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Poetry, Music and Social Consciousness

FELIPE PADILLA DE LEON

THE artist, as anti-world, sorcerer, creator of myths and imaginings far removed from reality, has always figured in the minds of men. He belongs to himself and his meanings, to an esoteric few only. "The artist" according to Symons, "has no more part in society than a monk in domestic life."

"It is a curious situation", says Macleish, "because the public street is precisely where we live our lives in this century. There is always an outdoor war to go to in our times or a huge public death in the sky or a revolution down at the corner of a couple of continents. All this is out of doors and it is out of doors we do our talking and arguing and walking up and down with our souls and wondering whether we'll live until morning and whether we want to. . . . We have a queasy, seasick feeling, not in the pit of ourselves but in the consensus of our public opinions, that the country is coming apart beneath our feet or the world is coming apart and we may have to swim for it. . . ."

So too, if Shakespeare can speak eloquently of "this happy breed of men, this little world/ This precious stone set in the silver sea/ This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"; or if Rizal can with ardor voice his lament, "Tunay ngayong umid yaring dila't puso/ Sinta'y umilag, tuwa'y lumayo/ Bayan palighasa'y lupig at sumuko"—does not the belief become untenable, do not these artists' utterances belie

the indictment, that art is a mere house cat shut off from the world of obligations?

With the coming of multiple generations of artists, especially poets like Yeats, Blake, Auden, Parker, and Arnold from the West; Benigno Ramos, Lope K. Santos, Julian Cruz Balmaceda, Pedro Gatmaitan, Patricio Mariano, Amado V. Hernandez, together with our poets in Spanish — Fernando Ma. Guerrero, Cecilio Apostol, Claro Mayo Recto — all of them giving testimony to the fact that art can function as a social conscience without forfeiting intrinsic aesthetic values, much of the mentality that has alienated the public from the artists has been overcome.

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS EXTENDED

The term *social consciousness* eludes total definition. The meaning most commonly attached to it covers only a certain sensitivity to the social conditions prevailing in the country. In this context we regard Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* as finest examples of social novels. So have we looked upon the movement poems of Epifanio San Juan, Jr., Florentino Dans, Jolico Cuadra, Serafin Lanot, R. Zulueta da Costa, Ricaredo Demetillo and many others who have put a heavy social sting in their works. If this were purely what we take social consciousness to mean, then we may also extol our own national anthem as the most socially significant music ever to grace our lives.

But there is another extension of social consciousness which is much larger in scope — richer and more proper to the term — that kind of consciousness by which the American composer, Roy Harris, firmly believed great music has been, and may be, produced because it springs from staunch individuals "who sank their roots deeply into social soil which they accepted as their own." "Musical Literature," he added, "never has been and never will be valuable to society as a whole until it is created as an authentic and characteristic culture of and from the people it expresses." Perhaps this is also what Paul Valery meant when he said in his *Art of Poetry*, "What is of value to us alone has no value."

T. S. Eliot has declared that "the music of poetry must be latent in the common speech of this time;" this means, it must be latent in the common speech of the poet's place. "If we all came to talk alike," he said "there would no longer be any point in our not writing alike, but until that time comes, it is the poet's business to use the speech which he finds about him, and with which he is most familiar." Precisely, it is the magic of familiarity which must permeate the very soul of one's work if he should be attributed with a high degree of social consciousness. He must set himself to the task—not only of making his meaning familiar — but also of making the familiar meaningful.

Social consciousness is a way of life. It involves the process of getting into the stream of national thoughts and aspirations — taking what possible gold can be sifted from the flowing sand — and fashioning it in a way that is recognizable but still highly evocative to the eyes of the beholder.

SPIRIT OF THE RACE

From this basic assumption, we must conclude that if we are to search earnestly for art works of real social value, we may find none better than those which deeply reflect the Filipino temperament.

Filipino society, though at present it may appear to be a loose pile of various foreign-oriented groups, nevertheless, has retained an essentially deep-rooted personality, something like Carl Jung's "spirit of the race," which probably accounts for the fact that until now when we want to go Filipino, we only have to get somebody to play the *tinikling*, *Magtanim ay Di Biro*, *Bahay-kubo*, and others of the type.

We undoubtedly have definite concepts of and responses towards a concrete national image, despite the repeated detractions from without and within about the Filipino being a first class copycat, an incorrigible leech that lives on the blood of alien cultures. We really accept the *barong tagalog*, the *yantok*, the *narra*, the *sampagita*, the various folk dances as distinctly Filipino. Things that we may have thought we discarded—

and this is most true in the city — like the fabled modesty of the Filipino woman, family ties, respect for elders etc. are somehow still alive within us because though we may not be practicing them as much as our ancestors did we implicitly recognize these virtues as peculiarly Filipino.

AESTHETICS AND FILIPINO SOCIETY

In the old days, our daily lives were closely intertwined with aesthetics, so closely in fact that Julian Cruz Balmaceda observed: "Poetry was every Filipino's fairy godmother from the cradle to the grave, it had almost become impossible for one to sail into the tempest of life without her." So was music which, "like a bough of stars," in the words of the historian Pigafetta, "illuminated every stone across the paths of these sturdy gifted people."

Under these conditions, to express oneself in perfectly Filipino terms was not difficult. Social consciousness was in the very air Filipinos breathed. Intimacy with the soil immediately beneath them bore fruits of wisdom that nourished even the plainest social consciousness of the times. If a young man was getting a little brash as to display his affection for a girl out in the street, he would be met with, "Hayop man daw sa parang/May lungga ri't tahanan." The young man if he must prove himself in earnest, would say, "Wala nang kasing tamis/ Pag naunahan ng pait."

Similarly, their songs — besides being faithful in context to daily experience — are embedded with glittering gems of thought that could have issued only from those so keenly aware of the vagaries of their immediate world. For instance, we have the following song:

*May isang batsilyer na sakdal nang alam.
Nanggaling sa klase, uuwi sa bahay,
May isang bangkero siyang natanawan,
Tinawag niya't pagdaka'y sumakay.*

*Nang makasakay na'y binuksan ang libro
At saka tinanong ang pobreng bangkero:*

*'Magmula sa langit hanggang sa Impiyerno,
Turan mo kung ilan ang signos ng tao.'*

*Sagot ng bangkero'y 'Di ako bihasa,
Di ako nag-aral sa alin mang eskuwela,
Dito ang bangka ko'y ang aking materya
At ang aking pluma'y ang sagwan kong dala.'*

*Sagot ng batsilyer: 'Ikaw ay pangahas
Sa isang gaya ko'y palalong mangusap,
Sa inutos ko'y gawin mo nang agad,
Hayo na't dakpin mo ang alon sa dagat.'*

*Sagot ng bangkero'y 'Batsilyer na bunyi,
Aking sasagutin iyong talumpati,
Hayo't ang buhang'i'y lubiring madali.
Sa darakping alo'y siyang itatali.'*

THE OPPRESSED: TOWARDS NATIONAL EXPRESSION

But the scourge of the Spanish colonial rule, as it continued to dominate every inch of the land, gradually and inevitably affected the artistic climate. The people's natural zest for life, the sunshine quality of their optimism which had given them a tremendous rapport with the beautiful things around them, evolved into a highly charged social complex, thereby infusing them with increased awareness of the more pressing needs of their country. What then had been a mere effortless passion for the realities of daily existence became a consummate rage that, though hedged by many fears, propelled their hearts toward a larger and more enduring unity. Adolescent ardor matured into anguish, and whatever innocent love they had felt before for their country finally reached that certain peak where desire meant unbearable torment, the desire to win back the beloved land which the conquerors had so wantonly violated.

The change of temperament deepened, seeping into the very heart of the masses. Here what other voice could equal in depth that of Bonifacio, who epitomized the Filipino ple-

beian awareness of country, a man who, bereft of all sophistication, succeeded in giving poetic utterance to his people's sentiment. A few snatches from his poem, "Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa," clearly indicates this:

*Aling pag-ibig pa ang hihigit kaya
Sa pagka-dalisay at pagka-dakila,
Gaya ng pag-ibig sa tinubuang lupa?
Aling pag-ibig pa? wala na nga, wala.*

Nowhere was the metamorphosis more felt than in the music of the people. Strangely, their songs were transformed from the usually unaffectedly gay to the serious and intensely emotional. Stranger even was the fact that although the lyrics of the songs generally touched on love for a woman, they, nevertheless, expressed patriotic sentiment. To illustrate my point, let me give this example of a love song which was so popular during the Revolution and which, as historical records will attest, fittingly earned the title, "Kundiman ng Himagsikan." The verses of this song, as you will observe, are lavishly centered on a woman named Pepita Tionson y Lara, the most adored lass in the town of Baliwag during her time.

JOCELYNANG BALIWAG

*Pinopoong sinta niring kaluluwa,
Nakakawangis mo'y mabangong sampaga;
Dalisay sa linis, dakila sa ganda,
Matimyas na bukal ng madlang ligaya.*

*Edeng masanghayang kinaluluklukan
Ng galak at tuwang katamistamisan;
Tala kang maningning na ang matunghaya'y
Masamyong bulaklak agad sumisikal.*

Now, let us compare the song just sung to this *kundiman*, which has for its theme love of country.

KUNDIMAN

*Sa tapat ng laging palangiting araw
Na lumalaganap sa dagat-Silangan,*

*May mutyang masuyo't libid kayaman
Na giliw ang handog sa pusong may damdam.*

*O Bayang maligaya ng aking paggiliw,
Pusong lakambini, kalong-salamisim;
Ang iyong pagluha'y sandaling pigilin,
Ang kundimang ito mutya'y iyong dinggin.*

*Bulaklak ng aking laging pinithaya
Ang ikaw'y makitang may sariling laya't
Sa dagat-Silanga'y butihing diwata,
Mayama't mapuri, bihis sa dalita.*

Both songs in spite of their difference are clearly suffused with nostalgia and melancholy, voicing an exile's lament for the native land. Whatever desire there is to participate in the glory of joy is squelched by an inherent fatality.

WOMAN AND COUNTRY JUXTAPOSED

Shelley once said that the sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest woe. Perhaps it was in view of this fact that our Filipino patriots, the brave, fiery revolutionary leaders and their men, as well as the composers who continued to write patriotic music, thought and felt it best to adopt songs which were haunting, fraught with melancholy and sadness as themes of their epic struggle for freedom. In this light also it was quite easy and natural to equate the love for a woman with the adoration and reverence felt for the country. The lonely portrait of a love-struck individual pleading to his beloved finds perfect parallel in the downtrodden Filipino soldier risking his life in the battlefield and pleading for the cause of independence.

It must be noted that Filipino music during and after the Revolution, on the whole whether patriotic or not, in fast or in slow tempo, reveals an underlying pensiveness, a certain nostalgic vein without which it would cry for completion. Take for example the following song. It is supposed to be humorous, as the lyrics show, but the music, surprisingly, is anything but that. The sentimental mood is evident.

DOON PO SA AMIN

*Doon po sa aming maralitang bayan,
Nagpatay ng hayop, niknik ang pangalan,
Ang taba po nito ay ipinatunaw,
Lumabas na langis, siyam na tapayan.*

*Ang balat po nito ay ipinakorte,
Ipinagawa kong silya't taburete,
Ang uupo rito'y kapitang pasado't
Kapitang labaking bagong kahalili.*

Take the patriotic song written by Julio Nakpil, a very historically significant one, for if Bonifacio had not died as early as he did, it would have been our national anthem. He had intended this music for the establishment of the Philippine Republic:

MARANGAL NA DALIT NG KATAGALUGAN

*Mabuhay, mabuhay
Yaong Kalayaan, Kalayaan
At pasulungin ang puri't kabanalan,
Ang puri't kabanalan.
Kastila'y mairing ng Katagalugan
At ngayo'y ipagwagi ang kahusayan.*

The plaintive strain here is unmistakable, no matter how seemingly martial the tempo.

By and large, we may conveniently distinguish between two kinds of social consciousness as reflected in Filipino music ever since the Spanish occupation. The first is *active consciousness*, which inspired the creation of songs with explicitly patriotic content. In this category are the strictly martial tunes whose general flow and quality command immediate fervor in the thick of battle. We may also mention in this respect those songs with definitely patriotic lyrics though they may not necessarily be martial. The other is *passive consciousness*, by virtue of which our people have spawned a mammoth treasury of lovely lovable songs truly expressive of their thoughts and sentiments as a race. The

songs falling under this category have no conscious patriotic intent, but some deeply rooted knowledge drawn instinctively from the people's collective experience seems to have injected into them a high-spirited nationalism.

Most of the following songs were composed during the Revolution; a few were written during the American occupation.

Enlightened criticism has bequeathed to us the important view that literature and music together form the "twin rivers of power" that "can carry a man over to any point in hell or heaven." This is because they alone possess the capacity to recreate the movement in time of the human personality. No wonder, therefore, that something vitally alive like a people's national sentiment should find best expression in these two media.

I hope that the fluidity which has flung open the gates of literature and music to the crystallization of the national image may not become itself the instrument for destroying this consciousness. I hope that in due time the enchantment of Western civilization shall gradually wear off and in its place a truly integrated Filipino consciousness will develop ever more richly as the spirit of a proud and sovereign people that it must be.

MARANGAL NA DALIT NG KATAGALUGAN

(1896)

Julio Nakpil

Allo maestro

Ma-bu-hay, ma-bu-hay yaong ka-la-ya-an, ka-la-ya-an.
an. At pa-su-lu-ngin ang pu-ri't ka-^{Allegando} ba-na-lan
ang pu-ri't ka-ba-na-lan. ^{FINE} Kasti-láy mairing ng Kataga-
lu-gan At ngayoy i-pag-wa-gi ang kahusa-yan. Ma-

(KUNDIMAN IN 1800)



Doon po sa a-min ma-ra-litang bayan, Nagpatay ng



Niknik ang pangalan - Ang taba po nito



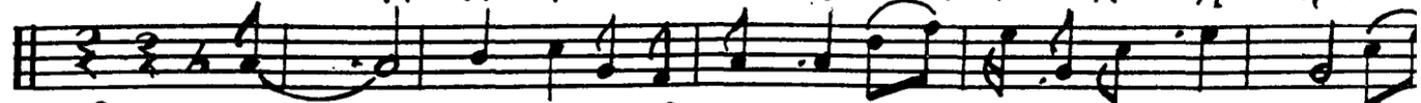
i-pi-na tu-naw, Lumabas na langis siyam na ta-pa-



Ang balat po nito ay i-pina-kor-te I-pinaga-



na kong sil-yat tabu-re-te. Ang u-u-po rito'y ka-pitang pa-



sadot Ka-pitang la-la-king bagang kaha-li-li. -

Bayang mali-gaya ng aking pagiliw, Pusong lakam-bi ni, kalong-sala-misim, Ang yong paglahay sandaling pi-gi-lin Ang kundi-mang-i to, Mutay, i-yong dinggin. Ang i-kawyma Buklak ng aking la-ging pi-nithaya Sa dagat-sila-ngay ki-tang may sa ri-ling laya Bu-ti-ting di-wa-ta, Mayamat mapu-ri, bi-his sa da-li-ta.

B. Abdon

KUNDIMAN
(1917)

Sa Dalampasigan

1897

Tempo di danza

Sa dalampo-si-gan ng da-gat-Mayni-la, Lune-ta ang ta-wag
 ng manga Kasti-la Ay doon bi-naril ang kaa-a-wa
 Nating Pili-pi-no martir nitong lupa. Naramay sa du-sa aag ating lang-
 gu-lan- Panganay na Burgos at bunsong si Rigal; Sa inggit at
 takot ng manga suka-ban, Pinatay ay walang bahid-kasala-nan.

Labintatlong Martir

(1898)

Julian Felipe

Tinig mo'y i-lakas, sintang Ba-yan Ang la-
 bintatlo'y i-pagda-ngal; Nag-ti-is ng madlang ka-hi-
 ra-pan, Ang pagla-ya mo ang da-hi-lan. Tinig
 lan. Daki-la-in sila ng la-hat na, Ng la-
 hat ng sayo'y sumi-sinta, Pinatay man sila at nali-
 bing, Sa a-la-a-la mo'y buhay rin. Daki-
 rin. Sa a-la-a-la mo'y buhay rin, Sa
 a-la-a-la mo'y buhay rin. Sa rin.

LUPANG TINUBUAN

(1944)

G Abadilla

Felipe P. de Leon

Tpo di kundiman

Sa lu-pa kong si-ru-la-ngan Ang lalaki ay matapang,
 Ang baba-ey yaman At sa la-hi ay dangal.
 Bayan ko ay tanging bayan Ng kaba-ya-ri-han
 Sa dibdib la ging buhay Ang diwa ng kasa rinlan.
 May sa-ru-ling Wi-ka At kanyang Bandi-la,
 ay patnubay sa pag-la-ya, I-sang Rizal na daki-la,
 ung sa-ka-sa-ka-ling Bu-hay ko'y pu-manaw, Sa
 lu-pa ring i-to, Langit ko na ang ma-him-lay.

BAYAN KO

(1928)

Jose Corazon de Jesus

Constancio de Guzman

Tpo di Kundiman

Ang bayan kong Pi-li-pi-nas, Lu-pain ng ginto't bulaklak
 Pagi-big ang sa kanyang palad Nag-a-lay ng ganda't dilag,
 At sa kanyang yumi at ganda Dayu hoy nanga-ha-li-na
 Bayan ko! bi-ni-hag ka, Na-sad-lak sa du-sa.
 I-bong mang may layang lu-mipad, Ku-lungin mo at u-mi-iyak
 Bayan pa kayang sakdal-di-lag Ang di magnasang ma-ka-alpas
 Pi-li-pi-nas kong mi-numut-ya, Pugad ng luha ko't da-li-ta,
 A-king ad-hi-ka maki-ta kang sakdal-la-ya.

JOCELYNANG BALIWAG

MUSICA DEL LEGITIMO KUNDIMAN PRECEDENTE
DEL CAMPO INSURRECTO

Tpo. di Kundiman

Pi- no-poong sinta ni-ring ka- lu-luwa, Na- ka-ka-
 wangis mo mabangong sam-pa-ga; Da- li-say sa linis,
 da- ki-la sa ganda - Matimyas na bukal ng madlang liga-
 ya. Edang mali-ga yang ki-nalu- luklukan Ng galak
 at tuwang ka-tamis-tamisan, Ada kang maningning na ang ma-
 tunggayay Masamyong bulaklak a-gad sumi-si-kal. -