
Feminist Criticism on the Short Story “Wedding Dance” by Amador Daguio

In a patriarchal culture, women are usually consigned to secondary classes or roles. This is observable in western societies, in both Europe and the Americas. If that treatment is existent in such developed cultures where women have substantially advanced in the struggle for gender equality, it is even more evident in indigenous patriarchal tribes in the Philippines. More often, women are greatly affected by the traditional imposed laws, because the culture creates traditions itself, and as most people are aware, men establish and control the society. This assertion will be examined even closer specifically in the indigenous tribe of the Cordilleras and the Mountain Province through the work of Amador Daguio’s short story *Wedding Dance*.

The story is about the tribal tradition of dancing during wedding celebration practices in the Mountain Province, however, the *Wedding Dance* is also a short story of pain and separation between a husband (Awiyo) and his wife (Lumnay). The gist of the story causing the conflict resulting in the pain of separation between the couple revolved around the unwritten rule in the tradition of their tribe that the husband has the right to replace his wife with another woman if after seven harvesting periods the wife could not produce an offspring. This could be discerned in the part of the paragraph that states, “No, You have been very good to me. You have been a good wife. I have nothing to say against You....It’s only that a man must have a child. Seven harvests is just too long to wait. Yes we have waited too long....” and in another paragraph is said, “Lumnay, if I did this, it is because of my need for a child. You know that life is not worth living without a child. The men have mocked me behind my back. You know that.” In this highlighted paragraphs it is implicitly understood that the burden of proof on fertility or infertility hang on the shoulders of the woman alone and not on the man. The stigma of being labeled as “barren” is always on women. In addition, a man who has not acquired a child is being ridiculed. Why is this the case, when even science taught us that infertility could be true in either the man or woman? It is possible that the procreative failure could be in the man but the woman could not prove it. Hence, the stigma of being labeled as “barren” is always on women. It is an unjust unwritten tradition in that tribe, that the woman who could not bear a child would just be discarded and left alone to go on with life without her husband. The miserable condition of Lumnay only shows how women have been placed behind men by society, and how the law gives them more constraints. Moreover, Lumnay’s situation proves how their tribe’s custom gives women restriction rather than freedom. The story had defined woman as someone who’s powerless and subordinating who is bound to conform to what is appropriate for their society,

and not given enough freewill as much as men. Lumnay may have hope for her tribe to validate her feelings in these lines, "*Suddenly she found courage. She would go to the dance. She would go to the chief of the village, to the elders, to tell them it was not right. Awi Yao was hers; nobody could take him away from her. Let her be the first woman to complain, to denounce the unwritten rule that a man may take another woman...*", however, in the end she lost her courage to do so which proves that she has been imprisoned to their culture dominated by men and fighting against it is like fighting against all the members of the group with the same belief. The story also discusses the role of a wife in their tribe in the following lines: "*...She is not as strong in planting beans, not as fast in cleaning water jars, not as good keeping a house clean...*" These mentioned tasks are basic duties of a wife in their tribe, where it has been set that women are to do these things once married to a man, having no right to do anything other than these duties which should not be the case. We could empathize the unfairness of the divorce in Lumnay's part for she doesn't have a say in this and all the decision making is done by a man. The story is not really about how Lumnay is treated unfairly and struggles against it, but rather how she is mistreated by such tradition and how she allows it to do so. The author has written how cultural practices have given an enormous impact on gender roles. They influence how men and women think about themselves within their gender roles.

In the story, the inequality of a man and a woman is prevalent in the tribe. The necessity of Awi Yao is the primary reason why he and Lumnay separated and that he could remarry another woman. It shows how in the patriarchal tribe gives less importance on women as they were only bound to do the chores at home and provide the needs and wants of their husband, and if unable to do so, the men can always have the choice of marrying another woman. The feelings of women are irrelevant and rebellious act against their culture is forbidden.