

Like the molave critical analysis essay sample



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In Rafael Zulueta da Costa's 1940 poem *Like the Molave*, the speaker entreats our national hero, Jose Rizal to inspire generations with his unwavering perseverance for national freedom. Moreover, the poem foresees the future of Filipinos in our countrywide failings such as our dependence upon others and upon the government, lack of self-restraint and loss of social dignity from a mistaken notion of modernity. Furthermore, the speaker tells the other heroes who bravely died in the process of freeing our country to enthrall the Filipinos by shedding their blood once again until we realize and develop the patriotic fervor of staying independent, like the Molave, an indigenous hardwood that can withstand tough storms and thus resilient in nature. Basically, the connection of the country's national heroes to ordinary Filipinos and the Molave unites in the spirit of 'Filipinism', a contemporized nationalistic act of improving the country by making it self-sufficient through first and foremost, raising social consciousness.

The recognition of Rafael Zulueta da Costa's poem *Like the Molave* in the Commonwealth Literary Awards (beating Jose Garcia Villa's entry) exhibits the interpretation of the existing scene of a raw semi-autonomous Philippine state in 1940. The Commonwealth Literary Awards was instituted by the government during those times to initiate national consciousness of the Filipinos; a trend in literature during the pre-independent Philippines. In the same way, the state's definitive stamp of approval to Zulueta da Costa's poem means that the literary work expressively reveals social and economic problems of the individual and of society. (Syed, 23)

In the poem, the persona asks the national hero to "...sleep not in peace" or not to cease in causing freedom because the entire country is not yet over

with the struggle for independence as suggested by the lines "...There are a thousand waters to be spanned, mountains to be crossed, and crosses to borne..." Through these figures of vast landscapes and heavy connotation of hardships to endure, it can be inferred that the speaker discusses the massive subject of the problem - Filipinos all over the archipelago.

Subsequently, the following statements reveal what bothers the speaker.

Our shoulders are not strong; our sinews are
Grown flaccid with dependence, smug with ease
Under another's wing. Rest not in peace;
Not yet, Rizal, not yet.

In connection to Rizal's dream for the nation, even during the 1940's the Philippine's pre-independence was hazy because the Filipinos were still limp and dependent to the colonizers where "...sinews are grown flaccid, under another's wing..." These phrases point out such weaknesses in barely standing up on our own by growing complacent and conditioned to post-colonial mentality. Even back then, when the scars of wars were still fresh, Filipinos have always been perplexed about the nation's own identity because of consistent foreign influences. The tone of resistance from the beginning is maintained in the line "...Not yet, Rizal, not yet." where the persona in the poem orders Rizal not to rest in persistently haunting or reminding Filipinos of their ancestors' long lost aspiration for independence.

Significantly, the speaker uses Rizal as an icon for empowerment because of his well-known belief of youth as hope of the nation. The line "...The land has need of young blood - and, what younger than your own, forever spilled in

the great name of freedom..." affirms such notion that the persona's concern in the poem pertains to the young generation who should bear on or uphold our country's independence and freedom achieved in bloody wars that took countless of heroic lives. Evidently, the lines "...Infuse the vibrant red into our thin anemic veins; until we pick up your Promethean tools and strong, we carve, for all time your marmoreal dream..." render the idea of the poet; Rafael Zulueta da Costa's social consciousness as the fuel to ignite and drive the patriotic act of 'Filipinism' among his countrymen.

Through infusing or carrying on the nationalistic spirit to the next generation, history will be made known on how epic were our heroes and thus will touch the hearts of the oblivious Filipinos who will then preserve our independence knowing we got freedom out of blood, sweat and tears. In the same manner, the allusion of Prometheus in Greek mythology as a titan who stole fire from Gods to give it to mankind only asserts the impression that Rizal bravely gave light to Filipinos during history's dark ages despite of knowing the consequences. (qtd. in Victoriano 25)

In addition to that, Jose Rizal is considered as the pioneer of the nationalist literary tradition in our Philippine Literature because of his two novels that destabilized the Spanish colonial structure with his anti-colonial visions, awakening the common Filipinos' patriotism. In short, Rizal, the literary writer, instigated social change and revealed the writer's significant role in informing and enlightening the readers about society—in persuading people to act and participate in social change. (Riyel, par. 17)

Relatively, the speaker in the poem also asks the "...souls and spirits of the martyred brave" to " Arise and scour the land! Shed once again your willing blood!" and not just Rizal alone. The tone in this line is quite strong, imperative and confident knowing that these noble heroes of our ancestry, rest assured that they would be willing to die all over again in hopes that we realize how much freedom means to them and for the future generations' independence from the bonds of the colonizers.

Until our people, seeing, are become
Like the Molave, firm, resilient, staunch
Rising on the hillside, unafraid,
Strong in its own fiber; yes, like the Molave!

Finally, the poem ends in connection to one of President Manuel Quezon's speech on August 19, 1938 in the Rizal Memorial Field; two years prior to when this poem was published. The late President's theme was the apparent degeneration of the Filipino national character and modern Filipino youth's tendency toward parasitism, choosing convenience over principles, thinking that lip-service and profession are equivalent to deep and abiding faith, inconstancy and easily admitting defeat. Unlike our ancestors who were strong-willed, earnest, adventurous, daring and courageous, they became pioneers like other giants in our history who gave luster to our name but now dead where it seems that their virtues were buried with them. (Bernad, 3)

The verse "...Until our people, seeing, are become like the Molave, firm, resilient, staunch, unafraid, strong in its own fiber..." reaffirms the poem's purpose of raising social awareness through ' seeing' to make Filipinos act

on a decisive effort in supporting each other for the greater benefit of the nation like how Molave, a tough Philippine tree can stand on its own.

Without a doubt, Rafael Zulueta da Costa's poem Like the Molave is a notable poetic expression of Filipinism. Garnering approbations when it won the Commonwealth Literary Award in 1940, Carlos Romulo himself, as a critic and chairman of the board of judges exuberantly commended the work saying that this poem is an eloquent statement of Filipinism which only goes to show that Filipino poetry in English is starting to become infused with social and cultural significance. (Reyes, 119-211)

El Filibusterismo is the sequel (of sorts) to Rizal's Filipino classic, *Noli me tangere*. It is set some thirteen years after the events of the earlier book, and many of the figures from *Noli* figure in it. *Noli* is, of course, dominated by Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra and his ideals for a better future for the Philippines — including fostering education as a means of improving the lot of the Filipinos. In both novels the corruption of those in power, and especially the friars — representatives of the powerful Catholic Church — is repeatedly shown and attacked. At the beginning of *El Filibusterismo* Ibarra is supposed to be long dead, and in his stead Simoun is introduced, a jewelry merchant whom little is known about. The wily merchant clearly has big ambitions — and quite possibly the means to accomplish them — though he plays his cards close to his vest. For good reason, too. One man learns his biggest secret early on (and the reader surely will have guessed it, too ...) — but Simoun trusts that his secret is safe with him: “ Like me, you have accounts to settle with the rest of society”. Simoun reveals that:

“ I’ve traveled the world over and worked day and night to amass a fortune to carry out my plan. Now I’ve come back to destroy that system, to shatter the corruption, to push it to the abyss to which it rushes without even its own knowledge, even if it means a tidal wave of tears and blood. It has doomed itself, but I don’t want to die without seeing it in tatters at the bottom of the cliff.”

What Simoun rages against is a sclerotic system in which a few wield great power and use it to hold the masses back. Education — which few have access to, and which in practice turns out to be a beating (or numbing) into submission — and claims of moral authority, in particular, are among the ways the friars and the nation’s elite maintain complete control. They even take pride in the fact that: We’re not like the English and the Dutch who, in order to maintain the people’s submission, make use of the whip ... We employ softer, more secure measures. The healthy influence of the friars is superior to the English whip. It makes for a largely docile if frustrated population, with almost no one daring to voice even the slightest criticism, or admit to any thought that is not in lock-step with those in power, as:

Here any independent thought, any word that does not echo the will of the powerful is called filibusterismo and you know well what that means. It’s madness for anyone to have the pleasure of saying what he thinks aloud, because he’s courting persecution.

Simoun is convinced now that open filibusterismo does not suffice; stronger measures are called for — and he has the plan(s) to overthrow the existing order and mindset. Yes, he has the grandest revolutionary visions: When the

poor neighborhoods erupt in chaos, when my avengers sow discord in the streets, you longtime victims of greed and errancy, I will tear down the walls of your prison and release you from the claws of fanaticism, and then, white dove, you will become a phoenix to rise from its still-glowing ashes. A revolution, woven in the dim light of mystery, has kept me from you. Another revolution will return me to your arms, bring me back to life, and that moon before it reaches the height of its splendor, will light up the Philippines, cleansed of its repugnant trash — And later:

“ Tonight those most dangerous of tyrants will rocket off as dust, those irresponsible tyrants who have hidden behind God and the state, whose abuses remain unpunished because no one can take them to task. Tonight the Philippines will hear an explosion that will convert into rubble the infamous monument whose rottenness I helped bring about. “

Twice the novel builds to a climax, to the promise of incredibly violent upheaval — an explosion into revolution — only for the grand plans to implode. Rizal takes his characters to the brink of a violent overthrow of the existing order — and then draws back, returning to the historical Philippine reality. There are a variety of reasons for why the plans are not carried through as originally intended, but certainly Rizal’s own message (as also expressed by characters in the book) is that violence is not the preferred solution, and that, while change is necessary, it should come about peacefully and sensibly. So while the novel does not provide all the simplistic cathartic satisfactions of utopian revolutionary fiction — wishful thinking fiction — in its realism, admitting to the near-overwhelming might of the

powers-that-be (while also condemning them through and through as base and corrupt), it is a more quietly effective work of literature.

El Filibusterismo is a social-critical work, with many chapters and scenes set pieces that show just how corrupt and debased this society — and especially high society, and the friars — have become. Or rather: remain — since, as one character notes, if after three and a half centuries of ‘education’ and leadership by those in power this is all it’s come to ... well, that’s a pretty sad and sorry indication of how very wrong the approach has been from the get-go.

Occasionally, Rizal is too specific in his prescriptions and moralizing — the case for education, and in particular for teaching Spanish, is a good one, but Rizal tries a bit too hard to weave that repeatedly into the narrative — but it’s the stray stories, illustrative of excess and corruption, that ultimately prove most distracting. Some of these are very entertaining, and some of the points both amusing and well-made, but ultimately Simoun is left in the shadows too much of the time. Almost too powerful a figure, it’s understandable that Rizal did not constantly want him at the fore, but he’s certainly the figure readers want to hear and see more from. Meanwhile, Rizal also isn’t quite willing to allow other significant figures, such as Basilio (who becomes a doctor) to take a more prominent place in the narrative either.

While much of the social criticism here is specific to a time and place, enough is certainly universal; Rizal was also clearly well-versed in the European fiction of the time, and El Filibusterismo is certainly comparable to

— and often more entertaining — than much of the social fiction coming out of Europe at the time.

A passionate work, verging sometimes on the melodramatic, *El Filibusterismo* is an entertaining document of its times, and a fine novel. If *Noli me tangere* remains the best introduction to the modern Philippines, *El Filibusterismo* is nevertheless a worthwhile follow-up.

"To the Women of Malolos" was originally written in Tagalog. Rizal penned this writing when he was in London, in response to the request of Marcelo H. del Pilar. The salient points contained in this letter are as follows: 1. The rejection of the spiritual authority of the friars - not all of the priests in the country that time embodied the true spirit of Christ and His Church. Most of them were corrupted by worldly desires and used worldly methods to effect change and force discipline among the people.

2. The defense of private judgment

3. Qualities Filipino mothers need to possess - as evidenced by this portion of his letter, Rizal is greatly concerned of the welfare of the Filipino children and the homes they grow up in. 4. Duties and responsibilities of Filipino mothers to their children 5. Duties and responsibilities of a wife to her husband - Filipino women are known to be submissive, tender, and loving. Rizal states in this portion of his letter how Filipino women ought to be as wives, in order to preserve the identity of the race. 6. Counsel to young women on their choice of a lifetime partner

Rizal's Message to Filipino Women

Jose Rizal was greatly impressed by the fighting spirit that the young women

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of Malolos had shown. In his letter, he expresses great joy and satisfaction over the battle they had fought. In this portion of Rizal's letter, it is obvious that his ultimate desire was for women to be offered the same opportunities as those received by men in terms of education. During those days young girls were not sent to school because of the universal notion that they would soon only be taken as wives and stay at home with the children. Rizal, however, emphasizes on freedom of thought and the right to education, which must be granted to both boys and girls alike.

The Responsibilities of Filipino Mothers to Their Children

Rizal stipulates a number of important points in this portion of his letter to the young women of Malolos. The central idea here, however, is that whatever a mother shows to her children is what the children will become also. If the mother is always kissing the hand of the friars in submission, then her children will grow up to be sycophants and mindless fools who do nothing but do as they are told, even if the very nature of the task would violate their rights as individuals.

Qualities Mothers have to Possess

Rizal enumerates the qualities Filipino mothers have to possess: Be a noble wife.

Rear her children in the service of the state - here Rizal gives reference to the women of Sparta who embody this quality Set standards of behavior for men around her.

Rizal's Advice to Unmarried Men and Women

Jose Rizal points out to unmarried women that they should not be easily

taken by appearances and looks, because these can be very deceiving. Instead, they should take heed of men's firmness of character and lofty ideas. Rizal further adds that there are three things that a young woman must look for a man she intends to be her husband: A noble and honored name

A manly heart

A high spirit incapable of being satisfied with engendering slaves.

ANALYSIS

"To the Women of Malolos" centers around five salient points (Zaide & Zaide, 1999): Filipino mothers should teach their children love of God, country and fellowmen. Filipino mothers should be glad and honored, like Spartan mothers, to offer their sons in defense of their country. Filipino women should know how to protect their dignity and honor. Filipino women should educate themselves aside from retaining their good racial values. Faith is not merely reciting prayers and wearing religious pictures. It is living the real Christian way with good morals and manners. In recent times, it seems that these qualities are gradually lost in the way Filipino women conduct themselves. There are oftentimes moments where mothers forget their roles in rearing their children because of the overriding idea of having to earn for the family to supplement their husband's income. Although there is nothing negative about working hard for the welfare of the family, there must always be balance in the way people go through life. Failure in the home cannot be compensated for by any amount of wealth or fame.