parent-knows-best logic that rationalizes constructing childhood as a time of innocence from sexual and other forms of "adult" knowledge. (1663)

In this subgenre, queer children are given agency to take charge of their bodies and the featured narratives veer away from the didactic and moralistic tones of other queer literature, especially those that teach the acceptability of being gay, that it is 'okay to be gay' (Miller "For the Little Queers" 1654). She also highlights the importance of camp, which is the "the love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration" (Sontag 105 as qtd in Miller "For the Little Queers" 1664) as a literary device to present homosexuality while desexualizing it, as characters can perform their identities and engage in the social world by enacting their pre-homosexual identities (Miller "For the Little Queers" 1664).

Collin Knopp-Schwyn and Michael Fracentese also noticed the recent increased prevalence of queer characters in children's picturebooks. They traced some of the milestone children's picturebooks that featured queer characters. Lesbians made their first appearance in picturebooks through the story by Jane Severance (1979) *When Megan Went Away* (414). Gay men, on the other hand, first appeared in English-language picturebooks in *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bosche (1983), which was originally titled *Mette bor hos Morten og Erik*—a black-and-white picturebook in Danish published in 1981 (426). Another milestone book was *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert (2008), featuring the first unambiguous trans-character in an English-language picturebook (414).

However, Knopp-Schwyn and Fracentese highlighted that no English-language children's picturebook has yet been published that featured a bisexual character. They argue that featuring a

bisexual character in picturebooks is important because bisexual individuals deserve equal representation in children's books as much as all other sexual identities. But they contend that labelling a character as bisexual in a picturebook is not critical to the representation of bisexuality for two main reasons. One, picturebooks are targeted for children who are at a stage of sexual development where they begin recognizing their inclinations but are not yet identifying with a specific sexual orientation (419). Two, labelling bisexual characters creates a "nasty double standard" where non-heterosexual identities are explained while heterosexual identities are simply understood without explanation (420). In response to that, they propose four criteria that must be satisfied to portray a bisexual character in a picturebook without the need for labelling such character as bisexual:

To represent a bisexual character outside of naming bisexuality explicitly, a character must (a) be shown to have romantic or sexual attraction, or the possibility of romantic or sexual attraction (b) to multiple characters (c) of more than one gender over the course of the story (d) without the text authoritatively negating the character's existence as bisexual. (420)

### **2.5.3. Intersectionality in Representations of Queer Characters**

Nancy Ehrenreich argues in her article "Subordination and Symbiosis: Mechanisms of Mutual Support between Subordinating Systems" that "it is always difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate one mode of subordination without attacking the whole edifice of interlocking oppressions" (255). In the context of queer politics, this means that focusing only on heterosexism without taking into account other systems of oppression is a disservice to the oppressed, more especially so for those marginalized within one or two axes of oppression. Darren Rosenblum echoes the same sentiment: most queer people experience various forms of oppression just like women, people of color, people with disability, cross-gendered people, and sexual subversives, therefore, queer identity should be viewed as intersectional ("Queer Intersectionality and the Failure" 88). Any political intervention or discursive counteraction must address the multiplicative essence of identity, its fluidity, and social construction. Lisa Bowleg similarly argues in her article "When Black + Lesbian + Woman  $\neq$  Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research" that

examining this multiplicity and intricacy of the intersection of identities such as race, gender, and sexual identity and analyzing the social inequalities associated with these identities is the task of intersectionality scholars (Bowleg 313).

There have been numerous studies on the portrayal of queer adult and young characters in children's literature, but only a few of these investigated the intersections of identity markers such as gender, age, ethnicity, and religion. One example is Lester's study where she conducted a critical examination of sixty-eight children's books published in United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands to uncover how certain systems of oppression are perpetuated through children's literature. Recognizing that oppression cannot be overcome by picking one facet of oppression individually at a time, she uses Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality to explore how queer-themed children's books, as means of cultural communication, fail to challenge heteronormativity (246). Throughout her report, she demonstrates and problematizes the dominance of narratives of queerness, homosexuality, and other non-gender conforming identities that subscribe to homonormativity: the promotion of White, male, able-bodied, middle- to upper-class, monosexual, and cis-gendered queer characters.

Lester's analysis identified prevalent messages conveyed in the selected children's books, three of which are deemed relevant to the current research. One, queer children and adults are easily "accepted" and assimilated into the larger heterosexual culture if they are White, belonging to middle- or upper-class, and if they are considered non-threatening by behaving according to acceptable social norms, such as wearing clothes that conform with gender heteronormativity (248-252). Two, the ubiquitous portrayal of nuclear families headed by same-sex parents rationalizes their "normalcy" by depicting their capability of maintaining monogamous relationships and raising children, which aligns with the heteronormative value of reproduction (252-54). Three, notions of White supremacy are perpetuated by the depictions of middle- to upper-class, mostly White couples adopting underprivileged, non-White children (254-58). Lester concludes that majority of the queer-themed children's books failed to challenge heteronormativity because these books also failed to subvert other systems of oppression such as racism and classism that are interlocked with heterosexism (246, 261). By depicting queer people as "normative subjects who perform socially expected behaviors" (247), they lose their queerness—the marker of their subversion.

## 2.6. Construct of *Bakla*

J. Neil Garcia has written extensively on the concept of the *bakla* in *Philippine Gay Culture* published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1996, with subsequent editions in 2008 and 2009. In this book, Garcia examines how the *bakla* has been constructed and interpreted in numerous texts and social traditions from the 1960s to the 1990s and contrasts these interpretations with historical accounts about the gender performativity of pre-colonial Filipinos.

The book traces *kabaklaan* (being *bakla*) back to its attributable precolonial origins in the practice of babaylan shamanism (*Philippine Gay Culture* 162). In an essay titled “Performativity, the Bakla, and the Orientalizing Gaze,” Garcia relates that, in contrast to the English language's binary gender division, gender as a construct exists on a four-level hierarchy in the Philippines that combines the dimensions of the sexed body, gendered performance, and sexual orientation. The childhood rhyme “Girl, Boy, *Bakla*, Tomboy,” a localized version of “eeny, meeny, miny, mo” captures this hierarchy. *Kasarian* is the Tagalog word for this gender matrix that translates literally into “type” (270), implying that the term is less restrictive when compared to words like gender or sex in English. In this matrix, the *babae* (cisgender, heterosexual woman) and the *lalake* (cisgender, heterosexual man) are regarded as normative genders. On the other hand, the *bakla* and the *tomboy* (a term adopted from the Americans for referring to alleged lesbians or girls who act boyish) are regarded as non-normative genders.

Garcia also notes that gender and sexuality in Filipino culture are understood as a simultaneously interwoven concept, contrary to the predominantly Western Sexual Orientation Gender Identity framework that separates the idea of sexual orientation from that of gender identity (“Performativity, the Bakla, and the Orientalizing Gaze” 272). As such, issues of conflation and translation are evident in Filipino popular culture and media. For instance, homosexuality and transgenderism are oftentimes conflated under the term *bakla* because it is the only available Filipino word that refers to both (male) homosexuals and transwomen. *Bakla*, then, is a category that incorporates ideas of effeminacy, cross-dressing, and male same-sex sexuality. According to Garcia, the conflation of homosexuality and feminine gender performance can be attributed to the Filipino concept of *kalooban* (interior), where the *bakla* is seen as possessing a female/feminine interior while having a male exterior (“Performativity, the Bakla, and the Orientalizing Gaze” 271).



In a later book titled *The Postcolonial Perverse: Critiques of Contemporary Philippine Culture*, Garcia relates that this conflation is also seen as a product of colonial modernity and the influx of American biomedicalization of the “phenomenon of ‘gender transitivity’ [that] permeates the oral past not only of the Philippines but also the whole of Southeast Asia” (126). In contrast, the concept of homosexuality is regarded as a more recent development, an ‘implantation’ of the American-sponsored biomedicalization into the local cultures of the Philippines (126).

With regards to sexuality, the *bakla*’s sexual object of preference is the masculine, heterosexual *lalake* (male), but the presumption of homosexuality lies solely on the *bakla*: the *lalake* is permitted to transgress heteronormative sexual boundaries without being homosexualized and regarded as a *bakla* himself if he performs the role of the ‘active partner’ in sexual acts (“Male Homosexuality in the Philippines” 13; *The Postcolonial Perverse* 272).

Arguing that the concepts of *bakla* and the male homosexual occur in different universes of thoughts, Garcia differentiates the two concepts because there are issues of gender performance, identity, and sexuality that can be categorized under *bakla* but not under the homosexual category (*Philippine Gay Culture* 58). Garcia classifies the *bakla* into two categories: (1) the gender-transitive that can be understood as a transgender who wishes to be a “real” woman, cross-dresses, is effeminate, and who may or may not undergo sexual reassignment; and (2) the gender-intransitive who does not cross-dress and is non-effeminate (*Philippine Gay Culture* 20).

Bobby Benedicto offers a further differentiation of these concepts along the lines of social class and effeminacy. Benedicto examines discourses about the *bakla* and posits that there is a level of disassociation that happens between the urban, middle-class gay man and the effeminate, working-class, gender-transitive *bakla* who is often associated with industries of fashion, dressmaking, and beauty salons (317). He points that the urban Manila gay scene tries to imitate modern Western images of homosexuality (317-318). For instance, various gay establishments that gender-intransitive *bakla* are portrayed to frequently visit include bars, clubs, and gyms among others, which is patterned after American gay lifestyles (322-332). Even though the *bakla* is still prevalent in urban gay culture, it is regarded as an ancient cliché that must be eradicated (326). Thus, gay men in Manila struggle to find ways to perform their homosexuality without necessarily being identified as *bakla* (323). This echoes Garcia’s

argument, in which he claims that there is a “kind of class antagonism between the ‘vulgar’ and the ‘respectable’ ascriptions and self-expressions of the *bakla* and/or gay identity” (*The Postcolonial Perverse* 97) that leads to this division between the gender-transitive and the gender-intransitive *bakla*.

The *bakla* also challenges the Western discourse on gender performativity. While Butler’s theory of identity formation is focused on repeated performances that establish a gendered subject rather than an elemental aspect that determines identity, Garcia contends that the *bakla*’s enactments are embedded in his woman-heartedness (“Performativity, the *bakla*, and the orientaling gaze” 272). He adds that “gender identity among the Tagalog-Filipinos is premised on a concept—more like an article of faith—that privileges depth, psychospiritual plenitude, and core-ness or *kalooban*” (“Performativity, the *bakla*, and the orientaling gaze” 271, emphasis in original).

However, in his article “Nativism or Universalism: Situating LGBT discourse in the Philippines,” Garcia warns against adopting an extreme nativist approach to *kabaklaan*, that is, the view that homo/hetero forms of sexuality remain alien and inapplicable to the Philippines. Instead, he argues for a moderate nativist viewpoint because he deems the prevalence of global LGBTQ+ rhetoric in the Philippines as a syncretism that combines imperialist imports with local gender and sexuality thinking that acknowledges “cultural divides” along certain lines, such as class status or religion among others (58).

In this study, I peruse this moderate nativist approach by combining Butler’s theory of gender performativity, Crenshaw’s intersectional approach, and Garcia’s *bakla* construct in examining how *kabaklaan* is constructed through text and image in select Filipino picturebooks.

## **Prevalence of Queer Themes and Characters in Philippine Literature and Cinema**

In the Philippines, critical studies about queerness in children’s literature, specifically children’s picturebooks, are few and far in between. Due to this paucity of relevant research on queer Filipino children’s books, I also reviewed studies that concern the portrayal of queerness in Filipino literature and cinema in general.

### **2.7. Queerness in Filipino Literature**

John Leihmar Toledo notes in his article “Manong, hindi lang kami puro titi” that there was significant growth in Filipino gay literature in the 1990s, especially those that feature

personal experiences of *bakla* (gay) Filipinos, alongside the introduction of the Internet (105). The Internet provided safe spaces, such as blogs, for the marginalized gay sector in the Filipino society; spaces where they can share autobiographical essays about their experiences that remained “unvoiced, unheard, or unsaid while trapped in the closets of their homes” (105). There was further growth in the following decades of the 2000s to 2010s when discussions about Filipino gay experiences were published as collections of essays, columns and features in newspapers and magazines, journal articles, literary entries to competitions like the annual Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, and literary collections brought forth by university-based endeavors (109-110). However, Toledo observes that there was a notable lack of literature that feature gay narratives of youth, teenagers, and young adults (112).

Despite Toledo’s observation, Chuckberry Pascual was able to build a corpus of twenty-four poems, short stories, and stage plays written from the personal point of view of gay individuals that relate their experiences of being a child and a young *bakla* (Filipino gay) (“Kabataan at Pagkabata sa Panitikang Bakla” 121-122). He points that the *bakla* youth have always been caught in the tensions and negotiations of living in a heterosexual world. As a result, their narratives have always revolved around four themes: self-discovery, identification with women, recognition of one’s homosexuality, and monitoring and surveillance of one’s sexuality.

The narrative of self-discovery is characterized by the *bakla*’s constant search for his self and definition of life, which is often accompanied by loneliness and fear (122-127). In contrast, the *bakla*’s identification with women is seen as a positive attribute because of the common association of women with the image of mothers, which Filipino gay children and youth try to emulate (127). Performing domestic chores—such as kitchen tasks and child-rearing, which are often delegated to the private sphere dominated by women—has been used as a metaphor for gay lives and longings. This positive identification with women is regarded as a representation of truth and liberation (129).

The third common narrative is about the *bakla*’s awakening, that is, the recognition of his own homosexuality. Stories that follow this narrative often use the trope of homosocial relationships (friendship, kinship, or acquaintanceship between males) developing into homosexual or almost homosexual relationships. However, the recognition of this homosexuality is often suppressed into obscurity (130-135). This suppression into obscurity is appropriately relevant to the fourth common narrative: the constant policing and repression of the *bakla*’s

practice and performance of gender. This policing is often performed by social institutions such as the Catholic church (during confessions) and the family (during parent-child interactions) (136). Parent-child interactions often involve portrayals of parents frowning upon their obstinate homosexual child, which may further include expression of violence through harsh words, infliction of physical pain, and public display of punishment (137-140).

In another study by Gabriela Lee, her research on depictions of alternative family setups and structures in Filipino children's picturebooks included the analysis of a children's book about same-sex parenthood. She analyzed *Ang Ikaklit sa Aming Hardin* (translated as *The Ikaklit in Our Garden*)—a book by Bernadette Neri and CJ de Silva published in 2012 that features the story of a family headed by a lesbian couple (96). Lee explains that the concept of motherhood is so significant in Filipino culture to the point that mothers are compared to the Virgin Mary—a potent symbol in the predominantly Catholic country (104). She suggests that the story of *Ikaklit* that features two mothers implies “twice the nurturing and support than a heteronormative two-parent household” (98). The acceptability of such families headed by lesbian or gay couples is increasingly becoming acceptable as long as the parents manifest the characteristics of a responsible mother who takes care of her children and oversees their emotional and spiritual growth.

## **2.8. Representations of *Bakla* in Filipino Films**

Compared to research on queer-themed Filipino children's literature, studies on the portrayal of queer, specifically *bakla* (gay) characters in Filipino films were more prevalent. Three studies were considered relevant and henceforth discussed: Kevin Leo Clidoro's investigation into the evolution of gay portrayal in films released between 1970 and 2015, Maria Elena Reyes et al.'s analysis of select mainstream and independent films that feature gay characters, and Generoso Pamittan et al.'s analysis of the use of gay language in select Vice Ganda films.

For his undergraduate thesis titled *For Better or For Worse: Evolution of the Portrayal of Gays in Philippine Cinema*, Clidoro chose and analyzed thirty-six films released between 1970 and 2015 that feature gay lead characters (24). He found that most gay characters in early films were portrayed to be in their twenties and thirties, with a few teenagers, who were either single or married to heterosexual women, belonging to lower- and middle-class families, and working as *parloristas* or as macho dancers, (67). There was a notable change by the 2000s and 2010s

when gays in relationship with fellow gays, who can be affiliated with the military, and be part of the upper-class were also depicted (67-68). In terms of appearance: effeminate characters were portrayed as skinny with extroverted and loud personalities (68). In contrast, discreet gay characters were portrayed with a mesomorphic body (68). One of the significant highlights in Clidoro's study is the observation that most films before the 2010s focused on the gay characters' sexual activities. However, more complex portrayals were observed in recent films, in which the gay "is not just a breadwinner of the family," but one who can be "successful and valued for his/her hardwork" (69). Clidoro suggests that featuring "flamboyant gay characters" may have been allowed if their story involves the demonstration of their value to society, for example, serving as their family's breadwinner (70).

Reyes et al. had similar results in their study "Filipino Gay Stereotypes in Mainstream and Independent Films," and found two common, arguably polar, stereotypes of the *bakla*: the feminine gay and the masculine gay (37). This mirrors what Epstein observed in the depiction of lesbians aligned with a butch-femme polar opposite (*Are the Kids All Right?* 63). In Reyes et al., the effeminate *bakla* is often portrayed as a cross-dresser and/or a *parlorista* (hairdresser) who lives a flamboyant lifestyle and behaves femininely (21). On the other hand, the discrete *bakla* is depicted as a bisexual male with both masculine and feminine self-image (21).

Pamittan et al.'s study "Kaloka, Keri, Bongga: Pakahulugan at Pahiwatig ng Gay Language sa mga Piling Pelikula ni Vice Ganda" is also included in this literature review to supplement insights about the use of gay language in picturebooks. In their study, they examined the use of gay language in select Vice Ganda films in terms of its contribution to the narrative and characterization of gay individuals (95). The authors contend that behind the use of Filipino gay language in popular comedy lies hidden some societal contradictions about *kabaklaan* (gayness) (98-99).

In their analysis, they found that gay language was often used to deliver humorous lines that invoke the comedic style of "stating the obvious" and "sarcasm" popularized by Vice Ganda (121). Gay language was also used to create "color" and "humor" even amidst serious scenes, which the authors argue to be instances of struggle where the association of gay language with comedy and humor is challenged (121). Such instances subvert the assumption that gay characters in films are only used for comic relief, therefore, they will only have funny speaking lines.

Pamittan et al. assert that gay language can also be used in discourses other than humor because it serves four significant societal functions for gay people: to resist the prevailing system's co-optation of the *bakla*; to assert the individuality, identity, and space that the *bakla* occupy amidst the restrictive parameters of dominating ideologies; to relate and affiliate with their fellow *bakla* as a community; and to use the “defensive” and “offensive” potential of the gay language in asserting power (121).

Although queer themes in children's books appeared earlier in Western cultures, notions about *kabaklaan* have been portrayed and challenged through Filipino cinema and adult gay literature. In this research, I hope to initiate an in-depth exploration into how notions of queer gender and sexuality—in particular, *kabaklaan*—are introduced to young Filipinos through the use of visual and textual language in picturebooks.

### 3. Analysis of Primary Texts

Guided by Butler's perspective on gender performativity, Garcia's findings and propositions about *bakla* as a social construct in Filipino culture, and Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, I will analyze the three selected picturebooks, namely *Uncle Sam* (Matias), *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* (Garlitos), and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* (De Guzman). I will first provide a detailed summary of each book focusing on text-image interactions and symbolisms of gender. Then, I will discuss the common themes found across the three picturebooks. Notably, given the selection criteria I have set, all picturebooks fit into what Sunderland and McGlashan refer to as the "Upfront" strategy (193) because the queer characters are explicitly labelled as *bakla*.

#### 3.1. *Uncle Sam* by Segundo Matias (2014)

*Uncle Sam* is written by Segundo Matias, Jr., illustrated by Jason Moss, and published by Lampara Books—a major Filipino children's books publisher—in 2014. The book is bilingual, with Becky Bravo's translation of the Filipino narrative into English. Narrated from the perspective of a presumed heterosexual, cisgender, young female character named Annie, this story introduces us to Uncle Sam, a *bakla* who lives with Annie and her family. From the start, Annie already likes her Uncle Sam, who showers her with affection by beautifying her daily to prepare her for school and regularly bringing her into his parlor (beauty salon)—a stereotypical *bakla* business in the Philippines (cf. Clidoro; Reyes et al.). However, Annie is troubled by her observations and by what other people comment about her beloved uncle: Uncle Sam is a man, but a little different. *Uncle Sam* only accentuates the gender component of *kabaklaan*, evident from the constant reference to the protagonist as the "Uncle"—a man like Annie's father. Still, he is persistently visualized and described through his clothing style and mannerisms that align with the stereotypical monosexual, feminine gay dressed up in feminine colors. The illustration of the book cover shows Uncle Sam fixing Annie's hair and make-up. From this, Filipino readers can immediately associate Uncle Sam with the stereotypical Filipino parloristang *bakla* (Reyes et al.), one who is often involved in the business of hairstyling, make-up, and aesthetics. Other stereotypical notions about *bakla* individuals are also explicitly mentioned in the book's foreword addressed to parents, teachers, and caregivers:

The author shows some aspects of Uncle Sam's life, and also that of his fellow gays – *his talent, being creative, loving and helpful to kin and friends; the wholehearted acceptance of and living up to his gender, and the determination to continue leading a respectable life* despite a number of negative attitudes towards his person. (3, emphasis mine)

It can be argued that the foreword explicitly ties the story of *Uncle Sam* to the trope of the *bakla* as a creative individual who uses his talent to earn for himself and leads a “respectable life.. The significance of Uncle Sam's character is founded on his demonstration of affection towards his niece and his ability to beautify people. The paratext also explicitly states that the illustration for Uncle Sam is referenced from Vincent de Jesus, with an accompanying inset photo. In the photo, Vincent is dressed like a drag queen wearing an ensemble of a white furry hat, white lace dress, white gloves, and blonde wig. It is unclear, however, if Vincent is a gay male or a transwoman. Nonetheless, Filipino readers would infer that he is *bakla* without necessarily inquiring about his sexuality.

The story begins with Annie introducing the readers to Uncle Sam. They both wake up in the morning at the same time every school day. This scene is depicted with Annie in blue pajamas, fixing her all-pink bed, mattress, blanket, and pillows, while her parents are still asleep on their bed. The illustration also gives us a peek of Uncle Sam's back reflected through a hallway mirror, wearing a striped pink and blue shirt, and floral green shorts while carrying “his bag that looks like a box,” one he is “never without” (4). Annie then shares with us that after her mom bathes her in the morning, Uncle Sam will tell her to sit at the dining room table, where he will open his big pink bag filled with “combs and brushes, powder, cakes and lipstick” (6). Although it is not clear how Uncle Sam is related to Annie, his facial features and body type are illustrated closely resembling that of Annie's mom. We can infer from here that she and Uncle Sam could be siblings. This aligns with Naidoo's findings that non-heterosexual characters are often portrayed in picturebooks as either same-sex couples or as an extension of a nuclear family, which in this case is a *bakla* uncle (n.p.). In the next frame, Uncle Sam proceeds to dry Annie's hair with his blower, and he carefully brushes it while her mom watches them. He also proudly tells Annie that: “You are pretty my darling. You really took after me” (9). In these two scenes, we are shown gendered stereotypes of a caregiving mother and a *bakla* uncle, where child-rearing is associated with feminine behavior and the domestic space is considered as the private



sphere of women (Pascual 129), and by extension, of an effeminate *bakla*. Likewise, we are explicitly told that Uncle Sam describes himself as pretty, an adjective traditionally associated with femininity, and claims that his niece inherited this prettiness from him. Uncle Sam is further described as talented and creative, as evidenced in the different fashion styles that he puts Annie into. Annie's changing hairstyles make her popular at school, and whenever she is asked who does her hair, she proudly says "It's my Uncle Sam" (13). Uncle Sam here, thus, represents the talented and creative *bakla*, who can beautify things using feminine aesthetics.

However, Annie sometimes wonders why his Uncle Sam is different from her Daddy. She notes that they are both men, but the masculinities they perform differ significantly. The illustration shows her father's larger body side-by-side with Uncle Sam's skinny physique (see fig. 1). Annie then compares her father's clothing and physical attributes to Uncle Sam's: the former has short hair and thick eyebrows and wears shirts and pants to work, while the latter has thin brows, wears make-up, and is usually clad in tight shirt and pants, sometimes skimpy shorts. The men also differ in terms of behavior. Annie's father "walks and moves straight" (15) but Uncle Sam sways his hips while walking, with his fingers flying everywhere "like they're dancing, when he talks" (15). Notably, the illustrations for both characters are laid out on a square frame divided into three panels with different colored backgrounds to emphasize the difference between them. Annie's father is illustrated with his straight-postured, front-facing full body against a red background, a profile view of his upright walking strides against a green background, and his voice depicted by lightning and dark clouds coming out of his open mouth while talking on the telephone drawn against a yellow background. He is also clad in a white polo *barong* matched with black slack pants and leather shoes while carrying a brown suitcase—a typical outfit for Filipino male office workers. These depictions of Annie's father underscore his dominant masculinity (cf. Taylor) by using "masculine" colors, maintaining his upright, rigid posture, and alluding to his rumbling voice to show his aggressiveness and assertiveness. Uncle Sam, on the contrary, is illustrated with his full body in a zigzag posture—one shoulder higher than the other and skewed to the right while his hip is skewed to the left—against a light blue background, his front-facing walking strides resembling a runway model's crisscrossing catwalk is drawn against a pink background, and a profile close-up view of his face is drawn against a pastel green background. In stark contrast to Annie's father's "low but big voice" (15), he speaks in a sing-song manner with his high-pitched voice, depicted by a rainbow coming out of his

mouth. This way of speaking is typically associated with Filipino women. Unlike Daddy, who is sloppily dressed in the same uniform in all three panels, Uncle Sam changes into different, neatly styled clothing for each panel: one with tight-fitting clothes, another with skimpy shorts and V-neck top, and the last one with an off-shoulder, red striped shirt. In addition to being a creative and talented beautician, Uncle Sam also represents a *bakla* who is flamboyant, that is, vibrant, bouncy and “dance-y.” Annie could not help but quip, “He is like a girl!” (15). In summary, Annie’s father embodies the dominant masculinity ascribed to Filipino heterosexual, masculine males through his gender performance in the way he walks, talks, and dresses. To an extent, he epitomizes the dominant version of masculinity against which Uncle Sam is being compared. Viewed from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, Uncle Sam represents subordinated masculinity—one that is considered as the “lesser version of masculinity” (Taylor 2) and is, therefore, “flawed and less than normal” (Taylor 7) for he does not conform to the ideals of a rigid, masculine, Filipino man. This deviance from the norm and its consequences are further highlighted in the succeeding scenes.



Fig. 1: Illustrated juxtaposition of Annie’s Dad and Uncle Sam.

Uncle Sam sometimes brings Annie to his workplace—a beauty salon that he owns and operates. Its name, “Samantha’s Parlor”, highlights Sam’s status as *bakla*. In this exposition of Uncle Sam’s worldview, we are shown a *bakla* who is in his stereotypical job site doing a stereotypical *bakla* job, which is to beautify female customers. As Annie relates: “The customers are so fond of Uncle Sam because he can work magic on their hair and faces” (17). This

*parloristang bakla* (*bakla* in the parlor) is a typified Filipino image of the *bakla* that first emerged in the 1970s when the *bakla* gained a reputation in the fields of art and entertainment, specifically hairstyling and fashion design (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 73). The *parloristang bakla* is often depicted as an effeminate *bakla* who lives a flamboyant lifestyle and behaves femininely (Reyes et al. 21).

In the depictions of Uncle Sam's workplace, we are shown that Uncle Sam works with other men who are presumably *bakla*. Uncle Sam is dressed in a tight-fitting green polo shirt and boat shoes. There are three other co-workers with him. The first one to his left is dressed in a pink frilly dress and flower slippers. The second one behind them has a darker skin tone, wearing a pink top, white shorts, and white sandals. The third one near the reception area is wearing a V-lined shirt and green sandals. Notably, all of them are wearing skimpy shorts in colors of green, white, and pink. Likewise, except for Uncle Sam, the other three *baklas* are wearing headbands and bright red lipstick. Swardspeak, or the local gay lingo, also developed in the 1970s, is evident in this scene. Annie notes: "When they speak, they also use words that I can't even understand" (19). The *bakla* in this scene are described as joyful and boisterous when inside the confines of their parlor. Uncle Sam and the other *baklas* demonstrate how swardspeak is used as a way to assert their *bakla* identity and space (Pamittan et al. 121). This implies that the parlor is a safe space for the *bakla*, where they can freely perform their gender. In this case, as Annie observes, her Uncle Sam with her fellow *baklas* "all act the same way" (19), that is, performing their gender in a flamboyant and effeminate manner (cf. Clidoro).

According to Garcia, this type of *kabaklaan* (being *bakla*) has a distinct position in Filipino culture: they (the *bakla*) are welcome if they are funny, manifested through behaviours such as swishing hips, speaking whimsically, and waving their wrists as if they are movie stars (*Philippine Gay Culture* 1). To this day, the notion of the *bakla* within the heteronormative Filipino society is still often associated with the beauty parlor. Garcia relates that "the *bakla* ends up as *manicurista*, *parlorista* or *custurera* because of the social ills – his class and the minoritizing aspect that befalls him: *Kung lalaki ako, [If I were a man,] I wouldn't be a hairdresser, I'd be a doctor. It's easier to become a hairdresser because you don't need a college degree*" (*Philippine Gay Culture* 116, translation in brackets added). Remarkably, access to a college degree is often more achievable for heterosexuals as they are not minoritized and discriminated against, hence risking harassment in schools and colleges.

Going back to the scene in the parlor, Annie’s uncertainty about Uncle Sam is further heightened whenever she notices that his *bakla* colleagues call her Aunt Samantha instead of Uncle Sam. They even say that Annie is as beautiful as her Aunt Samantha. But for Annie, his Uncle Sam is a man, so it makes her wonder why he is referred to as Aunt, not Uncle and called Samantha instead of Sam. When she asked her Uncle Sam about his real name, he replies: “Sam [...] but for you little girl, you call me Aunt Samantha” (20). This answer puzzles her more. The accompanying illustration of this scene shows Annie in a state of confusion, sitting alone at the dining table (see fig. 2). Pink and purple silhouettes of three persons with the middle person’s shadow closely resembling Uncle Sam’s proportions appear in the background. The three of them are posed like the agents in *Charlie’s Angels* (see fig. 3), a TV series (1976), and later a film series (2000), both created and produced by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts featuring three statuesque “fab” ladies who “can turn heads” and use their “feminine wiles for undercover stuff” when they work as private investigators or “Angels” for the mysterious Charlie (Howe n.p.). The aforementioned illustration may then imply that like in *Charlie’s Angels*, Uncle Sam is living a double-agent life—as Uncle Sam, who is “like a man,” and as Auntie Samantha, who acts femininely like an “Angel,” as depicted in the silhouette illustration. Annie’s confusion, however, is not immediately resolved.

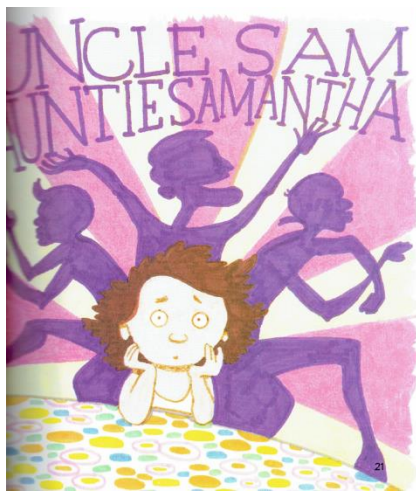


Fig. 2: Annie is confused about her uncle’s two personas: Uncle Sam and Auntie Samantha



Fig. 3: *Charlie's Angels* (1976) title card

In the succeeding scene, Annie is chosen to represent her class in a beauty contest. Uncle Sam gives her a makeover “as expected,” and “he was so happy while doing it” (23). Importantly, it also makes Annie happy. This scene implies that Annie can rely on Uncle Sam regarding matters that concern beautification and aesthetics, and Uncle Sam, in return, finds joy in performing such practices. This concurrently reinforces the trope of a caring and affectionate *bakla*, a gendered stereotype associated with femininity, and the stereotyped association of *kabaklaan* with being a talented hairstylist and make-up artist.

The illustration for this scene is the same as the cover page, in which Uncle Sam is shown with six hands to signify his capability to multi-task and do all of Annie’s hair and make-up on his own, which ends up with Annie “[looking] like a princess” (23). Once again, Uncle Sam reiterates how pretty, just like him, Annie is: “*Ganda-ganda [...] Manang-mana ka talaga sa akish*” (translated as, “What a beautiful girl [...] You really took after me!”). This implies that Uncle Sam also considers himself *maganda* (beautiful), a traditionally feminine adjective. Notably, Uncle Sam does not limit his use of swardspeak in the parlor for he also used the word *akish* at home, which means *akin* (me/mine); hence, Annie is familiar with it. When Annie’s classmates see her in the school hallway, they are “in awe” (24). The girl is at the center of attention, wearing voluminous hair with streaks of light blue and purple, light blue eye shadow, pink lipstick, and a long purple dress with an open slit that exposes one leg. Her overall look is reminiscent of a drag queen. According to Darren Brabham, drag is a form of empowerment because it “challenges gender ideologies and gives the drag persona the agency to “put on” his/her idea of masculinity and/or femininity that is outside the performative acts of gender” (14). In this case, Annie performs hyperfemininity beyond her performance of traditional femininity through her drag. Her classmates, on the other hand, presumably the other muses

joining the competition, are dressed much simpler in single tone dresses complying to what is expected of stereotypical feminine performance of gender. At the edge of the illustration, half of Uncle Sam's face is shown peeking at the girls who were in awe, expressing a look of satisfaction and a gentle smile. He is proud of his artwork that demonstrated his talents through Annie's appearance. Annie eventually wins as the most beautiful muse.

However, despite her victory, Annie is left surprised and confused when her classmate, also one of the competitors on stage, remarks: "Kaya pala magaling mag-ayos ang Uncle Sam mo, kasi 'bakla' siya" ("That is why your uncle makes your hair and does your makeup, he is 'gay'") (26, quotation and translation from original). Annie is astounded as it was the first time she heard the word *bakla* (gay) to which she quipped to herself: "Gay? What is that?" (26). In the foreground, Annie's face shows a questioning but "*mataray*" (sassy) facial expression directed at her classmate who mocked her uncle. The other contestants on stage who can be presumed to be within hearing distance also show a subtle sassy and condescending expression. Similarly, the audience in the background, including Annie's mother and Uncle Sam, show a combination of happy, uninterested, disapproving, and questioning looks. This was all happening while Uncle Sam was merrily celebrating Annie's win, oblivious to what the girls are discussing on stage. Notably, only Uncle Sam and Annie's mother are illustrated in color, while other audience members are shaded grey. There is an irony here that although Uncle Sam himself is proud and enjoys being who he is, his talent is easily overlooked and dismissed, to the point of being mocked, simply because he is *bakla*.

Back home, Annie asks her mother if Uncle Sam is a *bakla*. The woman confirms, but adds that despite his effeminacy, "Uncle Sam is a man" (28). The mother then states what can be argued as the picturebook's central premise: "Sadly, he and many others like him are mockingly called different names like '*bakla*,' '*bading*,' 'gay,' and others" (28). Based on the notion that such references include a negative connotation about *kabaklaan*, the mother advises Annie not to call her Uncle any of these names. By doing so, she succinctly verbalizes the lesson that the story aims to teach about *kabaklaan*. Even though the story of *Uncle Sam* uses the "Upfront" strategy of explicitly labelling a character as *bakla*, the conclusion essentially promotes the principle of the "different" strategy because the heterosexual mother advises Annie not to use *bakla* and claims that Uncle Sam is "*lalaki rin*" (28) (trans. "also a man"). One can argue that Matias, through the character of the mother, upholds heteronormativity and rejects the principle of

“wholehearted acceptance” he explicitly stated in the foreword. By erasing Uncle Sam’s queerness, the author confines and defines Uncle Sam’s identity founded on the sexual parameter of being a “*lalaki rin*”—male but slightly different. The story of *Uncle Sam* demonstrates a complicated situation of queer identities, particularly of *kabaklaan*, within the Filipino culture. The term *bakla*, in particular, has become a pejorative notion carrying a variety of unfavorable connotations, among them, the presumption that gay individuals can only work as *parloristas* and have to endure living as a woman trapped in a man’s body (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 115). This is further confirmed when Annie’s mom tells her that “Uncle Sam and Auntie Samantha are one and the same” (28). The accompanying illustration shows the silhouette of Annie and her mother talking at the dining table in the background, while the foreground shows Uncle Sam’s pink aesthetic kit with a photograph of Uncle Sam holding an infant presumed to be Annie (see fig. 3). *Bakla* individuals can perform or behave according to their inclinations, but they cannot claim a gender identity that is separate or not primarily based on one’s sexual identity as biologically male. Garcia summarizes it concisely: “more than any other place in the world, homosexuality in the Philippines would seem largely been ‘humorized’ or obsessively rendered into an unsuitable topic for serious discussion, ever since it became a reality of metropolitan Filipinos from the second half of this century onwards” (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 10).

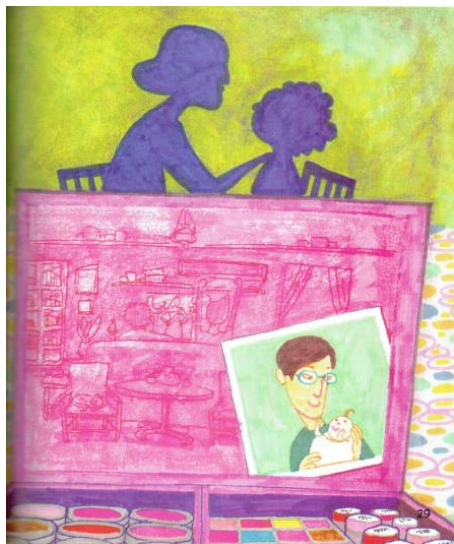


Fig. 3: Annie’s mom explaining what the *bakla* is

The story ends with Annie, her parents, and Uncle Sam all dressed in white, Halloween-themed costumes, which can be considered as a nod to Vincent de Jesus’ all-white attire. It is

notable that the illustration depicts Uncle Sam dressed in women clothes, that is, a tunic top, a short skirt, and high-cut boots instead of his usual tight-fitting ensemble. This calls to mind the gender-crossing dimension of Garcia's construct of the *bakla*, expressed here through clothing. In the end, Annie makes an affirmation to herself to "not be like the bullies, mocking uncle with names" (31). After all, whatever he is called, either Sam or Samantha, she loves him. Though the story seemingly ends on a positive note, it perpetuates the notion that the celebration and acceptance of *bakla* individuals is allowed if it is premised on a demonstration of their value that is often tied to their capability to help mothers implement caregiving tasks and earn a living as an expectedly proficient beautician—a talented, creative, and kind-hearted uncle who can help a heterosexual couple take care of their female child. Even the accompanying study guide asks the readers to describe someone like Uncle Sam, with an emphasis on identifying the "talents" that he has. This echoes Clidoro's argument that featuring a "flamboyant gay character" may be tolerated in Filipino cultural texts if his story revolves around the demonstration of his value to society (70). Likewise, there is no definitive resolution of what a *bakla* is, except for establishing that they are first and foremost biologically male. The story leaves the readers with a vague understanding of what constitutes *kabaklaan* but still asks them to avoid using terms such as *bakla*, *bading*, and *gay* because these terms connote a mockery of individuals like Uncle Sam.

Overall, the story of Uncle Sam utilizes a "positive, upbeat tone" (Chick 20) with the intention of celebrating and promoting the acceptance of *bakla* individuals as a moral imperative. Capitalizing on the trope of *parloristang bakla* could have been used as an opportunity to invoke and challenge the stereotyped image of *kabaklaan* while making the story still relatable through its happy ending. However, by using *bakla* as a trigger for the story's conflict, Matias effectively proposes a wholesale rejection of any reference to gay identity such as *bakla*, *bayot*, or *bading*. Likewise, as these terms were contextualized negatively as signifiers of mockery instead of using them as an identity label to refer to *bakla* individuals, any claim of pride gained or discrimination suffered due to their queer gender identity was essentially erased. The story claims to celebrate gay individuals, but it essentially obscures their queerness by rejecting existing references to their identity and offering a vague characterization of their identity predicated on their biological sexual identity as males. Instead of promoting social change by truly celebrating queerness, Annie's resolution to never mock and simply love him for being her Uncle Sam diminishes the societal issue of prejudice against *kabaklaan* into a micro conflict that can be solved by



demonstrating an individual's exceptional value. The prevailing patriarchal social structure is maintained as the status quo through this subjugation of *kabaklaan* as the “subordinated masculinity” (cf. Taylor)

### **3.2. *Ang bonggang bonggang batang beki* by Rhandee Garlitos (2013)**

Translation: *The Fierce and Fabulous Boy in Pink!*

*Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* is a bilingual picturebook written by Raymund “Rhandee” Garlitos, illustrated by Tokwa Salazar Penaflorida, and published by Vibal Publishing in 2013. It is considered to be one of the first picturebooks that features a “boy with a feminine face, lithe body and very graceful demeanor” as its main protagonist (Coconuts Manila n.p.). As I have pointed previously, *bakla* does not have a direct, equivalent translation in the English language. The *Batang Beki* in the title—comprised of the word *bata*, the Filipino term for a child, and *beki*, a contemporary Filipino slang for *bakla*—is officially translated here into “boy in pink.” This already alludes to the centrality of gender expression, not sexuality, in the story. Narrated from a presumed heterosexual, cisgender, young male perspective with a *beki* younger brother, the main protagonist Adel is characterized as a feminine boy who is loved by his family and has a group of fabulous *beki* friends. However, this environment of acceptance and celebration is ruined by a representative of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Taylor) embodied in the character of *Tito* (uncle) Braulio who aims to “correct” Adel’s *kalambutan* (softness). The conflict of the story aligns with one of Garcia’s construction of *bakla* as a confused individual subjected to “correction” to coerce and pull him back to masculinity (*Philippine Gay Culture* 57). The story highlights being *bakla* as a gender identity by depicting gender performance that aligns Adel’s self-presentation with femininity and gender-crossing.

The story starts with Mico introducing his younger *beki* brother, Adel, who is fond of the color pink. For Mico, this color is something that he feels uncomfortable with as it is often associated with girls. He highlights it in the opening words of the picturebook: “On the other hand, I feel uneasy with the color [pink] that I always see in the bags and lunch boxes of my girl classmates” (2). The story establishes early on that pink is for girls. Interestingly, their older sister, *Ate* Pinky does not like the color pink and clothes with floral designs, implying that girls do not always like the same, stereotypically girly things. However, bearing the name Pinky herself denotes that the word and color are associated with being female. The accompanying

illustration for this scene shows us a peek of Adel's head with his purply-pink items including a wallet with a cat logo, socks, shoes, and shorts (see fig. 4). When Mico asks Adel why he likes the color pink, Adel responds, "Pink makes me think!" (4). Here, Adel is illustrated in shades of purple-pink juxtaposed with Mico, who is illustrated in shades of blue. Adel's remark implies that his preference for pink is more associated with his way of thinking than just being a preferred color for his belongings.



Fig. 4: A peek into Adel's thoughts

Aside from liking the color pink, Mico also expressed curiosity about Adel's preference to be home-bound and do household chores: "Instead of playing in the streets, Adel would rather stay home and do the chores. He does the laundry, washes the dishes, and tends the garden *even without asking him*" (8, emphasis mine). This denotes that Adel is voluntarily, maybe even "instinctively," inclined to perform domestic chores. This invokes Pascual's second observation about young gay narratives: their identification with women is marked by their performance of domestic chores that are often delegated to women.

Another feminine behaviour that Adel manifests is being expressive. For instance, he receives a pink watch with flowers from his dad, and "Adel jumped for joy, as he kissed our father and said, 'I love you, Papa!'"(5). From this introduction, Adel is shown as a boy who transgresses the expected performance of his gender. We see here what Garcia refers to as an image of the 1960s child *bakla*, that is "boys who are not physically active in games and outdoor activity" (*Philippine Gay Culture* 52), and of the *bakla* as a feminized version of maleness

(*Philippine Gay Culture* 71). The latter is further reinforced with how Adel is described and illustrated in terms of his physical resemblance to their deceased mother: “Adel looks exactly like mama. The spark in his eyes, the thin lips, the small but pointed nose, the white and silky skin, even the way his long and soft hair parts, he got it all from mama” (6) (see fig. 5). Likewise, Adel also behaves similarly, “very dainty and soft-spoken” (6). Pink was also their deceased mother’s favorite color and when she was pregnant with Adel, she craved “for pink roses, pink strawberry ice cream and pomelos with pink rind” (6). In the Filipino context, these cravings (*paglililihi*) during pregnancy “supposedly influenced physical attributes of the unborn baby, as well as influence its personality growing up” (Dizon n.p.). *Paglililihi* is considered a phase of pregnancy during which a mother’s cravings can affect her child’s physique or cognitive attributes. In this case, because the mother preferred to surround herself with pink items and craved pink food while carrying Adel in her womb, Adel’s fondness for the color pink did not come as a surprise to his family. It can be argued that Adel’s non-conformity with the prescribed gender norms is accepted because it is attributed to something inborn. Furthermore, it can be claimed that perhaps Adel essentially fills in the “missing femininity” left by their deceased mother.



Fig. 5: Adel is a mirror image of their deceased mother

Adel also has his circle of friends who are like him: boys who are “dainty and soft-spoken” (9), and love the color pink. Just like in the picturebook *Uncle Sam*, Adel and his friends

also use swardspeak, which affords them to talk exclusively among themselves, and brings them “on another planet” (10). Swardspeak lets them access their inner (*kalooban*) femininity because through this language, they can personify their alternative feminized “self.” This gender performativity is also demonstrated by their soft dance movements and “high-pitched, beautiful voices” (9). Play for *beki* children is comprised of conversing in an exclusive language, singing, and dancing—performances that are perceived as vibrant, entertaining, delightful to watch.

However, other children mock them “because of their unique ways” (11). Some people mock them using the word *beki*, implying that just like in *Uncle Sam*, *beki* is being redefined as a derogatory term. According to Garcia, this treatment of the *bakla* stems from both colonialism, where the *bakla* is treated as the “other” weak one, and from the indigenous bias against effeminacy, where the *bakla* is considered as less-of-a-man, a coward, and a joke of/an unreal woman (*Philippine Gay Culture* xx). However, unlike in *Uncle Sam*, Adel and his friends take ownership of the word *beki*, and proudly claim it as their own: “We may be *BEKI*, but we are the FIERCE AND FABULOUS BOYS IN PINK!” (11). *Ate* Pinky then defines *beki*, which can be considered as a definition of gender identity based on their appearances and behaviours: “‘*beki*’ are men who don’t act tough, have high-pitched voices, and behave like girls” (11) (see fig. 6). This instance once again reminds us of Garcia’s definition of *bakla* as a feminized version of maleness.

The presumption that *bakla* are weak individuals is reinforced in the succeeding pages, in which Adel is characterized as someone who cries easily when watching drama, gets queasy seeing blood and fish guts, and is scared of spiders, cockroaches, and mice. This weakness is also textually and visually reinforced by describing his physique as “thin as a broomstick” (13) and juxtaposing his illustration with his bigger *Kuya* (older brother) Mico. Notably, Mico refers to Adel as his “*kapatid*” in the Filipino text, but is translated in the English text as “brother.” This demonstrates a loss in translation, and by extension, a miscommunication of value, when publishing bilingual children’s books that uses the gender-neutral Filipino language and gender-specific English language. Throughout the story, Adel is explicitly associated with a feminine maternal character; unlike Uncle Sam who was compared against a masculine paternal character.



Fig. 6: Adel with his *Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki!* peers

From the beginning of the story, Adel is depicted as a young *beki* who is dainty and soft-spoken, and someone who prefers doing household chores playing outside—characteristics that are often associated with femininity. Despite his non-conformity with traditional masculinity, he is well-loved by his immediate family. However, this environment filled with love and acceptance is disturbed by the introduction of a character embodying dominant masculinity (cf. Taylor) who serves as the story’s antagonist.

We are introduced to Adel’s paternal uncle, *Tito* Braulio—a soldier with a “thunderous voice, muscular body, and deep stare” (14). *Tito* Braulio as a member of the military is used as a definitive symbol of dominant masculinity (cf. Taylor) and explicitly labelled as one of Adel’s greatest fears (see fig. 7). He often criticizes Adel for being “too soft” and “not very manly” (14) whenever he converses with Adel’s father. The story flashbacks to an incident when *Tito* tried teaching Adel and his siblings how to swim. However, Adel failed miserably, *Tito* Braulio got mad and shouted at him. Adel then cried and withdrew from the lesson. This scenario demonstrates how dominant masculinities, embodied by *Tito* Braulio, directly subjugate subordinated masculinities embodied by Adel. For *Tito* Braulio, a boy should learn how to play basketball or arm wrestling. However, Adel is incapable of doing these physically challenging activities, and as such, he is considered as a feminine boy with a weak physique who needs to be taught how to become a “man.” Here, a potential irony exists. Singing and dancing, which Adel and his friends are fond of, can also be regarded as physically challenging activities. However, such activities are commonly regarded as entertaining, funny, or feminine, and are, therefore,

seen as less challenging, hence more feminine. Because *Tito* Braulio triggers Adel’s traumatic experiences, his presence literally sends him to “hide in the closet or in the backyard so he won’t be seen” (14). This play of words, too, denotes that masculinity, or more specifically, the Filipino macho culture, tries to intimidate effeminacy to the point that it is either kept inside the closet, or allowed out in the open but is not seen or acknowledged. Garcia refers to this as the *bakla*’s “visible invisibility” (*Philippine Gay Culture* 47).

With the introduction of *Tito* Braulio as a definitive antagonist, Filipino readers may recall some intertextual relations to the movie *The Unkabogable Praybeyt Benjamin* (2011), directed by Wenn Deramas. The main star of the movie is Vice Ganda, a well-known *bakla* comedian who also sometimes cross-dresses on national television. In the movie, the *bakla* Benjamin has to join the army in place of his ailing father and go to war. Benjamin has to monitor his gender performance and behave accordingly to the ascribed gender norms of a dominant, masculine, Filipino male—aggressive, decisive, and always ready for a fight; the very same characteristics that *Tito* Braulio epitomizes.

Adel also fears the presence of *Tito* Braulio’s twin sons, Bruno and Berto, who are presumed heterosexual males and are about his age. They are fond of making fun of him to the point of bullying him enough to make him cry. In this scene, we are shown how Adel’s physique is different from his cousins’: the former is skinny, while the other two are bulkier. At the same time, Adel’s expression shows fear but his cousins show their mischievous smiles to accentuate their “naturally naughty and troublesome” attitude (15), a common stereotype for young heterosexual boys. Though the twins can tease Adel, they cannot do the same to his *Kuya* Mico. This is another instance of how representatives of dominant masculinity can subjugate an effeminate boy but not someone who also displays features typical of hegemonic masculinity.

abi ng kapatid kong bunso.



Fig. 7: *Tito* Braulio, Adel’s paternal uncle who is also a member of the military

The story peaks on the birthday of Adel's father, when *Tito* Braulio and the twins come over to celebrate but "Adel hid in the backyard to avoid them" (17). Once again, *Tito* Braulio relays to Adel's father comments about the boy's gender performance: "Kuya Eliseo, is your youngest still very dainty? He might grow up limp-wristed!" (17). The original text in Filipino for limp-wristed is *lelembot-lembot*, which connotes someone who is a coward and a weakling. According to Garcia, a popular Filipino macho belief is that a *bakla* child can still be converted to complete masculinity after a serious and protracted beating (*Philippine Gay Culture* 44). This is the reason why *Tito* Braulio keeps pressuring his older brother to "straighten" Adel.

*Ate* Pinky and *Kuya* Miko show their irritation and confided with each other how they wish their relatives were not invited. However, Adel's father did not say anything. It is unclear whether his father unconditionally accepts Adel as a *beki*, or is still in the process of understanding and accepting his *beki* child. The father may be regarded as a representation of complicit masculinity (cf. Taylor) because even though he shows his love towards Adel, he never challenged his brother's criticisms that are premised on hegemonic masculinity.

Amidst the preparations inside their house, shouts for help coming from the twins are heard inside the house. The twins were found up above a mango tree in an attempt to escape a chasing mad dog that they provoked with their slingshots. Adel came rushing out of the backyard called the dog "Becky Becky!" Everyone anticipates with fear that the dog would lunge and bite him. Instead, the dog wagged its tail and started to lick Adel's face. Mico realized that "Becky" sounds like the word that they use to call Adel—"beki." *Tito* Braulio and the twins apologize to Adel and praise his bravery. "'Son, I didn't know you were that brave. I really admire you; he said with a smile to Adel, who found it unusual for our brusque uncle" (22).

Adel's story follows the Western "sissy" boy trope (cf. Miller; Epstein) where the queer child has to perform something courageous to be accepted. Lester warns that these kinds of stories should be taken with caution as these propagate a notion that queerness cannot be accepted simply as is, without necessitating a display of extraordinary value to deserve acceptance. Lester writes:

This motif of having to prove oneself means the main characters are accepted only after those around them learn to appreciate their differences, the

implication being that there is ultimately something unacceptable about gender nonconformity for which young male characters must compensate. (250)

This means that the theme of proving oneself and being unique to gain acceptance may at first send a positive message; however, it is problematic because the burden of proving oneself becomes the burden of the non-conforming child instead of the communities, which should change its treatment towards that child.

To a certain extent, Adel represents a stereotypical *bakla* who performs his effeminacy and flamboyancy (cf. Reyes et al.). Adel also embodies Garcia's *bakla* in a young child who is "swishy, weakling, unprincipled; doing stereotypical women chores such as knitting, cooking, soprano-singing" that, from the perspective of a Christian government, must be converted back to being a "male" (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 61). However, the story concludes not with a 'conversion' to traditional dominant masculinity, but with Adel's proud assertion of his identity as a "fierce and fabulous boy in pink" and characterization of pink as the colored signifier of happy cheeks, singing voices, and laughter among his *beki* friends. More importantly, pink is the color of inspiration and inner strength (*lakas ng loob*: note here the focus on *loob*), and that it is not confined to a specific gender. Ultimately, Adel takes ownership of the color pink—a color traditionally associated with femininity—and re-appropriates it as a signifier of his own personality and identity, and even his way of thinking, without adults or any other agent imposing it on him. The two final illustrations show a seated Adel framed with a pink floral garland waving towards the direction of the reader, and a standing Adel drawn against a predominantly pink background winking towards the reader while standing proudly with two hands on his right-skewed hip (see figs. 8 and 9).





Fig. 8: Adel framed by a garland of pink flowers



Fig. 9: Adel illustrated against a pink background

### 3.3. *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* by De Guzman (2018)

Translation: *Billy has two daddies*

The third picturebook, *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy*, was written by Michael De Guzman, illustrated by Daniel Palma Tayona, and published by Tahanan Books in 2018. This picturebook

is considered a radical and ground-breaking celebration of the triumph of love over prejudice (see the paratext on the back cover). Narrated by an omnipresent narrator from the point-of-view of a presumed heterosexual, cisgender young male with homosexual male parents, the story shows us that Billy loves his two daddies, whom he refers to as Daddy and Papa, and enjoys spending time with them. However, this harmonious situation is disturbed by an incident one afternoon when Billy fought back against a persistent classmate who has been mocking him “*bakla*.” Billy then asks his fathers what “*bakla*” means. In contrast to *Uncle Sam* and *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*, all three primary characters belong to one family and are depicted as cis-gender, masculine individuals with mesomorphic bodies, clad in stereotypical masculine clothes, who enjoy physically challenging activities such as basketball and bicycling. The cover illustration shows Billy dressed in a basketball jersey while carrying his basketball. The inner title page also depicts the three family members posing for a family photo where Billy is dressed in a school uniform, Papa in a white shirt with long sleeves and a green tie, and Daddy in a blue polo and denim pants. *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* presents a notion of *kabaklaan* that is starkly different from the first two picturebooks. The *bakla* in this story is explicitly defined in terms of sexual orientation, that is, the romantic attraction between two males, and its gender component is anchored on masculinity. It discusses sexual orientation but prescribes that it is something an individual can contemplate and choose once they grow up. This may be problematic as it takes away a child’s agency to address early inclinations that they may be starting to recognize even at a young age.

The story opens with the narrator introducing Billy and his parents, Daddy and Papa. The illustration is comprised of a smartphone displaying a group picture that only shows a portion of Billy’s face in the foreground and the upper body of his fathers in the background. We see Daddy wearing a blue jersey shirt and sporting a bald head, and Papa with short black hair wearing an indigo shirt and eyeglasses. We are then directed to an illustration of their family’s daily morning scenario inside their home’s kitchen and dining area, where Daddy makes breakfast, Papa plays music, and “together, they dance!” (n.p.). Daddy is depicted wearing a blue sleeveless shirt and red jersey shorts while holding a spatula and Papa is wearing a blue shirt. Billy, wearing a red jersey shirt and holding a smartphone, has his back turned towards the reader. The illustration seems to frame the scenario as if the reader is looking at the characters from a relatively close distance (see fig. 10). Billy relates that Daddy likes fried chicken, Papa

likes vegetables, and he himself likes both. This implies that a child of a gay couple can inherit their quirks, effectively anchoring their familial relationship on nurture rather than on a biological premise.

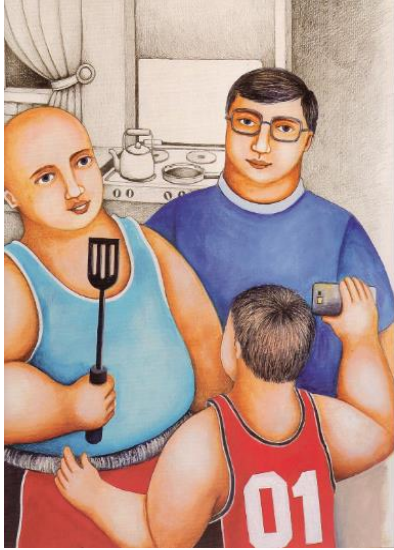


Fig. 10: Billy and his two daddies getting ready for breakfast

The succeeding scenes introduce bisexuality. The narrator ushers the reader inside a room that can be presumed as Billy's bedroom. The artifacts inside it reinforce Billy's heteronormative masculine through the repeated use of basketball-themed objects. In addition, a framed photo introduces the reader to Billy's biological mother. The noticeable presence of a wedding ring on his Daddy's ring finger in numerous illustrations, coupled with the introduction of his mother, establishes the fact that his Daddy can be romantically attracted to multiple characters of more than one gender. Introducing the deceased biological mother and proceeding to a narration of the romantic story between Billy's Daddy and Papa does not negate either romantic relationship. This approach meets the four criteria proposed by Knopp-Schwyn and Fracentese for portraying a bisexual character without necessitating the explicit use of the word "bisexual" to label the character (420).

The story advances and the narrator relates Billy's first day of school when the boy's fathers accompany him to school, each father holding one of Billy's hands (see fig. 11). The presence of a wedding ring on his Daddy's hand and its absence on Papa's hand reinforces the narrative about Daddy's marriage to Billy's late mother. Notably, same-sex marriage is not legally allowed in the Philippines. Billy notices that his other classmates "only had one dad each" (n.p.), and remarks how lucky he is because he has two. This implies that in Billy's mind, he is more fortunate and proud of having two fathers.

However, one afternoon, his Daddy finds Billy crying when he came to fetch him from school. The teacher reported that Billy fought with his classmate Jay. Billy and his Daddy

arrived home, followed by his Papa who had to leave work early to discuss Billy's issue. Papa's clothes and a medical bag imply that he works as a physician. Depictions of Daddy throughout the book, however, do not allude to him being employed. It can be argued that this indicates the family to be part of the middle class, in which the salary of one employed parental figure is enough to support the entire family. Both Papa and Daddy then ask Billy how he got involved in a fight, to which Billy replied: "Jay always calls me a '*bakla*.' This morning he pushed and punched me in the playground. I fought back" (n.p.). Just like in *Uncle Sam* and *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*, the term *bakla* is invoked with a negative connotation that triggers the bullying. His Daddy asks Billy if he knows what the meaning of "*bakla*" is, to which Billy replies, "No, Daddy. Jay's mom says because you and papa are '*bakla*,' I must be one, too. What is a *bakla*?" (n.p.). The reported remark from Jay's mother embodies a belief that the child of *bakla* couples inherits their *kabaklaan* (homosexuality).

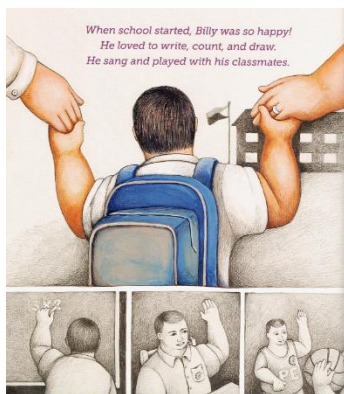


Fig. 11: Billy's first day of school

In the next scene, we are shown Billy's fathers explaining to Billy what *bakla* means. The illustration spread over two pages resembles a theater stage with two huge red curtains on each side. This implies a big revelation or staging of something important. Both fathers hunch down to talk with Billy at the same eye level, showing an expression that implies hesitation. They look at each other, and Papa remarks, "When boys love other boys, many people call them '*bakla*.' They also call them gay" (n.p.). The second part of the statement only exists in the English text and not in the Filipino text. It can be argued that this was added to invoke Western notion about gayness, which is predicated on an individual's sexual identity as a male and his romantic attraction towards fellow males.

However, Papa's explanation make Billy even more confused: "Am I gay, Daddy? I am a boy and I love you" (n.p.). Daddy then chimes in and uses his relationship with Billy's late mother to clarify the kind of romantic love between *bakla* couples and differentiate it from Billy's filial love towards his fathers. Daddy explains, "What Papa means is the love of a husband and wife. The way your Mommy and I loved each other when she was still alive" (n.p.). To which his Papa adds: "And the way Daddy and I love each other now" (n.p.).

Billy, rendered in grayscale drawing with a confused look on his face, remains puzzled. His fathers, rendered in full color, assure him that he will understand it better when he "gets to be a little older" (n.p.) (see fig. 12). Still, Papa points that not all adults can "understand people who are different" (n.p.). Some would instinctively express either anger or fear because it is easier and simpler to do so. Garcia notes that "despite the seeming omnipresence of *kabaklaan* in nearly all areas of popular culture, homosexual love remains outlawed within polite society" (*Philippine Gay Culture* 56). The Catholic dogma endorses the separation of a *kalooban* (interior) and a *labas* (flesh). Consummating homosexual attraction is frowned upon in Filipino society because it is deemed as "not natural." The only virtuous path for homosexuals is to avoid engaging in acts of the flesh and practice celibacy. Heterosexuals, in contrast, are allowed to get married and consummate their sexual attraction (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 109).

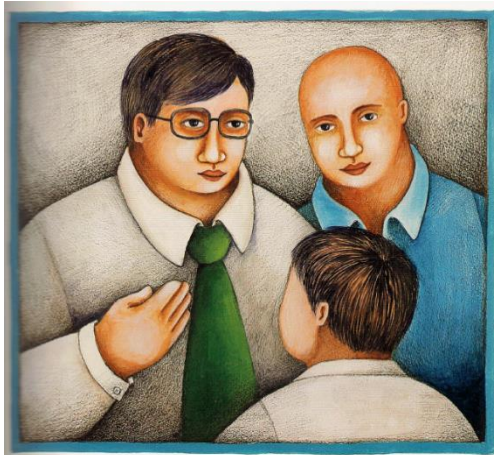


Fig. 12: Papa and Daddy explain to Billy what a '*bakla*' is

The penultimate scene depicts Billy in his school uniform, bathed in rainbow colors, raising his clenched left fist (see fig. 13). Daddy reassures him that whatever he hears from others, he should "remember that [his fathers] love [him] very much" (n.p.). Billy smiles and asks if he will be gay, too, when he grows up. Daddy laughs and says, "Billy, when you grow up,

you can be anything you want to be!” (n.p.). The rainbow signifies the variety of identities that Billy can construct for himself, including its sexual and gender components.

In this picturebook, the two *bakla* fathers perform masculine close to the Filipino hegemonic masculinity—notably different from Uncle Sam and Adel. Their portrayal as cis-gender, same-sex couple heading an apparently middle-class nuclear family adheres to what Lester regards to be a non-threatening approach to depict queer characters (248). However, among the significant contributions of the story is the discussion of sexuality and the portrayal of bisexuality in a children’s book. The picturebook also endorses individual agency in determining their sexual orientation and deciding how they want to express their gender. But this endorsement comes with a caveat that their individual agency is something that can only be fully harnessed when they get older.

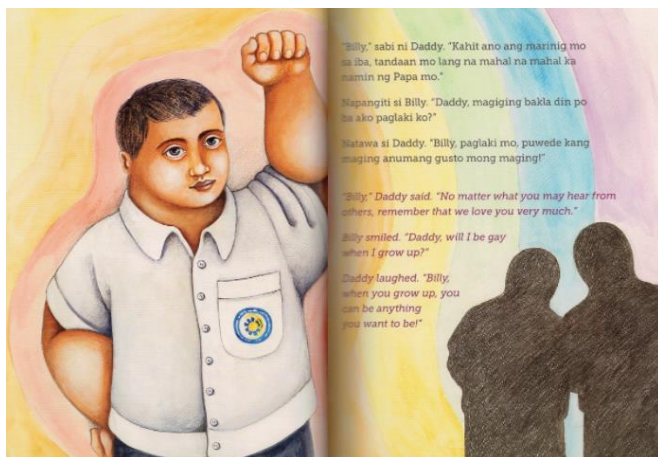


Fig. 13: Billy bathed in rainbow colors.

### 3.4. Discussion

In this section, I discuss some commonalities and differences found across the three picturebooks in terms of endorsing certain assumptions about the construct of *kabaklaan*.

#### 3.4.1. Implied Reader

None of the picturebooks is narrated from the perspective of a definitively *bakla* character. *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* is seen from the point of view of Mico, Adel’s older, and presumably heterosexual, brother; *Uncle Sam* is told from the perspective of Annie, his presumably heterosexual niece; and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* is narrated by an omnipresent narrator focused on witnessing Billy’s struggle as a presumably heterosexual son of

his two fathers. This implies that these books can serve as a “window” to show “latently heterosexual children” (Huskey 68) how a *beki* child, an adult *bakla*, and a *bakla* couple perform their gender identities, respectively. Moreover, the books’ perspective also aligns with Chick’s observation. These queer-themed books demonstrate some ways that heterosexual children can deal with other people’s negative attitude towards their non-normative family setup or non-heterosexual relatives (18). Though these picturebooks can also serve as a “mirror” for queer Filipino children, the narrated perspective of the presumed heterosexual characters are privileged over the voices of the *bakla* themselves. The beliefs of the *bakla* characters remain obscured except when they directly interact with the primary narrator or character. The readers witness a story about *kabaklaan* from the secondhand perspective of ostensibly heterosexual characters, who themselves stay witnesses to the queer characters’ struggles. The *bakla/beki* does not command the spaces and voices to define themselves. Instead, their queerness is mediated through the eyes of heterosexual people. Thus, it is still the perspective of heteronormativity that is privileged. Garcia terms this as the *bakla*’s visible invisibility (*Philippine Gay Culture* 47), which I explain further below.

### **3.4.2. Definitions and Portrayals of *Kabaklaan***

The picturebooks feature three variations of *kabaklaan* embodied by four characters who differ in terms of their age, physique, clothing, and mannerisms. *Uncle Sam* features middle-aged, *parloristang bakla* whose physique can range from fair-skinned, thin individuals to darker-skinned, bulkier *bakla*. Uncle Sam and his friends also cross-dress, often involving an ensemble of brightly colored feminine clothes, and they manifest an exuberant attitude.

*Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* also features feminine *bakla* characters embodied in young boys. The use of the term *beki* essentially attempts to disassociate the sexual orientation component of *kabaklaan* from gender expression and focus the narrative on the subject of childhood effeminacy among boys. Notably, all the *beki* characters were young, short-haired, skinny boys dressed in various shades and tones of pink who enjoy singing and dancing.

These two picturebooks also include instances of using swardspeak—the colloquial gay language—as part of *bakla*’s gender performance. Using an exclusive language provides them with a sense of individuality and identity. It also allows them to access their inner femininity embodied by their alternative personas: Aunt Samantha for Uncle Sam and Aryarwen for Adel. This notion of the *bakla*’s gender crossing is prominent in Filipino culture, and is especially



evident when heterosexual people ask gay individuals: “*Ano ang pangalan mo sa gabi?*” (What’s your name at night?). While the question may seem innocent and harmless, it reinforces heteronormativity because it insinuates that the *bakla*’s femininity should remain hidden, cloaked by the darkness of night. The use of swardspeak among gay individuals within certain spaces affirms their affiliation with a collective community (Pamittan et al. 121). Adel inhabits a “different planet” with his *beki* friends, one where they talk using self-invented words. For Uncle Sam and his co-workers, the parlor serves as a space where the *bakla* can work and socialize.

In contrast to the first two picturebooks, *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* presents starkly different gender performance. Here, Billy’s fathers have larger, rounded bodies with deep-brown skin tones. One of them has short hair, while the other sports a shaved head. They also wear stereotypically masculine clothes and enjoy physically challenging activities such as basketball and bicycling. None of the dialogues or narrations in the book use swardspeak as well. However, the most important and fundamental difference between this picturebook and the other two is that the story anchors *kabaklaan* on sexual orientation, that is, the romantic attraction between males and portrays bisexuality embodied in the character of Billy’s Daddy.

Though the three books collectively feature a variety of gender performativity that range from feminine to masculine, it should be noted that each story presents a single, relatively stable gender identification: *Uncle Sam* and *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* feature feminine *bakla* and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* feature masculine *bakla*. Moreover, none of the picturebooks features an elderly *bakla*. Garcia asserts that “to grow old as a *bakla* is to have a life of loneliness without happy ending” (*Philippine Gay Culture* 115). Perhaps, the general desire to preserve a positive tone in children’s books discourages publishing stories that allude to a potentially lonely late-stage life of a *bakla*.

All the picturebooks also feature ostensibly middle class and able-bodied queer characters. Uncle Sam lives with Annie’s family in a house that can accommodate separate bedrooms for four individuals. He is also a successful business owner. Adel’s family, too, lives in a large house with a backyard, and is supported solely by their father’s income. Descriptions of Adel and his *beki* friends’ play also allude that they have access to popular media through which they learn how to impersonate famous Filipino cultural icons like Regine Velasquez and

Charice Pempengco (now, Jake Zyrus).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Billy's family seems to be solely supported by his Papa's income as a medical doctor. In addition to that, they as a family can engage in group hobbies like biking in the park. Illustrations of the furniture and devices in their homes, including a four-burner stove in their kitchen and basketball-themed objects in Billy's bedroom, also imply a middle-class lifestyle.

### 3.4.3. The *Bakla*'s Visible Invisibility

While the authors of the picturebooks claim to celebrate the queerness of *kabaklaan*, their subjective voices remain unheard. Definitions, characterizations, and observations of the *kabaklaan* are mediated through a presumed heterosexual character; except in *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy*.

In *Uncle Sam*, Annie's mother attempts to explain what a *bakla* is. However, her explanation vaguely anchors the definition of *bakla* on their *pagiging lalaki rin* (being males, too), alludes to the negative connotations of *bakla* as a pejorative term, and concludes with a piece of problematic advice to avoid using any term that refers to gay individuals. Instead of putting in the effort to clarify even just its gender component, she essentially "invisibilized" (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 47) the *bakla* by endorsing a wholesale rejection of gay references like "*bakla*," "*bading*," and "*bayot*," among others.

In *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*, Adel's story evokes the trope of "sissy" boys who can be regarded as protogays (cf. Epstein; Miller). *Tito Braulio*'s attempts to "correct" Adel's effeminacy enacts a desire to prevent the eventuality of homosexuality among "sissy" boys; to subjugate subordinated masculinities and perpetuate the supremacy of dominant masculinities (cf. Taylor). Adel is only able to end *Tito Braulio*'s attempts after he demonstrates his bravery by rescuing his twin cousins from a chasing dog named "Becky." Though Adel and his friends express pride in their identification with being a fabulous *beki*, definitions and observations of the *beki* performativity are provided by *Ate Pinky* and mediated by *Kuya Mico*.

*Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* tries to break this invisibility by letting the *bakla* define themselves depicted through Billy's fathers. The conversation the boy has with them Billy—and the implied readers—includes a clear-cut definition of the *bakla* provided by *bakla* characters

---

<sup>1</sup> In a June 2013 interview, a few months before *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* was launched, Charice Pempengco, a popular singer who appeared on the American teen series *Glee*, came out of the closet as a lesbian. In June 2017, Charice became known as Jake Zyrus and he started undergoing gender-affirming treatments (see Arsua; Mizoguchi; Tantuco).

and addressed towards a young child who may still be unable to fully comprehend the concept of asexual orientation. It is important to note, however, that both characters do not manifest any form of gender transgression challenging dominant masculinities.

#### **3.4.4. The Oppression of the *Bakla***

Although “several *bakla* couturiers and hairstylists enjoy social prominence” (Garcia *Philippine Gay Culture* 56), the word *bakla* itself remains connotated with derogatory assumptions. In the three picturebooks, the mention of the word *bakla* and the ensuing attempt to grapple with its lack of definition triggers the onset of conflict: Annie is astounded by her classmate’s dismissive attribution of her uncle’s capabilities to his *kabaklaan*; Adel is afraid of enacting his *beki* performativity in front of his uncle and cousins; and Billy is targeted by a bully for being the son of a *bakla* couple.

To stop, or at the very least, reduce conflict directed towards *bakla* individuals, they need to do something exceptional. For example, one needs to be creative (Uncle Sam) or courageous (Adel). This conditional acceptance sets a harmful precedent for young *bakla* readers, prescribing the pursuit of something extraordinary to deserve a space within the predominantly heteronormative society. Discrimination directed towards a collective identity is diminished into instances of micro-conflicts that each individual needs to solve. Such narratives put an overwhelming focus on individualism and exceptionalism, instead of endorsing a more fundamental change of attitude towards queerness.

#### **3.4.5. The *Bakla* Conversion and Acts of Resistance**

According to Garcia, to be *bakla* is simply to undergo “a temporary phase in the individual’s life,” that is, *kabaklaan* is another semantic space of mental confusion and undecidedness, a temporary lack of resolve and an emotional wavering, and “a confused but temporary space” (*Philippine Gay Culture* 61). *Bakla* individuals are fundamentally males who strayed away from the ideal form of masculinity. But they can still be straightened, persuaded, or coerced back to the right path (Garcia “Male Homosexuality” 13). This is how *Tito* Braulio initially perceived Adel’s problematic effeminacy. He made numerous attempts to force Adel to act “more manly” (Garlitos 14). The advice of Annie’s mother can also be regarded as an attempt to refuse recognizing Uncle Sam’s gender performance as a deviation, as she assured Annie that Uncle Sam is “lalaki pa rin” (still a man) (Matias 28). However, both Adel and Uncle Sam resist this trope of conversion. Adel asserts his love for the color pink and his identity as a “fierce and

fabulous” *beki* in pink. Likewise, the penultimate scene shows that Adel embraces his being *beki* in the form of “Becky” the dog, instead of running away from it. Uncle Sam, on the other hand, presents himself as a cross-dresser at the end of the story.

In contrast, a reverse conversion happens in *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy*. Instead of the *bakla* being pulled back to the ideal “straight” path, the presumably heterosexual child’s world is opened to a multitude of potential identity configurations. His parents explain the definition of the *bakla*, but they do not prescribe a specific sexual orientation or gender identity for him. They encourage Billy to construct his own identity in the future and assured him that he can become whatever and whoever he wants to be.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, I conducted a critical content analysis of three Filipino queer-themed picturebooks that feature the *bakla* as a main character, namely *Uncle Sam* (Matias), *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* (Garlitos), and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* (De Guzman). Guided by queer theory, specifically Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, and J. Neil Garcia's characterization of the construct of *bakla*, I aimed to answer the question of how is the *bakla*, a Filipino queer identity, portrayed in select children's picturebooks? This research is prompted by my desire to spotlight a subset of the Filipino queer literature and include Filipino notions of queerness in the ever-widening global spectrum of queer identities. I also recognized the pedagogical ability of children's literature, in particular, children's picturebooks as a tool to introduce queerness to young people. However, my literature review confirmed that research on queer-themed children's literature is dominated by analyzes of English language children's books written from an Anglo-American point of view. As such, representations of queerness in children's literature have mostly featured Western notions of sexuality and gender expression through characters who are usually White, middle- to upper-middle class, Christian, and able-bodied. This is tantamount to promoting a narrow conception of queerness that is limited to these visible, recognized, and acceptable queer representations. To initiate a more in-depth exploration of Filipino queer-themed children's literature, I investigated existing representations of the *bakla* in select children's picturebooks to contribute to a more inclusive worldview of queerness. *Bakla* is one of the most prominent queer identities in Filipino culture that is also replete with issues that involve the intersection of sexual orientation, gender expression, class, and societal expectations.

Consequently, the analysis of the selected picturebooks showed diverse representations of the *bakla*. First, I found that the *bakla* was depicted as effeminate and flamboyant, both as a young boy and as an adult, as seen in the characters of Adel and Uncle Sam, respectively. This was also evident in the use of the *parloristang bakla* trope in *Uncle Sam*—a stereotypical image of the Filipino *bakla* characterized by the association of effeminate, cross-dressing gay individuals working in the field of fashion and beauty. Likewise, the “sissy boy” trope observed in Anglo-American queer-themed literature (cf. Miller; Epstein; Lester) was also used in the depictions of young boys who transgress their expected gender behaviours by being *Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* (Fierce and Fabulous Boys in Pink).

Second, the *bakla* is often associated with femininity as manifested through their clothing, mannerisms, and the assumption of domestic roles in the family. For instance, Adel is characterized by his fondness of doing household chores instead of playing outside, and both Uncle Sam and Daddy are portrayed as caring and nurturing figures to Annie and Billy, respectively.

Third, the *bakla* was also constructed not only as a gender identity but as a sexual orientation as well. The story of Uncle Sam and Adel focuses solely on gender performativity, but Billy's two "daddies" define the *bakla* as a sexual orientation marked by a romantic attraction between two "boys." Moreover, *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* meets Knopp-Schwyn and Fracentese's criteria for depicting bisexuality in children's books without using the word "bisexual" as a label.

Fourth, the stories also feature diverse depictions of the *bakla's* physique and gender performance that align with the feminine-masculine binary. Uncle Sam and Adel are skinny, have a vibrant, upbeat personality, and they often wear colorful clothing. In contrast, Billy's fathers are bulky and prefer stereotypically masculine hobbies and clothing. Uncle Sam represents the typified, cross-dressing, *parloristang bakla*; Adel the "sissy boy;" and Billy's fathers the masculine gay couple. These depictions of gender performativity still fit the heteronormative binary of femininity and masculinity and demonstrate the challenge of representing a complex queer character to a young reader in a comprehensible, coherent manner. The very principle of viewing gender as fluid resists stability or static definitions.

Fifth, the stories also featured themes that allude to the tensions and the complex situation of *kabaklaan* in the Filipino culture. The pride and acceptance of gay identity manifested through their clothing, mannerisms, and language is juxtaposed with discrimination premised on the very same manifestations of the *kabaklaan* identity. The stories start with a celebration of this diversity but conclude with a resolution that seems to endorse a form of acceptance that attempts to erase, conform, or "tone down" gender queerness to a non-threatening level: *Uncle Sam* advocates for the erasure or non-utilization of gay labels; *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* ends with the acknowledgment of Adel's value by a character that embodies dominant masculinity; and *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy* portrays a cis-gendered, same-sex couple. In these stories, it can be argued that gender transgression is either tolerated and forgiven or is non-existent at all.

While the existence of the *bakla* as a normative part of society is deeply rooted in the pre-colonial Filipino's way of living, we cannot deny that Western hegemonies, brought about by Spanish and American colonialism, have greatly affected how the Filipino society views queerness. The three children's picturebooks analyzed, thus, reflect the complexity of discourses surrounding *kabaklaan* in the Philippines that continue to struggle away from connotations of mockery and towards ownership, celebration, and pride.

This research demonstrates that representations of *kabaklaan* are not monolithic. *Kabaklaan* can be performed in various ways even in Filipino children's literature. This supports Butler's assertion about the fluidity of one's gender and sexuality, and by extension, identity. However, the Filipino construct of *kabaklaan* challenges the Western binary of gender and sexuality as it provides space for the conflation of both. As the *bakla* finds his space in the widening sexual and gender spectrum, and discussions about *kabaklaan* increase in children's literature, some questions still need to be addressed, such as: Where are the representations of the *bakla* who are ostensibly lower class? Where are the older *bakla*? How are their narratives told? Where are the disabled *bakla*? Where are the *bakla* who subscribe to and affiliate with various religious beliefs and faith-based groups? Using an intersectional lens, I found *bakla* representations that are diverse in gender expression but limited to the perspective of the abled, urban-dwelling, middle-class *bakla* who can speak Filipino and English.

To better understand the implications of these results, future research can address the following research gaps on Filipino children's literature: 1) investigate regional literature that features queer characters who are labelled or ostensibly identifiable as gay (*bakla*, *bading*, *bayot*, etc.) in different local languages; 2) find stories narrated by and from the perspective of the *bakla*, both in fiction and non-fiction; 3) explore real-life narratives or autobiographies of *bakla* individuals, including child, young adult, and old age perspectives.

I hope that this research provides a more inclusive view on gender and sexuality, delivered through a pedagogical medium such as children's literature, to better understand people who are deemed "different," "unique," "queer," or in this case, "*bakla*." Perhaps, representing diversity is indeed not something that must be cramped into a limited number of stories. Rather, it must be discussed in multiple ways through numerous narratives that feature queerness in all its forms and configurations.

## 5. Works Cited

- Abate, Michelle Ann, and Kenneth B. Kidd, editors. *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*. University of Michigan Press, 2011. [books.google.co.cr/books?id=fsWV-TAoJXEC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP4#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.cr/books?id=fsWV-TAoJXEC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP4#v=onepage&q&f=false).
- Ahmed, Sara. "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 12 no. 4, 2006, p. 543-574. *Project MUSE*, [muse.jhu.edu/article/202832](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832).
- Alberto, Jesh. *Bukas na si Cajon*. Illustrated by Gabbi Ramirez. Quezon City, Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking (CYAN), Inc., 2018.
- Almario, Virgilio S. *Panitikang Pambata Sa Filipinas*. Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2010.
- Arsua, Koji. "Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki + Anong Pangalan Mo Sa Gabi?" 11 Aug. 2013. [kojiarsua.com/2013/08/11/ang-bonggang-bonggang-batang-beki-anong-pangalan-mo-sa-gabi/](http://kojiarsua.com/2013/08/11/ang-bonggang-bonggang-batang-beki-anong-pangalan-mo-sa-gabi/).
- Beach, Richard et al. "Exploring the 'Critical' in Critical Content Analysis of Children's Literature." *National Reading Conference Yearbook*, vol. 58, 2009, pp. 129-143. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Exploring-the-%E2%80%9C-Critical-%E2%80%9D-in-Critical-Content-of-%E2%80%99-Beach-Enciso/4ced49601facb446f8ac47e5206083f0c2351edf#paper-header>.
- Benavidez, Angelo P. *Si Chowchow*. Illustrated by Aiko Shimizu. Quezon City, Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking (CYAN), Inc., 2018.
- Benedicto, Bobby. "The Haunting of Gay Manila: Global Space-Time and the Specter of *Kabaklaan*." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 14 no. 2, 2008, p. 317-338. *Project MUSE*, [muse.jhu.edu/article/241333](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/241333).
- Bouley, Theresa M., and Phoebe C. Godfrey. "Reading Outside the Boundaries: Children's Literature as Pedagogy for Building Empathy and Understanding of Social Justice in the College Classroom." *Journal of Effective Teaching*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2008, pp. 33-41. [eric.ed.gov/?q=Reading+Outside+the+Boundaries&id=EJ1055632](http://eric.ed.gov/?q=Reading+Outside+the+Boundaries&id=EJ1055632).
- Bishop, Rudine Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1990, pp. 9-11. [scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf](http://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf).



- Bowleg, Lisa. "When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research." *Sex Roles*, vol. 59, 2008, pp.312–325. *Springer Science + Business Media, LLC*, doi:10.1007/s11199-008-9400-z.
- Brabham, Daren C. "Power in Parody: Femininity 101 at Rupaul's Drag U" *Flow TV*, 2010. <http://flowtv.org/2010/07/femininity-101-at-rupauls-drag-u/>
- Bruhm, Steven, and Natasha Hurley. *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- . *Undoing Gender*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Carbado, Devon W., et al. "INTERSECTIONALITY: Mapping the Movements of a Theory." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2013, pp. 303–312., doi:10.1017/S1742058X13000349.
- Chick, Kay. "Fostering an Appreciation for all Kinds of Families: Picturebooks with Gay and Lesbian Themes." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2008, pp. 15-22. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/bkb.0.0013.
- Clidoro, Kevin Leo D. *For Better or For Worse: Evolution of the Portrayal of Gays in Philippine Cinema*. 2016. University of the Philippines Diliman College of Mass Communication, Undergraduate Thesis. [iskwiki.upd.edu.ph/index.php/For\\_Better\\_or\\_For\\_Worse:\\_Evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Portrayal\\_of\\_Gays\\_in\\_Philippine\\_Cinema](http://iskwiki.upd.edu.ph/index.php/For_Better_or_For_Worse:_Evolution_of_the_Portrayal_of_Gays_in_Philippine_Cinema).
- CNN Philippines. "2018 in Pinoy children's books." *CNN Philippines Life*, 28 Dec. 2018. [cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/literature/2018/12/27/2018-childrens-books.html](http://cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/literature/2018/12/27/2018-childrens-books.html).
- Coconuts Manila. "Batang Beki: a children's book that breaks barriers." 29 Aug. 2013. [coconuts.co/manila/news/batang-beki-childrens-book-breaks-barriers/](http://coconuts.co/manila/news/batang-beki-childrens-book-breaks-barriers/).
- Connell, Raewyn. *Gender and Power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1987.
- . *Masculinities*. 2nd ed., Allen & Unwin, 2005.
- Connell, Raewyn W., and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2005, pp. 829-859., doi: 10.1177/0891243205278639

- Crawley, Stephen Adam. "Be who you are: Exploring representations of transgender children in picturebooks." *Journal of Children's Literature*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2017, pp. 28-41. [www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Be-Who-You-Are%3A-Exploring-Representations-of-in-Crawley/bc0192b8818dceb4b1000862b5ca9b3432465628](http://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Be-Who-You-Are%3A-Exploring-Representations-of-in-Crawley/bc0192b8818dceb4b1000862b5ca9b3432465628).
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no. 1, article 8, 1989, pp. 139-167. [chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8](http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8).
- "Critical Receptions." *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault*, by Lisa Downing, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 104–117. *Cambridge Introductions to Literature*, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511793240.008.
- Cross, Gary. *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture*. 2004. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195156669.001.0001.
- Cruz, Vida. "These Filipino Children's Books Champion Gender Equality." *Spot.PH*, 18 Jul. 2019, [spot.ph/newsfeatures/the-latest-news-features/78516/mulat-sulat-sogie-books-a4411-20190718-lfrm](http://spot.ph/newsfeatures/the-latest-news-features/78516/mulat-sulat-sogie-books-a4411-20190718-lfrm).
- Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Dancel, Godfrey T. *Dumating na Si Manang Elisa*. Illustrated by Gabbi Ramirez. Quezon City, Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking (CYAN), Inc., 2018.
- De Guzman, Michael P. *Dalawa ang Daddy ni Billy (Billy Has Two Daddies)*. Illustrated by Daniel Palma Tayona. Makati City, Tahanan Books for Young Readers, 2018.
- Deramas, Wenn, dir. *The Unkabogable Praybeyt Benjamin*. Perf. Vice Ganda. A production by ABS-CBN Film Productions, Inc. and Viva Films, 2011.
- Dizon, Gerald. "The truth about 'paglililihi'—an expert explains." *Philstar*, 17 Dec. 2018. [www.philstar.com/lifestyle/health-and-family/2018/12/17/1868827/truth-about-paglilihian-expert-explains](http://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/health-and-family/2018/12/17/1868827/truth-about-paglilihian-expert-explains).
- Duggan, Lisa. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." *Materializing Democracy*, edited by Russ Castronovo, Dana D. Nelson, and Donald E. Pease, New York, Duke University Press, 2002, pp. 175-194. doi:10.1515/9780822383901-008.

- Ehrenreich, Nancy. "Subordination and Symbiosis: Mechanisms of Mutual Support between Subordinating Systems", *University of Missouri-Kansas City Law Review*, no. 71, 2002, pp. 251-324.
- Epstein, B. J. "We're Here, We're (Not?) Queer: GLBTQ Characters in Children's Books." *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2012, pp. 287-300. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.677241.
- . *Are the Kids All Right?: The Representation of LGBTQ Characters in Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Bristol, Hammer On Press, 2013.
- . "The Case of the Missing Bisexuals': Bisexuality in Books for Young Readers." *Journal of Bisexuality*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2014, pp. 110-25. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, doi:10.1080/15299716.2014.872483.
- Evasco, Eugene Y. *Ang Nanay ni Erwin/ Ang Tatay ni Klara*. Illustrated by Tokwa Peñaflorida. Quezon City, Saint Matthew's Publishing Corporation, 2018.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1, The Will to Knowledge*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990.
- Frany, Arkin. *One of the Boys (or How Kenny Saved the City of Toyland)*. Illustrated by Fides Balmaceda. Quezon City, Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking (CYAN), Inc., 2018.
- Garcia, J. Neil. "Performativity, the bakla, and the orientaling gaze." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000, pp. 265-281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370050141140>.
- . "Male Homosexuality in the Philippines: a short history." *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, no. 35, November 2004, p.13. [https://www.ias.asia/sites/default/files/2020-11/IIAS\\_NL35\\_13.pdf](https://www.ias.asia/sites/default/files/2020-11/IIAS_NL35_13.pdf).
- . *Philippine Gay Culture: Binabae to Bakla, Silahis to MSM*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Diliman, Quezon City, The University of the Philippines Press, 2008.
- . "Nativism or Universalism: Situating LGBT discourse in the Philippines." *Kritika Kultura*, vol. 20, 2013, pp. 48-68. <https://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/kk/article/view/KK2013.02003/840>.
- . *The Postcolonial Perverse: Critiques of Contemporary Philippine Culture*, vol. 2, Diliman, Quezon City, The University of the Philippines Press, 2014.

- Garlitos, Raymund “Rhandee” Magno. *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki (The Fierce and Fabulous Boy in Pink!)*. Illustrated by Tokwa Salazar Peñaflorida. Quezon City, LG&M Corporation, 2013.
- Greteman, Adam J. “Lessons from the Leather Archives and Museum: On the Promises of BDSM.” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2013, pp. 254-266. [journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/490](http://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/490).
- “Guidelines & Categories.” *Lambda Literary*, [lambdaliterary.org/awards/guidelines-categories/](http://lambdaliterary.org/awards/guidelines-categories/).
- Holland, Shannon L. and David R. Novak. “Critical Analysis.” *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, edited by Mike Allen, Thousand Oaks, California, SAGE Publications, Inc., 4 vols, 2017. *SAGE Research Methods*, doi: 10.4135/9781483381411. Accessed 30 Apr. 2021.
- Howe, Desson. “‘Angels’ Plays All the Right Angles.” *Washington Post*, 3 Nov. 2000, [www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2000/11/03/angels-plays-all-the-right-angles/ff31968b-2053-4ca7-ac56-9e1b4744a727/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2000/11/03/angels-plays-all-the-right-angles/ff31968b-2053-4ca7-ac56-9e1b4744a727/).
- Huskey, Melynda. “Queering the picture book.” *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 66–77, 2002. doi: 10.1353/uni.2002.0005.
- Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Publishing, 2013.
- Jenkins, Christine, and Michael Cart. *Representing the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature: LGBTQ+ Content Since 1969*. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Johnson, Holly, Janelle Mathis, and Katy G. Short. *Critical Content Analysis of Visual Images in Books for Young People: Reading Images*. New York, Routledge, 2009.
- Kidd, Kenneth. “Queer Theory's Child and Children's Literature Studies.” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 126, no. 1, 2011, pp. 182–88. *Cambridge Core*, doi:10.1632/pmla.2011.126.1.182.
- Kincaid, James. *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Knopp-Schwyn, Collin, and Michael Fracentese. “Challenges and Possibilities for Bisexual Picturebooks”. *Journal of Bisexuality*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2019, pp. 414-39. *Taylor & Francis Group, LLC*, doi:10.1080/15299716.2019.1649228.

- Lee, Gabriela. "MIX AND MATCH: A Thematic Analysis of the Depictions of Alternative Family Arrangements in Philippine Children's Picturebooks." *Journal of English Studies and Comparative Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 77-112. [www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescsl/article/view/6221/5511](http://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/jescsl/article/view/6221/5511).
- Lejano, Jing. "Kids rule at the National Children's Book Awards." *GMA Network*, 07 Aug. 2014. [www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/content/373771/kids-rule-at-the-national-childrens-book-awards/story/](http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/content/373771/kids-rule-at-the-national-childrens-book-awards/story/).
- Lester, Jasmine Z. "Homonormativity in Children's Literature: An Intersectional Analysis of Queer-Themed Picture Books." *Journal of LGBT Youth*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2014, pp. 244-75. *Taylor & Francis Group, LLC*, doi:10.1080/19361653.2013.879465.
- Lushchevska, Oksana. "Representation of Self within Soviet Ideology: Yelchin's 'Breaking Stalin's nose' and Sis's 'The wall: Growing up behind the Iron Curtain.'" *Journal of Children's Literature*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2015, pp. 22-30.
- Mallan, Kerry. *Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- . "Queer". *Keywords for Children's Literature*, edited by Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen, 2nd ed., New York University Press, 2021. *Keywords NYU Press*, <https://keywords.nyupress.org/childrens-literature/essay/queer-2/>.
- Manalansan, Martin F. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2003.
- Matias, Segundo D. *Uncle Sam*. Illustrated by Jason Moss. Manila, Lampara Publishing House, Inc., 2014.
- Matthews, Gareth B. *A Philosophy of Childhood*. Bloomington, IN: Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, 2018. Print.
- McGillis, Roderick. "Self, Other, and Other Self: Recognizing the Other in Children's Literature." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Johns Hopkins University Press, vol. 21, no. 2, 1997, pp. 215-29. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/uni.1997.0041.
- Mickenberg, Julia L., and Philip Nel. "Radical Children's Literature Now!" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 36 no. 4, 2011, p. 445-473. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/chq.2011.0040.

- Miller, Jennifer. "For the Little Queers: Imagining Queerness in 'New' Queer Children's Literature." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 66, no. 12, 2019, pp. 1654-70. *Taylor & Francis Group, LLC*, doi:10.1080/00918369.2018.1514204.
- . "Profile: LGBTQ Children's Picture Books." *LGBTQ+ Studies: An Open Textbook*, edited by Deborah Amory and Sean Massey, 2020. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-lgbtq-studies/chapter/profile-lgbtq-childrens-picture-books/>.
- Mizoguchi, Karen. "Charice Pempengco, Glee Actress, Comes Out as a Lesbian." *People.com*, 03 Jun. 2013. [people.com/celebrity/charice-pempengco-is-a-lesbian-gee-star-comes-out/](http://people.com/celebrity/charice-pempengco-is-a-lesbian-gee-star-comes-out/).
- Mizoguchi, Karen. "Everything You Need to Know About Singer Jake Zyrus, Formerly Charice Pempengco." *People.com*, 21 Jun. 2017. [people.com/music/jake-zyrus-name-change/](http://people.com/music/jake-zyrus-name-change/).
- Naidoo, Jamie C. *Rainbow Family Collections: Selecting and Using Children's Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content*. Santa Barbara, California, Libraries Unlimited, 2012.
- Neri, Bernadette V. *Ang Ikaklit sa Aming Hardin*. Illustrated by CJ de Silva. Manila, Publikasyong Twamkittens, 2012.
- Nikolajeva, Maria and Carole Scott. *How Picturebooks Work*. Routledge, 2006.
- Oswald, Ramona Faith, et al. "Decentering Heteronormativity: A Model for Family Studies." *Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research*, edited by Bengtson, Vern L., et al. SAGE Publications, Inc., 2005, pp. 143-165. *SAGE Research Methods*, doi: 10.4135/9781412990172.
- Pamittan, Generoso Jr., et al. "Kaloka, Keri, Bongga: Pakahulugan at Pahiwatig ng Gay Language sa mga Piling Pelikula ni Vice Ganda." *Plaridel: A Philippine Journal of Communication, Media, and Society*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017, pp. 95-124. [www.plarideljournal.org/article/kaloka-keri-bongga-pakahulugan-pahiwatig-ng-gay-language-sa-mga-piling-pelikula-ni-vice-ganda/](http://www.plarideljournal.org/article/kaloka-keri-bongga-pakahulugan-pahiwatig-ng-gay-language-sa-mga-piling-pelikula-ni-vice-ganda/).
- Pascual, Chuckberry J. "Kabataan at Pagkabata sa Panitikang Bakla." *Katipunan*, no. 3, 2018, pp. 118-145. Available from <https://ajolbeta.ateneo.edu/katipunan/articles/220/2468>.
- Patiag, Vonne. "In the Philippines they think about gender differently. We could too." *The Guardian: International Edition*, 3 March 2019. [www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/03/in-the-philippines-they-think-about-gender-differently-we-could-too](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/03/in-the-philippines-they-think-about-gender-differently-we-could-too).

- Peralta, Reina P. *Ang Nanay Kong Drayber*. Illustrated by Pepot Z. Atienza. Manila, Lampara Publishing House Inc., 2020.
- The Philippine Board on Books for Young People. "The 4th National Children's Book Awards." *PBBYP*, 19 Jul. 2016. [pbby.org.ph/links-ncba-2016](http://pbby.org.ph/links-ncba-2016).
- Prout, Allan. Introduction. *The Future of Childhood*, by Prout, Routledge Falmer, 2005, pp. 1-5.
- Pugh, Tison. *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature*. New York, Routledge, 2011.
- Reyes, Maria Elena C., et al. "Filipino Gay Stereotypes in Mainstream and Independent Films." *Advancing Literature and Communication Research*, vol. 1, 2012, pp. 21-42. doi: 10.7828/alcr.v1i1.172.
- Rosenblum, Darren. "Queer Intersectionality and the Failure of Recent Lesbian and Gay 'Victories'." *Law & Sexuality*, vol. 4, no. 83, 1994, pp. 83-122. *Digital Commons Pace University*, [digitalcommons.pace.edu/lawfaculty/210/](http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/lawfaculty/210/).
- Ruedas, Mondie. *What's My Power Gear?* Illustrated by Ruthie Genuino. Quezon City, Center for Youth Advocacy and Networking (CYAN), Inc., 2018.
- Ryan, Caitlin L., and Jill M. Hermann-Wilmarth. "Already on the Shelf: Queer Readings of Award-Winning Children's Literature." *Journal of Literacy Research*, vol. 45, no. 2, June 2013, pp. 142-72. *SAGE Journals*, doi:10.1177/1086296X13479778.
- Short, Kathy G. "Critical Content Analysis as a Research Methodology." *Critical Content Analysis of Children's and Young Adult Literature: Reframing Perspective*, edited by Holly Johnson, Janelle Mathis, and Kathy G. Short, New York, Routledge, 2017, pp. 1-15.
- Sims Bishop, Rudine. "Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors," *Perspectives*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1990, ix-xi.
- Stockton, Kathryn Bond. *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2009.
- Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2003.
- Sunderland, Jane, and Mark McGlashan. "The Linguistic, Visual and Multimodal Representation of Two-Mum and Two-Dad Families in Children's Picturebooks." *Language and*

- Literature*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2012, pp. 189-210. *SAGE Journals*, doi:10.1177/0963947011435863.
- Tantuco, Vernise. "Jake Zyrus Opens up on Coming Out, Transitioning." *Rappler.com*, 01 Jul. 2017. [www.rappler.com/entertainment/jake-zyrus-transition-journey-transgender-male](http://www.rappler.com/entertainment/jake-zyrus-transition-journey-transgender-male).
- Taxel, Joel. "Children's Literature at the Turn of the Century: 'Toward a Political Economy of the Publishing Industry'." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2002, pp. 145-97. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/40171621](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171621).
- Taylor, Nathan N. "Hegemonic Masculinities and Children's Picture Books." *Journal of Research Initiatives*, vol. 4, no. 2, April 2019. <https://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1175&context=jri>.
- Toledo, John Leihmar. "'Manong, hindi lang kami puro titi': Ilang Tala sa mga Mananaysay Tungkol sa Karanasang Bakla sa Panitikang Filipino at Ingles." *Diliman Gender Review*, vol. 2, 2019, pp. 104-30. <https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/DILIMANGENDERREVIEW/article/view/7091>.
- Warner, Michael. "Introduction." *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, edited by Michael Warner. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp. vii–xxxii.
- Young, Craig A. "Interrogating the Lack of Diversity in Award-Winning LGBTQ-Inclusive Picturebooks." *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2019, pp. 61-70. *Taylor & Francis Group, LLC*, doi:10.1080/00405841.2018.1536915.