“My Family’s Slave”

In Alex Tizon’s story “My Family’s Slave”, he recounts the life of a woman named Eudocia “Lola” Tomas Pulido and her struggle as a slave to the Tizon family. He demonstrates themes such as cultural differences, the mental effects of slavery, moral obligations, and hierarchies. Alex argues that one’s nature can be inherited but is not necessarily done so, a feeling that I subscribe to as well.

Alex begins to demonstrate the pathos in his writing by flashing forward to the posthumous return of Lola to her place of origin and comparing what she is now with the line, “The ashes filled a black plastic box about the size of a toaster. It weighed three and a half pounds”(p1) to presumably the person she was. He demonstrates the weakness of his article by stating, “My mother in recounting this story…”(p13) admitting to the fact that the events that he was not present for are now of questionable validity. He does continue to show he at least had the wherewithal to ask Lola for her accounts of the story, to which she confirms it, but this does show his reliance for potentially major portions of this article to be on hearsay, especially from such an unreliable source as his mother. Going back, he further proves this absurdity by stating, “We were model immigrants, a poster family”(paragraph 3 & paragraph 23) where he alludes to the idea that his parents were attempting to conceal their true life from their peers, and if they were willing to do so here then it seems naive to think they’d change for the recounting of this story.

Lines such as, “…silenced them with a .32-caliber slug to his temple”(p14) ironically help counter his argument due to Alex himself rephrasing into flowery, more acceptable wording. The article reads that Alex’s father, “Took on a second job…”(p21) which one would expect to be a high position as Alex assured the reader that, “My father had a law degree”(p23) and yet he continues to take odd jobs and menial labor unfitting of someone of his educational level. According to the admissions page of the Oregon Bar[2] he may not have had the proper credentials to be considered a lawyer in the state of Oregon, poking a hole in his supposed higher education.

When Alex says “…Big Jim, the Missler patriarch…”(p31) in which he talks about Billy’s father, he inadvertently shows some of the inherited mannerisms from his parents, despite his misgivings about their behavior. Referring to Mr. Missler as a ‘Patriarch’ rather than a father, dad, or parent may just be an attempt to vary his terms, but I believe that this is a demonstration of Alex’s theme of hierarchies in a family. As Alex continues with, “…Where will I go?...”(p60) as he makes his attempts to get Lola away from this life, he realizes at that moment how his complicit nature towards Lola’s treatment has created the perfect environment to perpetuate what he felt he could avoid by not behaving like his parents. Alex states, “Mom was still mom, but not as relentlessly…”(p72) where he portrays his mother as acting less like her father once the kids are gone. She is trapped and is jealous of Lola in how her children treat her slave versus herself, because of the inherited nature from Lt Thomas Asuncion.

In Alex’s mother’s last moments she says nothing and he writes that she, “without looking at Lola, she reached out and placed an open hand on her head”(p78) where he seems to say that she did regret her actions, but I believe that her refusal to admit aloud her regrets is some proof that she is irreversibly changed by her father. When Alex writes, “Let her be”(p84) as he describes what he must do now in response to Lola’s actions, despite his protests, he proves himself correct as Lola now has a new nature instilled from her years of slavery.

In conclusion, Alex utilizes his strengths of ethos and pathos to empathize with the struggles that all the people in his life have experienced. Alex struggles however with using logos effectively to support his argument, instead most of his attempts at logos counter his argument. These failings are few enough that he manages to prove the argument for the article remains sound and that he is not bound by the actions of his predecessors.

[1]https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/lolas-story/524490/

[2]https://www.osbar.org/admissions