
Analysis and Insights on Manalang-Gloria's SOLEDAD

Angela Manalang-Gloria's sonnet entitled Soledad basically tells us how the Filipinos evaluate and see their own direct and personal experiences. Her Soledad shows us two aspects of the Philippine society---conservative and religious. The poem depicts how the society reacts on a trying and disturbing event. In the poem, the customs and norms are followed using a cognizant mind (even unconsciously) with the Catholic teachings and religion in the backdrop. Religion is the basis of their actions. More often than not, the Filipinos deep sense of religiosity is reflected in their decisions and ways of seeing the events that happen in their lives.

In the poem, the townspeople learn about a scandalous situation that involves a girl from their town. The girl is described to be a well bred person with this line "one so carved from pride and glassed in dream." With this observation, the people in the town are surprised to find out that the girl engages in a pre-marital sex. As the poem says, "...she dared profane the bread and wine of life for one insane moment with him." She seriously defies a norm that has some religious underpinnings. Contextually, "profane" and "bread and wine" are terms widely used to discuss religion and philosophies of God and Man.

Towards the end of the poem, the town condemns the girl. It is interesting to know why such people resort to condemning the girl rather than giving her clemency and sympathy instead. What happened to the so-called Christian compassion and mercy if they are religious? With the contention above, this analysis shall focus on the last two lines of Gloria's romantic sonnet to answer the contention.

The town condemned this girl who loved too well
And found her heaven in the depths of hell.

These last two lines reveal the outlook of the poet about the townspeople outlook. The people of that town have a sense of destiny revealed in the last line, "And found her heaven in the depths of hell." The poet believes through the people of that town or vice versa that defiance of the social customs and norms of such kind is unpardonable and thus, deserving hell. With this attitude towards the "scandal", the townspeople express their unconscious fear of the Biblical Hell as the final point of destination present in the Catholic teachings and even in the famous literatures of Christian countries. Their condemnation of the girl is there way of teaching and reminding themselves of what is the consequence of their present action. They are concerned with their future.

Aside from condemning they are also grieving for the destination of the girl's soul. The immorality the girl commits as said in the poem, "Her soul's cathedral burned by his desires." The girl's morality has been destroyed by the man she sleeps with or on the time she sleeps with that man. Here, we are reminded of [Dante Alighieri's](#) Francesca da Rimini whose lust sends her to the Second Circle of Dante's Inferno.

The poem started with the word "sacrilege," which means "gross irreverence toward a hallowed person, place, or thing." With the poet's usage of that influential word, the reader is directed to a certain understanding that suggests the magnitude of the central matter in the story---the scandal. Furthermore, the word gives us an image

of worried people. Such is suggested by this part of the poem, "...the neighbors cried..." Such immense emotion expressed by the townspeople implies further the gravity of the situation. This worrying manifests their worrying for their destination and more for the girl's destination.

The traits, conducts, attitude and traditions of every society are guided by something. In this case, fear of Hell is what guides the whole framework of this society. Moreover, these social and religious outlooks manifest Filipinos being religious persons. They look at the profane world to be hints in discovering the sacred and thus their God. They are religious as they choose to proceed on seeing the spiritual dimension of the profane cosmos they belong to.

A noted philosopher once said that the sacred is to be approached only with fitting seriousness. This explains the town's condemning the girl. It is to show that the situation (scandal) is never a matter to be taken lightly as it involves the soul's salvation and above all the Sacred.

With this, Soledad is successful in telling people that some mistakes, errors and sins deserve forgiveness, but, not all. Sin separates man from God. It detaches man from the social mainstream. Look at the rapist and murderers. Soledad as a poem and art tell you that sin and defiance from set customs have a consequence---loneliness or solitude (soledad in Spanish).

The poem, "**Order for Masks**", is clearly talking about the different roles that the woman, who is the persona in the poem, has to portray throughout her life. It presents the woman's three masks which represent the three tasks in her life and the three faces she has to wear for the three men in her life. The first role that is illustrated is that of a sister -- the woman towards her brother. As a sister, she tries to differentiate herself from her brother that is why she does things that are completely opposite or in contrast with the things her brother does. She wants to be unlike him in every possible way so to make him feel secure in his masculinity and to make him believe that she is not a threat to him. The next role mentioned is that of a daughter -- the woman towards her father. As a daughter, she wants to show her father that she is the kind of woman that he expects her to be -- pure, innocent and chaste, leading him to believe that she is and will be a perfect daughter. Third simultaneous mask both as a wife and a mother as she turns older.

New Yorker in Tondo is a story of a girl named Kikay who went to New York to study Hair Culture and Beauty Science. Upon going home after a year, she acquires all the New Yorkish things like style, language, looks and manner. She even influenced her mother with her way of living.

One day, Tony visited her for he heard that Kikay has already arrived. Tony was Kikay's sweetheart and they got secretly engaged before Kikay left. While waiting for Kikay to wake up, Totoy and Nena also came. Totoy and Nena were also Kikay's and Tony's childhood friend.

Upon waking up, Kikay immediately entertained her friends. They are all shock of what they've seen. Kikay was transformed into a different girl. She doesn't want to be called as Kikay instead she wants everybody to call her Francesca. She tells them everything she experienced in New York and she even keep on comparing New York from Tondo.

When Kikay and Tony had the chance to be alone, Tony was trying to open the issue of them being engaged before she left. But Kikay didn't want to listen; instead she keeps on ignoring Tony and even told him that being engaged to him is just a childish act. She even degraded Tony by telling him, "Imagine a New Yorker marrying a Tondo boy!" Tony gets irritated of what Kikay acted, so he confronts her, reprimands her and tell her that New York didn't bring her any good.

Kikay realizes everything that Tony said. She asks for forgiveness and promises him that she will go back to her original self. She even said that Francesca is dead and who's standing in front of him is Kikay. Tony forgave her and they went back to each other's arms.

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