



## PHILIPPINE NATIONAL PRIDE IN CLARO M. RECTO'S "SOUL OF THE RACE"

**Suzette F. Valdez**

*AMA International University of Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain*

---

### ABSTRACT

*Literature is the inexhaustible riches of the past. It contains the ideas handed down through the centuries which have influenced the way Philippines developed its society and civilization. The diversity and richness of Philippine literature evolved along with the country's history and culture. This inherent heritage is given life in the creative non-fiction where a great deal of historical writing is mirrored and from which people preserve the experiences of the past in a cohesive and beautiful manner. Philippine history and government would cover the important events of the past in daily newspapers but they don't describe nor picture in details the feelings, thought, dreams and actual life of the Filipinos. This study analyzed Claro M. Recto's "Souls of the Race", originally written in Spanish as "El Alma de la Raza" and was translated by Nick Joaquin. It reflects significant events in the Philippines after World War II. In the syntheses of the work- national pride is revealed, bringing the Philippines stand out on the frontier of challenges under foreign culture. Moreover, this study worked on the realm of the figurative language making the investigation of the poem an intelligent operation of expressions.*

---

**Keywords:** Creative nonfiction, Aesthetic and universal ideals, Inexhaustible riches

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that many Filipino poets continue to patronize the intellectual influence started by Rizal. Through the years, they have used poetry in expressing their feelings and thoughts. Hence, evident in their works of beautiful language, there is no reason that they cannot express themselves in poetry; they must be inspired by a stimulus or motivated by a particular aesthetic purpose. Literary inclination is one of the great and noble traditions that they use as foundation for assimilation of new culture and new civilization (Ganir, 1990).

All literary works are inscribed in language. The reader must have sufficient understanding of linguistic elements to succeed in linking with his consciousness the poems' aesthetic milieu; he should undergo a particular process that will make the text intelligible. Philippines as a conglomeration of races has multifaceted history. The significant events after the assaults of World War II were inscribed in the hands of the poets. Filipinos survived the calls of the time and so with

the poems.

Claro M. Recto's "Soul of the Race" is one of the materials that aid in unraveling a part of Philippine history, particularly after World War II. His verses are a record of experience that transmits historical and cultural information. He left behind a mine of ideas that exhibit his staunch nationalism, inflamed the consciousness of the Filipino greatness from revolutionary heritage and molded the mind of his Filipino contemporaries and succeeding generations through his writings. Nobody from his generation could surpass his eloquence and facility of the Spanish language. He worked for intellectual freedom in the Philippine society.

<http://biography.yourdictionary.com/claro-m-recto>

Poetry inclines one for its entertainment value but more for its intellectual benefits. The fascinating Spanish language could have inspired Recto to articulate his heart and mind over the events that pass through his consciousness after the World War II - when Filipinos was under the auspices of the Americans. His work "El Alma de la Raza" was translated by Nick Joaquin to "Soul of the Nation".

The artists are few of the prophets and progenitors of civilization. The goal of nation building is also premised on the institution with artists like the poets like Nick Joaquin and Claro M. Recto. These luminaries are imbued with fresh outlook and dynamism which are reflected not only in the material but also in the intellectual aspects of their works (Marcos, 1969). Poetry is one of the reflections of national capacity, resources and a country's level of cultural development; it embodies the collective aspiration of the people of which people must not be alienated from their very sources. (Hila, 2003)

This Claro M. Recto's masterpiece in its fine translation depicts significant events in the Philippines in its conquest to revive its war torn national pride amidst the ruins of the war.

## 2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Gura and Lee (2005) stressed that poetry differs from prose in its compactness in the emotional weight of its content and the importance of its pattern. In poetry, the content and the form deepen each other. He added that the first step in understanding and evaluating a poem is to read the entire work to get a general idea of what it says. The first step may be less objective, less purely "intellectual" with poetry than it is with prose. At first reading, the reader maybe attracted by the sounds of the rhythm than by the denotative meanings of the words.

Dimalanta (2004) emphasized that while literature considers the legitimacy of indigenous traditions, it is undeniably significant that it plays an important role in the shaping of national identity. It does not ignore opportunities for cross cultural encounters which could broaden exposure to literary materials, leading to values, meanings, sentiments previously muffled by extreme traditionalism.

(Lacia, 2003) recommended that after the literal and inferential levels of understanding the poem have reached, students must be led to evaluate the work. This is when they can express their own opinions about the characters, theme and the over-all merit of the literary work. This is also the time when they can freely express their reaction to the work's literary themes and inherent cultural issues.

(Begawan, 2000) revealed that the nature of Philippine literature draws from the particularities of its historical formation. Nowhere else in Southeastern Asia have the effects of colonialism been so deeply intimate and persuasive as in the Philippines.

Croghan (1975) said that the history of nation can be learned in its laws, and its political statements. But to know the history of a nation spirit can be learned from literature. For in literature, one can discover how the people of a nation have reacted to the events around them. Literature offers more than a mere personalized history. An important quality of art is to share with the other the intense realization of human experience.

### 3. METHODS

This study researcher historiography where the chosen masterpiece was seen as both as a reflection and product of the times and circumstances in which it was written. This approach operates on the premise that the history of a nation has telling effects on its literature and that the literary pieces can be also understood and appreciated if one knows the times surrounding its creation; hence, the historians' two heuristics in handling evidence i.e. sourcing, and contextualization were also be used. Sourcing, or identifying the author, date of creation of a document, and the place it was created is a technique in establishing the authenticity or accuracy of information. Contextualization, or identifying when and where an event took place.

<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

Moreover, the descriptive method was also used. Descriptive research involves an element of interpretation of the meaning or significance of what is described. Description is also a fact-finding with adequate interpretation and more and beyond just data-gathering. To communicate the total effect of the works, the study's entirety was broken down to study its content and structure for logical meaning and for intellectual quality (Sanchez, 2002). Content and structure in literary pieces do not exist as separate entities, they work together to form one organic whole. With these approaches, the selected work was treated as manifestations and vehicles for understanding a significant part of Philippine History through literature, specifically through poetry.

### 4. DISCUSSIONS

Literary devices collectively comprise the art form's components. With equal recognition to the literary genius of Nick Joaquin in his translation, Claro M. Recto exhibited the national pride and revealing significant events in Philippine History through the alluring figurative language.

Manuel W. Roxas and Elpidio Quirino were inducted into office as President and Vice-President respectively of the Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1946. Philippines was paralyzed because World War II just ended. After taking his oath of office, President Roxas in his inaugural address pleaded the Filipino people to unite in the supreme task of rebuilding their devastated land. The rebuilding of the post-war Philippines fell into the hands of Manuel Roxas (Agoncillo, 1978).

The war devastated the Philippines with its cities and towns burned, farms and factories destroyed, roads and bridges blasted industries and commerce shattered and thousands of Filipinos

as victims. However, Filipinos personal dignity was not among of them. Most Filipinos were able to maintain personal dignity and honor, moral integrity, good-naturedness, good character, credibility, and trustworthiness (Leano, 2005). This is the measure of an individual's true greatness as shown in the following lines that call for national pride.

*The soul of my Race has romantic dreams.  
It hushes its grief with amorous singing  
On idyllic nights, beneath a limpid radiance.  
It smiles when it looks at the pensive moon  
Shimmering on the waves of a restless lake,  
Feigning sweet calmness, burying its grief.*

*Brother s in the idea: Our Race is divine  
Great and sacrosanct is the Philippine soul.  
So let us chant a hymn to its immortal glory!  
And you, O Fame: traverse the ends of the earth  
And to the sound of your clarions  
Proclaim the greatness of the land of Rizal.*

Claro M. Recto believes that Philippines can secure a national identity and protect its sovereignty as reflected in the following lines:

*Its scales soaring peaks, it conquers deep abysses  
And never succumbs when fighting despotisms  
Of alien power.  
Chanting hymns, it confront the enemy horde,  
The ideal of sword, in for triple armor:  
The glory of the nation, honor, and duty.*

Claro M. Recto through Nick Joaquin's translation brought an alternative approach in understanding an important part of Philippine History and Culture.

With metaphor, he visualizes his blissful race with the soul of the titans a river that meanders, and the ocean that demolishes mountains in the following lines:

*My race has a soul that is the soul of titans.  
blood of the Solimans  
runs in its arteries that shall ever throb.  
It has the breast tempered by the thunder of war.  
Under its feet of athlete trembles the ground  
For its nerves are kindled by volcanic flame.  
It's a river that meanders under the bamboos,  
Copying in the magic of its lucid crystals  
The blue immensity.*

*But it's also an ocean that demolishes mountains*

Claro M. Recto's romantic sensibility towards his race's uniqueness as Philippines encounters alien culture is exhibited in the following metaphor and parallelism.

*It's an urn of enchantment, a place of grandeur,  
A castle of heroism, a sanctuary of beauty,  
A refuge for the kisses of aromatic April.  
Invincible in combat, with its bolo it battles.  
And with its mellow flute, like a bird that warbles,  
It celebrates its loves in a warm garden.  
And with its mellow flute, like a bird that warbles,  
It celebrates its loves in a warm garden.*

Metaphor and allusion (reference to character in history) manifest the grandeur of Philippine race in the following lines:

*My race has a soul that is the soul of titans.  
blood of the Solimans*

Likewise, metonymy exalts the Philippine splendors in the following lines:

*The glory of the nation, honor, and duty.  
It's an urn of enchantment, a place of grandeur,  
A castle of heroism, a sanctuary of beauty,  
A refuge for the kisses of aromatic April.*

The combination of parallelism, simile and allusion (reference to historic place) is seemingly incomparable to Claro M. Recto when he likens the strength of the Philippines to powerful beasts and furious volcanoes. Filipinos rage to defend the native land is evident in the following lines:

*Strong, like the tamaraw of Malay jungles,  
Like the huge caiman keeping watch on its shores,  
Like the eternal fires of Apo and Taal.*

Claro M. Recto takes pride of his race's perseverance after his war-torn country emerges from the ruins as the following line highlight:

*In the three bright fields of its illustrious escutcheon.  
It smiles when wounded by the whistling bullet.  
Its scales soaring peaks, it conquers deep abysses  
And never succumbs when fighting despotisms  
Of alien power.  
Chanting hymns, it confront the enemy horde,*

*The soul of my Race has romantic dreams.  
It hushes its grief with amorous singing  
On idyllic nights, beneath a limpid radiance.*

*It smiles when it looks at the pensive moon  
Shimmering on the waves of a restless lake,  
Feigning sweet calmness, burying its grief.*

The following lines show simile as an articulation of ardent affection towards great race.

*It is gentle as the rhythm of bucolic flutes  
That sweetly in melancholy measures  
Among green reeds the vesper breeze rehearse.  
Strong, like the tamaraw of Malay jungles,  
Like the huge caiman keeping watch on its shores,  
Like the eternal fires of Apo and Taal.*

*It's buoyant sylph of fantastic flights,  
Virgin as the woodland, blue as the skies;  
A cyclone in combat, a zephyr in peace,  
With furies of thunder and songs of canary*

*When life is delightful and its dreams are golden,  
there is in its red mouth like flutes in chorus  
The eternal flowering of ardent laughter  
It can touch the zither to melodious accent,*

*Sad as a swan, mournful as a dirge,  
As if sensing death  
It can touch the zither to wild arpeggios  
Like the seething topazes in yellow champagne  
When the breast is drunk with the joy of living.*

## 5. RESULTS

Poetry covers a range of experiences; it slyly moves with the temper and clime of the time. It engages the reader in an invigorating interaction with realities. "The Soul of the Race exhibits the national pride of Philippines as one independent country. The literary devices being used are vehicles in bringing a clearer picture of Philippine splendors amidst colonial influences. Literary devices are used and crafted for emphasis, freshness of expression and clarity; they suggest and produce pictures or images in a reader or hearer's mind to give emphasis to an idea or sentiment.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Good poetry endures a lifetime. It is a wise and effective chronicler of the times. The significant events that are depicted in the poems prove that poetry is language that is multi-tasking. The poet can turn his experience to poetry. Poets write of facts and interpret these facts in the wider areas of human life - unraveling the uniqueness of one nation in surviving the ravages of war.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges the help given by Dr. Leticia Lava, Dr. Virginia Ganir and Ranz Elifred towards the realization of this academic endeavor.

## REFERENCES

- Agoncillo, T.A., 1978. Introduction to filipino history. National Bookstore: Gorotech Publishing House.
- Begawan, B.S., 2000. Modern literature of ASEAN: ASEAN Committee on culture and information. ASEAN-COCI sub-committee on culture, Brunei.
- Croghan, R.V., 1975. The development of philippine literature in english since 1900. Manila.
- Dimalanta, O.A., 2004. Philippine contemporary literature in english: Tradition and change from the 20's to the present. Manila: UST Publishing House.
- Ganir, V., 1990. A handbook on philippine literature. Manila: Manuel L. Quezon University.
- Gura, T. and C. Lee, 2005. Oral interpretation. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company Library of Congress.
- Hila, A.C., 2003. Culture and development: Government patronage of the arts in the new society. *Ad Veritatem (Multi-Disciplinary Research Journal)*, 2(2): 83-85.
- Lacia, F.C., 2003. The literatures of the philippines. Rex Bookstore, Manila.
- Leano, R., 2005. Society and culture. Makati City: Mind Shapers.
- Marcos, I.R., 1969. Message. *Music Journal of the Philippines*: 1.
- Sanchez, C.A., 2002. Methods and techniques of research. Manila: Rex Book Store.

## Internet

Bulatlat.com

<http://books.google.com/bh/books?id=C5ilpMk-CPAC&pg=PA14&lpg=PA14&dq=el+alma+de+la+raza+by+Claro+M.+Recto&source=bl&ots=fZpfXT9Cix&sig=SJeqV1B0jXVU6Bya8NeRFywK7cQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=tNKQUfWENYKKhOfg7ICICA&sqi=2&ved=0CEYQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=el%20alma%20de%20la%20raza%20by%20Claro%20M.%20Recto&f=false>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claro\\_M.\\_Recto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claro_M._Recto)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick\\_Joaquin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Joaquin)

<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

**APPENDIX**

**THE SOUL OF THE RACE (Claro M. Recto)**

**El Alma de la Raza**

My race has a soul that is the soul of titans.  
blood of the Solimans  
runs in its arteries that shall ever throb.  
It has the breast tempered by the thunder of war.  
Under its feet of athlete trembles the ground  
For its nerves are kindled by volcanic flame.

Its flag is tricolor. It has the blue of Art,  
The white of the lily, the red of Mars  
In the three bright fields of its illustrious escutcheon.  
It smiles when wounded by the whistling bullet.  
Its dream of glory is to fall in battle  
Having shroud its holy banner.

It is gentle as the rhythm of bucolic flutes  
That sweetly in melancholy measures  
Among green reeds the vesper breeze rehearse.  
Strong, like the tamaraw of Malay jungles,  
Like the huge caiman keeping watch on its shores,  
Like the eternal fires of Apo and Taal.

Its scales soaring peaks, it conquers deep abysses  
And never succumbs when fighting despotisms  
Of alien power.  
Chanting hymns, it confront the enemy horde,  
The ideal of sword, in for triple armor:  
The glory of the nation, honor, and duty.

It's buoyant sylph of fantastic flights,  
Virgin as the woodland, blue as the skies;  
A cyclone in combat, a zephyr in peace,  
With furies of thunder and songs of canary  
A ewe that fears not the bloody lion,  
A dove that flees not the ravishing eagle.

It can touch the zither to melodious accent,  
Sad as a swan, mournful as a dirge,



As if sensing death  
It can touch the zither to wild arpeggios  
Like the seething topazes in yellow champagne  
When the breast is drunk with the joy of living.

Its songs are inspired by countrysides in flower,  
By mountain breezes, by the merry noises  
Of the tropical forest,  
By the rain that descends in diminutive pearls,  
By the gold of twilight, by the shadows of caves,  
And by the epic tumult of the fierce typhoon.

The soul of my Race has romantic dreams.  
It hushes its grief with amorous singing  
On idyllic nights, beneath a limpid radiance.  
It smiles when it looks at the pensive moon  
Shimmering on the waves of a restless lake,  
Feigning sweet calmness, burying its grief.

Smile when you hear in the white morning  
The notes of a song that a bird lets loose  
From the fronds of a forest untrod by human foot.  
Smile, though in pain, as sadly you behold  
In the light shadow of the dying twilight  
The distant memories of your empire that was.

It's a river that meanders under the bamboos,  
Copying in the magic of its lucid crystals  
The blue immensity.  
But it's also an ocean that demolishes mountains  
When in the secret heart of its vast innards,  
In volcanic ire boils its thirst for liberty.

The Philippine soul is tender in its loves,  
Profound in its suffering, serene on its sorrows,  
Ardent in its passion.  
When life is delightful and its dreams are golden,  
there is in its red mouth like flutes in chorus  
The eternal flowering of ardent laughter

It's an urn of enchantment, a place of grandeur,

A castle of heroism, a sanctuary of beauty,  
A refuge for the kisses of aromatic April.  
Invincible in combat, with its bolo it battles.  
And with its mellow flute, like a bird that warbles,  
It celebrates its loves in a warm garden.

Brother s in the idea: Our Race is divine  
Great and sacrosanct is the Philippine soul.  
So let us chant a hymn to its immortal glory!  
And you, O Fame: traverse the ends of the earth  
And to the sound of your clarions  
Proclaim the greatness of the land of Rizal.