Abstract

This study analyzes the figurative language used, the rural life imagery portrayed, and the social reality depicted in the lyrics Southern Leyte’s folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower). It is found out that the folk song uses the following figurative language: apostrophe, metaphor, hyperbole, non sequitur, simile, personification, enumeratio; portrays rural life imagery of a gentle and modest woman; and, depicts the social reality of fragility of a woman. The analytical data has proven that the lyrics of the folk song uses figurative language, portrays rural life imagery, and depicts social reality.

Keywords: rural life imagery, social reality, Azucena, figurative language, folk songs

1.0 Introduction

It is the contention of this study that the lyrics of Southern Leyte’s folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) uses figurative language, portrays rural life imagery, and depicts social reality.

The best connection between music and language exists in folk songs and a good folk song is a perfect masterpiece. In fact, figurative language is an essential instrument in the construction of musical meaning. The literary tropes (figurative language) are striking features of the oral tradition. Words and phrases are used to embellish the language of literature to produce evocative and profound social meaning that transcends the standard meaning. A folk song creates a strong imagery through unexpected comparisons and word associations (Gemeda (2012) Kodaly cited in Patseas, (2013, para.2), Sakadolskis, (2003), (Morgan 2001)).

Wilson (2006) accentuates that serious literary studies have long been made of folk songs and folktales. In recent years scholars have charted new paths to a better understanding of rhetorical strategies in folklore and of the art of folklore performance. However, much remains to be done. Willing workers are needed in the vineyard. Wilson’s point is emphasized by Lopez (2006) who reveals that a close examination of many Philippine folklore collections left languishing on the dusty shelves of libraries shows that Philippine folkloristics need methodological strengthening. In the case of Southern Leyte, the late Placida Go-Saga published a book, Folk Poetry of Southern Leyte. Saga (2010) emphasizes in the preface of
the book that write-ups or publications on Southern Leyte folk poetry being nonexistent. Saga observes that a study on the beginnings of the oral lore of Southern Leyte starts with one facing a blank wall in the absence of written records on the subject. Saga’s limited accumulation of Southern Leyte’s folk literature is not enough to cater to the recent educational reforms, particularly the K-12 Basic Education Program. The program demands for a great need of instructional materials most importantly in the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education. Likewise, Cruz (2013) points out that 21st century materials are needed in teaching Contemporary Regional Philippine Literature. The subject is derived from Literatures of the Philippines. The literary works should be originally written and/or published in the region where the school is located. With the recent educational innovations that include the mother tongue and regional literature, there is a need to study the folklore of Southern Leyte to find out the features that the genres contribute to the academic arena.

Folk song studies are done through music, text, social context, and performance (Juh asz, 2009). This study chooses to analyze the figurative language used, the rural life imagery projected, and the social reality depicted in the lyrics of Southern Leyte’s folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower). The study is made possible through the formalistic and mimetic approaches in literary discourse analysis.

2.0 Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

This study assumes that the lyrics of Southern Leyte’s folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) uses figurative language, portrays rural life imagery, and depicts social reality. This theoretical assumption is supported by the theories of formalism and mimesis.

Figure 1. Schematic presentation of the Theoretical Framework of the study
The Formalist Theory (New Criticism) advocates methodical and systematic readings of texts. The theory’s major premises include: “text exists in and for themselves,” "art for art's sake," and "content = form." The premises develop reading strategies that separate and substantiate the definite structure of literary works, the techniques of authors, and the use of language. In the process, works are classified, categorized, and catalogued according to formal characteristics (“Formalism”, n. d.). Since the literary work is an object, the analysis is devoted to the intrinsic nature, on the interplay and relationships between the text’s essential verbal elements. Particular attention is given to the use of literary devices and to the patterns established (Murfin and Ray, 1988). The Russian Formalists of the 1920s concentrate on the language of poetry and the structure of narrative discourse (folk-tales, novels and short stories.) In formalism, poetry is seen as a special kind of language. The work is separated from everyday prose by the use of certain devices – metaphor, metonymy, rhyme, alliteration, etcetera focused on formal aesthetic elements (Ousby, 1993).

In mimesis, the texts represent a particular view of the world and endorse a specific set of values. The texts identify certain individuals as good or bad (heroic or cowardly, wise or foolish), and offer a specific view of human nature and the universe. In short, literature portrays and (implicitly) endorses an entire value system (Waugh, 2006). The poet is distinguished from the rest of mankind with the 'essential ability to produce imitation’ (Baktir, 1996). Mimetic criticism determines the extent that a literary work connects with the real world. Mimetic analysis can be broadened through the spiritual and symbolic approaches, the images connecting people of all times and cultures, and the aspects of moral/philosophical, psychological and feminist criticisms. Mimesis maintains that art conveys universal, temporal and individual truths. Furthermore, mimesis analyzes the accuracy and morality of a literary work and considers whether or not the work shows how people act, and whether or not the work is correct (Cody, 2013).

In this study, formalism is applied in analyzing the figurative language used and the rural life imagery portrayed in the lyrics of the folk song. When these dimensions are established, mimetic tendencies on the social reality that the folk song depicts are analyzed

3.0 Research Design and Methods

This study makes use of formalistic and mimetic discourse analyses. The figurative language used and the rural life imagery portrayed in “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) are determined through formalism. Mimesis is used to determine the social reality depicted, particularly on Philippine culture, customs, and tradition. The folk song is adapted from Saga’s (2010) book, Folk
Poetry of Southern Leyte. The textual translation of the lyrics of the folk song follows the standards of Phonology-Orthography Correspondence: Sound-Letter System on pedagogic grammar for Cebuano-Visayan of Dr. Angel O. Pesirla (2012).

4.0 Results and Discussions

Figurative Language Used

The table presents the results of the formalistic and mimetic discourse analyses of the folk song “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh Azucena Flower).

Table 1. Figurative Language, Rural Life Imagery, and Social Reality Depicted in the Lyrics of the Folk Song “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folk Song Line</th>
<th>Figurative Language Used</th>
<th>Rural Life Imagery Projected</th>
<th>Social Reality Depicted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U, bulak nga Azucenas (Oh, Azucena flower)</td>
<td>• apostrophe</td>
<td>• gentle and modest woman</td>
<td>• fragility of a woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangpangalaimyun tungud sa imung kaanyag (Fragrant because of your beauty)</td>
<td>• metaphor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May usa ha punayung nga rusas (There was a bunch of roses)</td>
<td>• hyperbole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putli ug katahun (Pure and lovely)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kutub ikaw mapiyuras (Until you budded)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hangtud mingbuhkad nining panahun (Until you bloom this time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanang daw mutya mu nga mga matang matahum. (Those pearl-like beautiful eyes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• simile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanang daw mutya mu nga mga matang matahum. (Those pearl-like beautiful eyes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• personification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanang mga balud mong pilak (Your wavy eyelashes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• enumeration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawy makapabihag sa imung kaanyag (Make your beauty bewitching)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“U, BULAK NGA AZUCENAS” (OH, AZUCENA FLOWER)
Adapted from Placida Go-Saga

U, bulak nga Azucenas
(Oh, Azucena flower)
Nagpangalimyun tungud sa imung kaanyag
(Fragrant because of your beauty)
Makawiwili nga pagatan-awun.
(Appealing to see.)
May usa ka pungpung nga rusas,
(There was a bunch of roses)
Putli ug katahum
(Pure and lovely)
Kutub ikaw mapiyurus
(Until you budded)
Hangtud ming buklad niining panahun.
(Until you bloom this time.)

Kuru:

Kanang daw mutya mu
(Those pearl-like)
Nga mga matang matahum
(Beautiful eyes)
Makabihag sa kasingkasing,
(Entices the heart.)
Ug kanang kilay mu
(And your brows)
Anindut pagatan-awun
(Are pretty to see)
Kanang mga balud mung piluk
(Your wavy lashes)
Mauy makapabihag sa imung kaanyag.
(Make your beauty bewitching.)

The apostrophe is a special variant in the poetic speech situation in that it involves the speaker addressing either someone who is not there, or even dead, or something that is normally thought of as unable to understand language or reply. It is one of the most important rhetorical figures in poetry (Montgomery et al., 2007). In “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower), the title itself is an apostrophe. It is repeated in the first line of the folk song and portrays a person addressing to the Azucena flower:

U, bulak nga Azucenas
(Oh, Azucena flower)
One of the first things to do in understanding a poem is to work out its speech situation - that is, who is speaking to whom. In this folk song, the speaker is addressing to the Azucena flower. Getting into the meaning of the apostrophe yields a metaphorical aspect since the Azucena being addressed is a woman.

A metaphor characterizes an object or idea used in place of another. The implicit comparison suggests a likeness or analogy between the factors (Schwartz, 2002). *Bulak* (flower) in “*U, Bulak nga Azucenas*” (Oh, Azucena Flower) is a woman to whom the speaker addresses his adoration:

*U, bulak nga Azucenas*  
(Oh, Azucena Flower).

Another figurative language used in “*U, Bulak nga Azucenas*” (Oh, Azucena Flower) is hyperbole. By the use of hyperbole, the thing or person referred to becomes better or worse, bigger or smaller, more unusual, etcetera (“Hyperbole”, n.d.):

*Nagpangalimyun tungud sa imung kaanyag.*  
(Fragrant because of your beauty)

The line speaks of an admiration to the Azucena flower focusing on its allure, making an exaggeration in the process. *Nagpangalimyun* means an excessive fragrance and to frame it in such a way that a woman exudes an excessive fragrance because of her beauty is a form of hyperbole.

A non sequitur is not logically or clearly connected to any thing stated before it appears in a written work (“Non sequitur”, 2013). However, there are cases when non sequiturs add force to the poem (Terry, 1993) and in some instances, they defy logic on a literal level, but speak evocatively on an emotional level (Myers, 2007). From the four-line non sequitur of this folk song, the reader gets the idea that the *rusas* (rose) described as pure and lovely bears some resemblance with the Azucena flower on being so fragrant like the rose.

The non sequitur Is from the fourth line to the seventh line of this folk song:

*May usa ka pungpung nga rusas*  
(There was a bunch of roses.)

*Putli ug katahum*  
(Pure and lovely)

*Kutub ikaw mapiyurum*  
(Until you budded)

*Hangtud ming buklad niining panahun.*  
(Until you bloom this time.)

A common figurative language in “*U, Bulak nga Azucenas*” (Oh, Azucena Flower) is a simile used in the following lines:

*Kanang daw mutya mu*  
(Those pearl-like)

*Nga mga matang matahum*  
(Beautiful eyes)
The simile is an explicit comparison between two things using ‘like’ or ‘as’. In the folk song, the simile is in the lines about the eyes of a woman being likened to a pearl.

Personification attributes animation to something inanimate or treating a thing or an abstract quality as though it is a person (Schwartz, 2002). In “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower), the personification is in the following lines:

*Kanang daw mutya mu*  
(Those pearl-like)

*Nga mga matang matahum*  
(Beautiful eyes)

*Makabihag sa kasingkasing,*  
(Entices the heart,)

*Kanang mga balud mung piluk*  
(Your wavy lashes)

*Mauy makapabihag sa imung kaanyag.*  
(Make your beauty bewitching.)

In this folk song, the beautiful eyes and the wavy lashes are given the capacity to entice and to bewitch. To entice is to charm someone to come to a place or to do an activity through pleasant or advantageous offers (“Entice”, n.d.). To bewitch is to attract or interest someone a lot so that one has the power to influence him/her (“Bewitch”, n.d.). To entice and to bewitch are both human characteristics. In “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower),

entice and bewitch are applied to inanimate features of a woman’s face: the eyes and the lashes.

Personification is a means of clothing the universal imagery effective to the senses and of transferring the abstract from the intellect to the imagination (Wasserman, cited in Sinnott, 2005, p.21). So, in “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower), the reader has to engage in visual imagination (Sinnott, 2005). Likewise, the reader has to imply typical features to understand the personification used.

The enumeratio details parts, causes, effects, or consequences to make a point more forcibly (Rambach, n.d.). It is used in “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower). The enumeratio intensifies the hyperboles used to describe the *bulak* (woman) by mentioning the facial features of beauty:

*Kanang daw mutya mu*  
(Those pearl-like)

*Nga mga matang matahum*  
(Beautiful eyes)

*Makabihag sa kasingkasing,*  
(Entices the heart,)

*Ug kanang kilay mu*  
(And your brows)

*Anindut pagatan-awun*  
(Are pretty to see)

*Kanang mga balud mung piluk*  
(Your wavy lashes)
Mauy makapabihag sa imung kaanyag.
(Make your beauty bewitching.)

Rural Life Imagery Portrayed

In “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower), the mere Azucena flower transforms into the image of a gentle and modest woman.

The description of the woman’s beauty and fragrance elicits a visual image (kaanyag) and an olfactory image (nagpangalimyun). The visual image is made more intensified through specific facial features: gem-like eyes, good-looking eyebrows, and wavy eyelashes.

The woman in the rural areas possesses beauty that glows from within. It radiates on the outside making the woman beautiful and fragrant. This is what the speaker wants to convey by saying: nagpalimyun tungud sa imung kaanyag (fragrant because of your beauty). A delicate, modest, and demure personality makes a woman beautiful and attractive to men. Such features give the man the courage to openly admire the woman just like in this folk song.

Moreover, a man desires love and affection from a rural woman showing purity and gentleness. Sanford (cited in Lisahistory.net, n.d., para. 4) elaborates on this by saying: “Delicacy is, indeed, the point of honor in woman.” A woman’s purity of manner guarantees humble submission and respect than any other leverage. A woman with fine and gentle features is more loved and respected than any other woman.

Bacatan (1994) asserts that a woman’s physical desirability is considered to be an image in poems dealing with woman in which the degree of expression varies from subtle openness. Bacatan’s assertion is realized in this folk song because the man talks of nothing but the beautiful facial features of a woman and how these entice the heart.

The Azucena is an evergreen, with a stout and tuberous rootstock cultivated for the fragrant flowers. The volatile oil from the Azucena is used for perfumery, and the warm and seductive scent is useful in aromatherapy as a hypnotic for women suffering from insomnia with sexual drive depressions (“Azucena”, n.d.). From the images evoked, it could be inferred that the Azucena flower is a fitting comparison. The Azucena thrives in Southern Leyte, and does not only amuse the Southern Leyteños of the good smell but also cures some illnesses as well.

Molina’s (cited in Avenido, 2011, p. 139) admiration for women holds true in the imagery in this folk song. He says that a woman is a creature gifted with natural beauty. Likewise, in Avenido’s (2011) study of the Boholana woman through the poetry of Carlos P. Garcia, the physicality of the Boholana bears some similarities with the rural woman mentioned in the folk song “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower). In the study, the Boholana is described as a woman...
with smooth, curvaceous, and beautiful body with rosy cheeks, a pair of dimples, beautiful eyes, brows, and lashes, wonderful breasts, and brown skin.

**Social Reality Depicted**

Fragility of a woman is depicted in the folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower).

Kenny (2002) points out that the association of women with flowers has long been utilized as a literary motif, especially in male-authored literature. Seaton (1989) observes that people consider flowers beautiful to look at and enjoy the fragrance of most of them. They understand the flower’s role, more or less in the reproductive cycle of plants. Most writers have been men who enjoy the beauty and fragrance of women, and likewise their role in reproduction. The similarity between flowers and women is thus quite a dominate note in literary works, based on such associations. Another association is that flowers so acutely illustrate the beauty of youth, the fading that comes with middle age, and finally death, thus serving a common easily grasped sign of mutability.

Kenny and Seaton’s propositions are realized in “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) as the delicate features of the flower refer to the fragility of a woman. Delicadeza is an act of being refined or delicate in tastes or manners. It is commonly referred to as a sense of propriety.

Delicadeza conveys a woman’s gentleness and modesty (Millan, 2004). The fragility in women that entices men is caused by many factors. There are those which stem from a woman’s refined behavior. Such fragility brings forth in men the Filipino value of *lakas ng loob* (inner strength) if they are interested in a woman. The man in this folk song uses inner strength to express open admiration for the woman. At certain situations, in order to win the love of a woman, *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (wellness in a social relationship) follows *lakas ng loob*.

**Findings of the Study**

The formalistic and mimetic analyses of the folk song “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) reveal that it:

- uses the following figurative language: apostrophe, metaphor, hyperbole, non sequitur, simile, personification, enumeratio;
- portrays a rural life imagery of a gentle and modest woman; and
- depicts the social reality of fragility of a woman.

**5.0 Conclusion**

The analytical data has proven that the lyrics of Southern Leyte’s folk song, “U, Bulak nga Azucenas” (Oh, Azucena Flower) uses figurative language, portrays rural life imagery, and depicts social reality.
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