
An Ideological Analysis On *Mulanay Sa Pusod Ng Paraiso*

Mulanay sa Pusod ng Paraiso is a film that shows the astounding dedication of a doctor to help the rural community of Mulanay, Quezon. Dr. Ria Espinosa, a newly licensed doctor, decided to join the Doctors to the Barrios – a program where doctors are sent to various remote or disadvantaged areas in the Philippines to provide medical services and to ensure public health and safety. Ria, coming from a more privileged type of living in Manila, opened her eyes to the situation of the people in places like Mulanay. She did not just stay in her clinic to treat the people coming in; she went out and saw the town, along with its problems like clean water, proper sanitation, and broken bridges and roads. She met a lot of people, knew their story, and started to be one of them. She also took part in raising funds for Mulanay and opened their minds to the importance of having a deep well and a clean environment.

According to Mitchell (2014), “Ideologies in film help expose audiences to a broad range of beliefs and value systems.” These ideologies, either strongly or weakly imposed, help us find ourselves. These help us relate to the situation the characters are going through and gives us a deeper plunge into the narrative. These ideologies are what we are in this world, both the truth and the lies. This breaks one’s notion that films are for entertainment only. Mitchell added, “Incorporating ideology in film gives the director a chance to speak without speaking themselves and also helps to make the story rich with multiple perspectives when used to its advantage.”

Since everyone has their own ideologies, anyone can fully comprehend its importance in reading film. According to Easthope (2013), “Once we realize that it is the nature of the system to turn the cinema into an instrument of ideology, we can see that the film-maker’s first task is to show up the cinema’s so called ‘depiction of reality.’” He also said that films can be classified into categories depending on the use of ideologies. *Mulanay sa Pusod ng Paraiso* can be classified to category C whereas the film is described to work “against the grain”; such that the story is not political but somehow becomes like it as the story progresses because of the form or the narrative. In other words, even though it intends to be apolitical, it still comes down to politicizing the subject—which is the traditional way of depicting reality for them.

One idea that was strongly shown from the beginning to the end of the film was the citizens’ dependency to quack doctors and priests in healing their illnesses and having doubt on doctors. Faith healing, as defined by Cariaso (2012), is the belief of someone that is capable of healing illness without the help of medicines or people with medical credibility. She said that people resort to faith healing especially in isolated towns wherein the government does not allot enough funds for proper healthcare. Most of the time, *Albularyos* do not have formal education; they just inherited the practice of herbal medicine and *pagtatawas* from their ancestors. Meanwhile, other people resort to the healing brought by a superior being. The Philippines, being a Catholic country, is well known for its devotion to Christ. People worship and adore him to the point that people believe their illnesses can be cured once you devote yourself to God or Jesus; and that’s what is adapted throughout the country.

In the beginning, when Ria came to Mulanay and passed by some people, they doubted her abilities as a doctor based on her age and appearance. A woman said, “Kay Lolo Entoy nalang

ako. Okay na sakin yung tawas tawas,” followed by another woman saying, “at konting dasal”. Lolo Entoy was the town’s famous quack doctor; the one who people go to before Ria came to Mulanay. It was also established in the first part that people also believe in healing through prayers. Norma, the town’s Midwife and Ria’s clinic partner, said that oftentimes, the town’s priest goes there to pray over people with illness. They believe that many people have already been healed by him. This directly implies the lack of proper public healthcare in the towns like these; therefore, they resort to faith healing.

Ria did not argue with this belief. She said to Norma that she also studied herbal medicine and that it is better than synthetic. When she was asked if she believes in tawas, she did not answer and just said “Hanggang herbal medicine nalang muna siguro ako.” When she was then asked if she believes in the powers of prayers, she said, “May mga bagay talagang mahirap ipaliwanag, basta ba nagpapagaling edi okay.” This portrays how our superstitious beliefs and faith in religion have been established in these places to a long time.

This idea of the people was then again portrayed when many people rushed to the clinic for illnesses due to unclean water. Many people were waiting outside that time and were patiently waiting because Ria cannot cater them all at once. A mother, rushing her ill child to the clinic, did not get the help her child needs for Ria because of the long line of people. She, as well as other citizens, resorted to go to Lolo Entoy and the Priest for healing. This is after Ria already started and already gave help to many citizens. This suggests how people neglect the proper way of treating patients mainly because of their belief of faith healing.

Until the end, that idea of doubting the doctors still prevailed as Lino refused to take his ill son Ogot to the clinic. When he knew that his son was sick, he was asked by Ogot whether he should go to the clinic or not. He refused and said, “Umakyat ka nalang sa taas at uminom ng gamot total yun din naman ibigay nila sayo. Clinic, clinic.” This negligence resulted to the death of Ogot and the revelation that is Ogot being the son of Norma and Lino.

Next ideology that can be perceived in the film is the need of communities like Mulanay of help from volunteers as well as support from the government. Mulanay, as said earlier, was in Quezon Province. Ria rides a boat twice, one from the pier to Bayan, and from Bayan to Patabog, where the clinic is located. It’s an isolated barangay in Mulanay where the bridge and roads are broken, which adds burden for transportation. Animal husbandry and fishing are the community’s main livelihood.

When Ria came to Mulanay, she was welcomed by the town’s officials, teachers, the mayor, as well as a band. The town even threw a party for Ria’s arrival. This evidently shows that even just one person coming to their town and volunteering to care of them means a lot to them. This also shows how inaccessible this town is, that’s why its civilization is not that refined. The mere existence of the Doctors to the Barrios and the consideration of Mulanay as a place that needs to be helped by this program suggest its avid need for it. Norma even said to Ria, “Kung nakapag-aral kami at mabuti ang pamumuhay namin dito, di na kami maghahanap ng tulong.” This statement opened a lot of disadvantages for the people in Mulanay, that they lack other forms of education, funding, career opportunities, which in return affects how they live in the present; And this is just one of the hundreds or thousands of remote areas in the Philippines.

The moment Ria arrived, she wanted a change of what is happening. She discovered the dirt of the place and she demanded to the people that they need a deep well and that they need to

start cleaning their community. She imposed discipline to families especially with regards to health. She became a role model to the people and set an example as to what a citizen should be—responsible and has initiative. In need of funds, Ria returns to Manila and returned. When she saw the community, she then uttered, “Norma, wala ka bang napapansin? Bumalik nanaman sa dati ang patabog” that made her realize that having someone imposing change is not enough, what they need is collective action. All of these again rooted down to the need of the community to have a leader that can help them effect change.

Another thing that Ria did was to courageously go to the Mayor and ask for funding for the installation of deep wells and reconstruction of bridges and roads. This act of concern, that even if it is not included in her job description, this was the one needed by the people. In the end, Ria began effecting real change by putting up a small drug store and ignited the fire within the citizens to help save Patabog. This change also led the collective action of the Patabog citizens to go to the Mayor as one and here their thoughts. The film may have hanged us as to what happened after that but inspired the viewers to continue fighting for their rights. As Ria said, “Patuloy na ipinaglalaman ang bawat araw sa mga lugar na gaya ng mulanay; wala pang happy ending.”

As much as we want not to cross that line, but politics can still be an underlying ideology here. The problems in Patabog are deeply rooted to the lack of supervision of the local government. Ria did what she had to do because the ones who should be do it, effecting change, is not doing any good. We can relate the mayor’s answer to Ria to the concept of hegemony, wherein he said that the only thing he can do is to talk to the higher one, which is the governor. The hierarchy of this power leaves the smallest communities marginalized and helpless, not to mention notable corruption within local governments.

According to Gbargaye (2011), the roles of the local government in development include the local political decisions, facilitating the funding for public works, and the provision of five basic services which include agriculture, health, social welfare, maintenance of public works and highways, and environmental protection. In all those services, Ria was involved. She was concerned in funding Patabog for the following reasons: The reconstruction of the bridge and roads for accessibility and transport of crops and products; funding the baseball team and other activities in the Barangay for social welfare; and for the cleanliness and environmental protection in the community which can improve sanitation and health of the citizens.

This ideology depicts how a local government can neglect one of its barangays and enlightens us with the possibility of the negligence of higher governments to their constituents. Its also sad to realize at people must protest first or thing should first come out of hand before the people with power does something. In the end part, when the government finally helped the community, Ria said, “As usual, kung kalian palala na ang problema, saka nagpadala ng tulong ang gobyerno.” Followed by, “At saka natauhan ang barangay na kumilos.” This means that what the barangay needed was monitoring and proper leadership from people above.

Last idea I perceived, which I believe is a minor one, is the effect of the need to leave the country. People have this notion of getting rich and getting out of poverty once you step outside the Philippines. In two subplots, it showed the possible consequence of leaving your lover behind for your family’s future. Despite the advantages especially in terms of money, one consequence according to Natividad (2012) is the loneliness of the worker as well as the people he/she left behind. He said, “In reality, specifically to couples whose partner is far away from

them and do not take such condition positively, working abroad usually results to a shaky relationship or even worst. Relationships are destroyed and if they have kids, they are usually the ones who suffer the unpleasant outcome.” The two subplots that were mentioned earlier was the conflict between Norma and Lino, and the scene of Elvis when he was caught by Cora with another woman. In both situations, Norma and Cora worked as OCW. While the adultery between Elvis and Cora was in Mulanay, in Norma and Lino’s case, Norma was the one who cheated. This showed possibility in both ends of the relationship. It can somehow mirror the Filipino’s desire to have a better future and how they could sacrifice not seeing their family.

Mulanay sa Pusod ng Paraiso presents a community that is not that different from any other community. It shows the simplicity of their life as well as the struggles they face on their everyday life. It’s about a community where the development is regulated by the people of power and a community where sickness and malnutrition are wide-spread. It portrays a community that is in desperate need for volunteers that will help alleviate their suffering. It is a community that needs proper leadership and professionals who can change the perspective of the people. And just like any other community, it wants to evolve, to develop, and to get better. The film is a great example as to how there are dedicated people whose desire is to help others and not for their personal gain. It ignites the volunteerism of the people and makes them realize that they must take part of this action. As Ria said, “Nakasalalay din sa inyo mga mahal kong manonood kung ano ang kahihinatnan ng kanilang paglilingkod sa bayan.”