Abstract

This study analyzed the rural life imagery representations in selected folk songs of Southern Leyte. The formalistic analysis revealed that “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) projected farmers working to attain a good harvest. The folk song “Barutu” (Boat) presented a coffin made out of a sawed-off boat and funeral activities. “Alibangbang” (Butterfly) featured a man courting and exploiting a woman then leaving her for another woman. “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) portrayed a socialite mother living in a shanty on a hill. The findings showed representations of rural life imagery in the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte.

Keywords: rural life imagery, folk song, farmers, sawed-off boat coffin, courtship, exploitation, socialite mother

1.0 Introduction

This study claims that the four selected folk songs of Southern Leyte: Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain), “Barutu” (Boat), “Alibangbang” (Butterfly), “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) have representations of rural life imagery. Imagery is a soul of poetry that sparks off the senses of experiences that could produce physical perceptions and mental pictures. It signifies all the sensory perception referred to in the poem. As a mental event, imagery involves visualization of a concept or relationship (Tiwani, 2001; The Poetry Archive, 2014; Langer, 2009; Wheeler, 2013; K. Lutz & R. Lutz, 1978). In this study, imagery does not focus on visual imagery only. It also includes auditory (sound), tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic sensation (movement). Imagism is an early twentieth-century artistic movement in the United States and Britain. The imagists Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, and T.E. Hulme are adherents of imagism (Wheeler, 2013).

Beaton (2004, p.58) observes that in Greek folk songs, “the architectonic patterns of the songs or the progress of the theme are worked out in images that invoke the natural...
world as a reflection of human emotions or attributes.”

Stundzhiene’s (2013) study on the depiction of trees on Lithuanian folk song reveals that man and tree have parallel features. This revelation is usually understood as a wholly typological trait of the poetic folk tradition. In folklore, a picture is worth a thousand words. It is the role of empirical research to find out the essence of this truism.

Presentations that portray imagery are better retained than those which do not (K. Lutz, & R. Lutz, 1978). Studies on rural imagery in folk songs have been conducted in the Himalayas on the images of women in folk songs (Capilla, 2012), the Appalachian images in folk song, and popular culture (McNeil, 1985). There is also the American Negro folk songs (White, 1928), the Japanese new and old folk songs (Hughes, as cited in Tokita & Hughes, 2008), the kinesthetic and visual symbolism in Philippine community (Ness, 1992), etcetera. However, there is a need to explore on the rural images depicted in the folk songs of the Philippines to strengthen cultural literacy among students and teachers. Moreover, Hirsch (as cited in Browne, 1992, p.68) includes the word “folklore” in his 5,000 items that are needed to allow one to call himself/herself literate. Moreover, Stanley and Dillingham (2009) emphasize that understanding folk literature will improve students’ literacy and develop their love for reading.

Considering that folklore studies provide an avenue to many academic pursuits and adhering to recent pedagogical demands on further regional literature studies, this research is conducted. It specifically identifies the rural life imagery representations in the four selected folk songs of Southern Leyte. The results of this study provide some insights on how folk songs can serve as authentic examples on rural life imagery in literature discussions and as reliable materials for applications of literary theories.

2.0 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study postulates that the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte have representations of rural life imagery. The formalism theory validates the assumption of this study. Kant et al. (1971) elucidates that this theory is also called the theory of textuality or new criticism or theory of intertextuality.

Formalism focuses on the literariness of texts. It makes use of the literary form and literary devices in the text to analyze motifs,
techniques, literary implications, and other aspects of literary analysis. The Formalists give focus to the narrative, not to the author or to the context. For them, it is the one with meaning, the hero-function of the text (Brewton, 2013).

The Formalists focus on the narrative, not the author or the context. For them, it is the one with meaning, the hero-function of the text (Brewton, 2013).

The literary device that is given focus in this study is rural life imagery. These images and words as elucidated by the New Critics (Armstrong Atlantic State University, 2004) are the universal truths that literary works might hold concerning the human condition. They are static, enduring, and applicable to all humanity. In this study, the conditions particularly conform to rural life imagery.

Shklovsky (1990) elucidates that the image does not make people understand on what it represents but to make them perceive the object in a special way. Imagery leads people to a certain vision, not just mere recognition. Shklovsky (1990) specifies two types of imagery used in this study: the practical way of thinking, that is, as a means of uniting objects; and as a way of intensifying the impressions of the senses. Since this study highlights on the rural scenes projected in each folk song, the basic elements of literary imagery are used.

Analysis of the selected folk songs in this study follows the formalistic

Figure 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical/conceptual framework of

Southern Leyte State University, Tomas Oppus, Southern Leyte
conviction that literariness makes a given work literary. In other words, literariness is a feature that distinguishes literature from other human creations. It is made of certain artistic techniques, or devices (priemy), employed in literary works. These devices became the primary object of the formalists' analyses. Since they were concrete structural components of the works of literature, they were essential in determining the status of literary study as a science (Karcz, 2005).

The analysis of the folk songs is also guided by Potebnya’s concept on imagery (as cited in Shklovsky, 1990, p.1). He explicates that the relationship of the image to that which is explained by means of it may take one of two forms. One is when the image serves as a constant predicate to a succession of ever-changing subjects- a permanent means of attracting changeable percepts. The other one is when the image is much simpler and clearer than which is the experience.

3.0 Research Design and Methods

The formalistic discourse analysis focused on the representations of rural life imagery in the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte: “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain), “Barutu” (Boat), “Alibangbang” (Butterfly), “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill). The folk songs were compiled by Saga (2010).

In this study, the lyrics of the folk songs were textually translated using the norms of Phonology Orthography Correspondence: Sound-Letter System on pedagogic grammar for Cebuano Visayan of Pesirla (2012). Aspects of rural life imagery were coded following Wheeler’s (2013) classification: visual, auditory, tactile, thermal, olfactory, gustatory, and kinesthetic sensation. The study had two phases: the first focused on the formalistic approach and the second focused on the data triangulation. The insights on rural life imagery used in the study were from the works of White (1928); Rodell (2002); A. Roces and G. Roces (2013); Salcedo et al. (1999); Lehmiller (2013); Verlag (1999); and Greer and Molberg (1999). Data from these sources together with the mimetic approach in literary analysis and an unstructured interview to some Southern Leyteños were utilized in the triangulation.

4.0 Results and Discussions
Table 1 presents the rural life imagery representations found in the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte. The formalistic analysis of the lyrics reveals the following representations of rural life imagery in the selected poems: “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) - farmers working to attain a good harvest, “Barutu” (Boat) - a coffin made out of a sawed-off boat and funeral activities, “Alibangbang (Butterfly)” - a man courting and exploiting a woman then leaving her for another woman, “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) - a socialite mother living in a shanty on a hill.

The folk song “*Awit sa Bukid*” (Song of the Mountain) projects an image of the pastoral tradition of farmers working to attain a good harvest.

This folk song creates a tranquil auditory image through the line, “*awit sa bukid*” (song of the mountain). The picture is appealing through a visual image of weary farmers comforted by the song of the mountain. Actually, the song is the sound of the breeze and the songs...
of the birds. This is the unique feature of this folk song as it beautifully emphasizes on the sounds of the mountains to soothe the weariness of the farmers. Williams (as cited in Murphy et al., 1998, p. 33) emphasizes on this by saying that “poetry should have ‘edges’ or points of contact with the world.” Moreover, Williams’ assertion is fitting with “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) that echoes the world of farming still being pursued by some Southern Leyteños today:

In “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) the images in the lyrics depict farm life and landscape. The poet is keen enough to create a vivid picture through the use of figurative expressions. Reece (2002, p.24) supports to this by explaining that “the connection between farming and poetry is ancient. Their ageless relationship has always been sentimental and ironic. The two disciplines would seem to have mostly accidental requirements in common: patience, fatalism, renunciation, an awe of nature, reverence for the earth.”

There is a similarity between Jose Rizal’s imagery of farm life in his “Philippines, a Century Hence” and the imagery that “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) projects. Rizal saw his beloved country having a personality of her own. All the idle lands turned into one vast productive garden full of coconut, hemp, sugar cane, lumber, rice, amidst the grandeur, fragrance, and music of her mountains, valleys, woodlands, brooks, springs, and flowers. The beautiful imagery form the poesy of the Ideal, the Sublime, and the Beautiful (Aguilar, 1997, p. 234).

Like Jose Rizal, the Roman poet Virgil features in his Eclogues some aspects of farm life like that of “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain). Virgil (Ferry, 2005) accounts how some farm works in the First Georgic are done:
The hurried life of the farmers in “Awit sa Bukid” (Song of the Mountain) depicts kinesthetic and visual images. The farmers are already in their farms very early in the morning. Some bring with them their breakfast and change of clothing. In Southern Leyte, the farmers have to keep up with the planting season and to make use of daylight to do their usual tasks. They do not waste their time. The visual, kinesthetic, and thermal images of the farmers working under all weather conditions make the pastoral image more emphasized. Southern Leyteño farmers work in the farm, exposing themselves to the sun and the rain. There are times when they choose to stay in their farm huts at nights to make sure the crops and other plants are not flooded or stolen. Sometimes, taking an afternoon nap is not an option when they keep watch for crows, rats, and pests. These farmers are not excused from being sick. They bear body pains and common illnesses to take care of their plants to have a good harvest:

The time has come for my groaning ox to drag
My heavy plow across the fields, so that
The plow blade shines as the furrow rubs against it.
Not till the earth has been twice plowed, so twice
Exposed to sun and twice to coolness will.

Sayu sa kabuntagun ang tanang magbabaul
(Early in the morning all the farmers)
Ginagukud ang panahon;
(Run after time.)
Ang kabulahanan pangitaun.
(Fortune they seek.)
Giantus sa lawas ang ulan ug init
(The body endures the rain and heat)
Binalun sa dughan ang iiang mga kasakit.
(Borne in the breast are their pains).

When the harvest season comes, the farmers are extremely delighted. There is much merrymaking as manifested in the visual, kinesthetic, and auditory images portraying the farmers singing and shouting with joy during the harvest season. In some parts of Southern Leyte, a harvest season is an important event to the farmers. It signifies another supply of food to a lot of them. The last line of this folk song: Musayaw ug musinggit kay daghan na sila’g makaun (They dance, and they shout having much to eat.) draws out a gustatory image. The harvest season signifies provisions for food to the farmers. The people have established some kind of a teamwork during harvest season called “bulhun” in which other farmers and neighbors would help. In the earlier times in Southern Leyte, the usual harvest season activities include eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and serenading. In recent times, the farmers turn on the radio and listen to music or to drama while doing the harvest or while eating, and
drinking “tuba” (wine from coconut) or alternatively, some light liquor:

*Kum muahut na ang bunga sa ilang mga kabudlay*  
(When the fruits of their toil come)  
*Ang mababawl hapung sa kalipay.*  
(The farmers are full of joy.)  
*Musayaw ug misinggit ang iyang pagabuhatun*  
(Dancing and shouting are what they do)  
*Musayaw ug misinggit kay daghan na sila’g makaun.*  
(They dance and they shout having much to eat).

“Barutu” (Boat) is laden with *sarcasm* images of a *coffin made out of a sawed-off boat and funeral activities.*  

“Barutu” (Boat) brings into focus one common visual image of a death ritual still practiced in some areas of Southern Leyte. Some people make use of available wood or cut down trees to be made into a coffin if someone is dead. Usually the men in the community help in the carpentry. This folk song projects a sarcastic image through the *sawed-off boat* to be made into a coffin:

*Adunay putul barutu*  
(There is a sawed-off boat)  
*Si anhing Ingku Dupo.*  
(Of the late Ingku Dupo.)  
*Akung hangyun paliton*  
(I’ll request to buy it)  
*Buhatun kanimung lungun.*  
(To make a coffin for you).

This folk song might be laden with sarcastic notes but it features a unique rural life imagery of Southern Leyte: being ingenious in times of financial deficiency. In this folk song, such resourcefulness or inventiveness is crafted sarcastically but in essence, it is what makes situations lighter in Southern Leyte when there is no money to buy for a coffin.

In addition to the *sawed-off boat,* other *visual,* *auditory,* and *olfactory* images portrayed are charged with sarcastic images from the *funeral wreath made out of albahaca and tagbak* until the *balitaw singing during cemetery visits.* *Albahaca* is a culinary herb commonly known as Basil (Spanish Central-Merriam Webster Online, 2013), and *tagbak* is a medicinal plant for hemoptysis, paralyzed extremities and urticaria (Philippine Medicinal Plants, 2013). To make a funeral wreath out of these plants is a form of ridicule to the dead person:

*Ang imu unyang lungun*  
(Your coffin then)  
*Dayandayanana mga lukun,*  
(Will be adorned with wreaths)  
*Kuruna sa mga nindut bulak*  
(Crown of beautiful flowers)  
*Mga bulak sa mga albahaca’g tagbak.*  
(Flowers of *albahaca* and *tagbak*).

The *visual image of the lambayung* commonly known as the beach morning glory spreading on the tomb is another
contemptuous picture. The funnelshaped flowers close late in the day (Binisaya.com, 2013). So, if the lambayung is planted by the tomb, it elicits a taunting image. Another sarcastic representation is the offering of prayer every afternoon. Urimusan is to pray the Spanish oremos that is a concluding prayer:

Sa ibabaw sa imung lubung
(At the top of your grave)
Timeaan sa akin paghandum
(A sign of my remembering)
Pakanatun ku'g lambayung
(I will plant a lambayung)
Urimusan hapun-hapun.
(With prayer every afternoon).

The sawung, a native lamp of Southern Leyte completes the sarcastic visual image. Instead of a candle, the sawung is lighted on top of the tomb. Also, a visual image is portrayed as the speaker advises the one who will be dead to drop blood on the sawung so its fire will not be extinguished:

Wa man akuy kwarta
(Since I have no money)
Ikapalit naku'g kandila,
(To buy a candle with)
Dagkutan ku la'g sawung
(I'll just light a sawung)
Dug-i unya arun di mapawung.
(Drop blood on it so it won’t extinguish).

Although structured with sarcasm, this folk song depicts an image in the rural neighborhood of Southern Leyte when someone dislikes a person and goes to the extent of mentioning funeral preparations for the latter. If the sarcasm is to be considered, Southern Leyteños believe that it is some kind of a curse for the person or a wish for some misfortune to happen to the person.

However, setting aside the sarcastic aspects of the images, the funeral activities mentioned in “Barutu” (Boat) are some of the usual scenes during funeral practices in Southern Leyte. “Alibangbang” (Butterfly) shows an image of a man courting and exploiting a woman then leaving her for another woman. In “Alibangbang (Butterfly)”, a beautiful image is stimulated: a butterfly and flowers; that of a man and women. Metaphorically told from the perspective of a woman (bulak), very clear images are brought by nanagpaniba (relishing) and naghadla-hadla (caressing). They indicate that the man is courting and exploiting the woman (alibangbang):

Nahimuut aku nga nagatan-aw
(I am amused watching)
Sa alibangbang nanagpaniba
(The butterfly relishing)
This folk song achieves a unique and suitable choice of the butterfly and flower image. Instead of eating, butterflies get their nourishment from drinking through its proboscis. It is a long narrow tube in their mouth that acts as a straw when they drink the nectar of the flower (“What Do Butterflies Eat and Drink,” 2014). The lines describing the *alibangbang* (man) flying and sipping nectar (exploiting the woman) as it flies off to another flower (goes to another woman) project a kinesthetic image:

*Sa human mupahimulus*
(After taking pleasure with the)

*Sa akung bulak sa akung pantaw, ay*
(Flower in my porch, ay)

*Ay, mitapad, mitapad nga nagahagarus*
(Ay, if flies, if flies speeding,

*Sa laing bulak na usab, ahay,*
(To another flower again, ahay)

*Nagapadayun.*
(It keeps on).

“*Nanagpaniba*” (relishing) denotes a negative image in “*Alibangbang*” (Butterfly). It presents the essence of exploitation to women. Hughes (2000) explains that exploitation of women is an abuse of female sexuality. It uses women for sexual gratification and profit. The image in “*Alibangbang*” (Butterfly) bespeaks that some women in the rural areas experience some of the abuses mentioned by Hughes (2000). Incest, rape, sexual harassment, battering, bride trafficking, pornography, and prostitution are the instances when women are sexually exploited (Repression and Exploitation, para. 3).

The woman’s observations have affected her. She makes a request to her lover, pleading him to spare her from the same plight. This somber visual image is in the last part of the folk song:

*Ningsantup dayun sa akung dughan*
(It came to my senses)

*Nga sama da sa akung kaayimtang*
(That it’s like my situation)

*Aku’y bulak, ug alibangbang*
(I’m a flower, and the butterfly)

*Nga kanaku da usab, ahay...*
(That to me also, ahay…)

*Nagapaduyan.*
(Is exploiting)

*Hinaut pa unta nga dili mu buhatun*
(Would that you refrain from doing)

*Ang gibuhat sa alibangbang*
(What the butterfly does)

*Sa human sa usa ka bulak mahitugdun*
(After on one flower hovering)

*Sa laing bulak na usab, ahay,*
(To another flower, then again, ahay.)

*Nagapaduyan.*
(It keeps on).
“May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) portrays a socialite mother living in a shanty on a hill.

The folk song “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) features a vivid rural imagery that is still seen in Southern Leyte until these recent times. This imagery uniquely features the resilience of Southern Leyteño. There are still houses by the hill that serve as rest areas of the farmers or as residential homes. The image projected by the folk song implies that the speaker is looking at the house at the time of his/her narration. He/She creates the visual image of the small child looking out of the window. Furthermore, the asyusa (fashionable/socialite) mother who wears make-up and perfume, and who flaunts a penniless wallet creates visual and olfactory images:

May balay gamay sa bungtud
(There was a hut on the hill)
Kang Nanay, Tatay kadtung tinukud;
(Nanay and Tatay built it)
May batang gamay namintana,
(A little child looked out the window)
Buutan kadtu nga bata
(He was a diligent child)
Ang iyang Nanay asyusa,
(Her mother was fashionable)
Papula-pula ug pinaagwa,
(Blushed and perfumed)

Pasinaw-sinaw sa iyang pitaka,
(Her wallet shiny)
Pag-andu waly kwarta.
(But had no money).

Being resilient, the Filipino family can always adjust to trying times. Dagoon et al. (2002) upholds that “a guided Filipino family lives within its means, and survives even in times of grave crisis.” The mother in “May Balay Gamay sa Bungtud” (There Was a Hut on the Hill) still manages to look like a socialite even though she is penniless. It implies that it is her way of inspiring herself and feeling good despite the circumstances. Lyman and Villani’s (2004, p.199) description of self-esteem elucidates the mother’s situation. According to them, self-esteem is the “evaluative views and feelings about the self that express degrees of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It is the person’s implicit and explicit comparison of his or her self-concept in an area to standards for the self in that domain that determines whether self-esteem is high or low.”

5.0 Conclusion
The findings of the study showed that the selected folk songs of Southern Leyte have representations of rural life imagery.

6.0 Literature Cited


Hughes, D. (2000). Men create the demand; Women are the supply. Retrieved from uri.edu


Ness, S. A. (1992). *Body, movement, and culture: Kinesthetic and visual symbolism in a*


Violeta B. Felisilda

Journal of Educational and Human Resource Development


