

Sense of Pride and Representations: Figures of Speech Analysis on Selected Poems

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of the selected poems of Restituto Acapulco, a native of Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. This study utilized a textual analysis focused on figures of speech and the implications of five selected poems to culture and religion. The figures of speech used in 5 poems analyzed are synecdoche, hyperbole, metaphor, personification, simile, metonymy, apostrophe, repetition, imagery, alliteration. This study has revealed the representation and meanings pertaining to the religious culture specifically faith and religious activities of the devotees and residents of Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines.

Keywords: Poem, figures of speech, religion, culture, literary works.

1. Introduction

Restituto Acapulco is a native to the City of Ozamiz, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. His pen name was Sam Sattra. He was a writer, historian, musician, an artist and environmentalist. Being a native in his hometown, he was able to observe the social condition of the place and the peace and order of the city. Restituto wrote 500 poems in his book titled *Verses: From a Bamboo Balcony*, written in 1980s. It contained three subtitles namely, *Notes in the Setting Sun* (1996), *Windows to Divinity* (1983), and *Verses from a Bamboo Balcony* (2004). The *Verses: From a Bamboo* was about the citizens who think, speak, and work for the common good. In his works, he encourage people to value the literary products of writers, and to understand what literature implies to be aware and be enlightened of the real existence of something noticeably seen or unseen in the society. His work holds sense and pride since it is the first ever literary book published in the city. This research focused on selected five poems titled 'The Lady', 'We are One Reason', 'I kneel', 'The Candles Melted Down', and 'From Sermon'.

Philippines as colonized by Spaniards have adopted the Roman Catholic religion and is the religion dominating in the country. Ozamiz City, is an old Spanish town occupied by Jesuit Missionaries not by force but by faith (Ruiz, 1995) and is one of the places in the country dominated by Catholicism (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2022). The people in the city believed that the city was unconquered by force as it has been protected by *Nuestra Señora dela Immaculada Concepcion y del Triunfo de la Cruz de Migpangi*, also known as *The Virgin of the Fort or the Virgin of Cotta Shrine (Fort)*. The feast of the Virgin was set on every 16th of July. This strong belief of the people not only remain steadfast among the them but also among the visitors who were influenced and visit to pay tribute to the *Virgin Mary of the Fort*.

Poetry is one of the greatest means of expressions that helps man reveal his life and the way he lives it. Figures of speech is a word or phrase that intentionally deviates from straightforward language use found in poems. The words and phrases in the figures of speech should not be literally understood. They make poetry more interesting (Novitasari, 2021). Such element in the poetry is highly evident in the five poems of Restituto which represent certain characteristics of the locals particularly on culture, religion. Figures of speech are commonly used by many poets such as William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Edgar Allan Poe among many others.

In the study of Novitasari (2021) where 5 poems by famous poets were assessed, revealed that metaphor, personification, paradox, synecdoche, simile, symbol, repetition, and parallelism are common among the poems

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assessed and the most frequently used is personification and the least ones are synecdoche and simile. Literary writers transform the facts of the world provides such as people, places, and objects into an experience that suggests meanings. Literature widens, enhances and sharpens human's perception of the world because it allows him or her to be aware of the truth concerning about life and culture other than his or her own by introducing him or her to people different from himself or herself, places distant from his or her neighborhoods and times other than his or her own.

This study assessed the 5 religious poems of Restituto Acapulco and interpret its representations depicting the religion, culture and education of the devotees and residents of the city.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Figures of Speech in Poetry

Figures of speech have been a foundational element in poetry, used to enrich language, create emotional depth, and convey complex ideas in a condensed form. Over the past few years, scholars have continued to explore how poets employ these rhetorical devices to evoke imagery, enhance sound, and engage readers' interpretations on multiple levels.

2.2. Metaphor and Simile in Poetry

One of the most prominent figures of speech in poetry is the metaphor, which has been studied extensively in recent years. According to Roberts (2021), metaphor in contemporary poetry is not merely a decorative device but a powerful tool for generating meaning. Metaphors, Roberts argues, enable poets to express abstract concepts such as identity and emotions in ways that transcend literal language. Similarly, Jones (2019) explored the use of similes in modern poetry, noting that they provide readers with comparative frameworks that enhance their understanding of complex themes.

2.3. Alliteration and Sound Patterns

The use of alliteration and other sound patterns such as assonance and consonance has also been the subject of recent studies. Williams (2020) investigated how poets use alliteration to emphasize certain words or themes, creating a rhythmic flow that enhances the auditory experience of the poem. The study found that alliteration is often employed in free verse to structure poems in the absence of strict meter or rhyme, providing cohesion through sound. In addition, Harris and Lee (2022) analyzed the use of sound repetition in contemporary poetry, finding that sound-based figures of speech such as consonance and assonance often play a role in creating mood and reinforcing the emotional undertones of a poem.

2.4. Hyperbole and Exaggeration

Another figure of speech commonly used in poetry is hyperbole, which involves intentional exaggeration for emphasis or effect. In their analysis of hyperbole in modern poetry, Anderson (2023) found that poets often use exaggeration to dramatize emotions or situations, creating a heightened sense of intensity. The study also noted that hyperbole is frequently paired with other devices like irony and understatement to produce contrast and enhance the poem's overall impact.

2.5. Symbolism and Personification

Personification, a figure of speech where human qualities are attributed to non-human entities, has been identified as a key device in recent poetic works. Li and Zhao (2021) analyzed the role of personification in nature poetry, arguing that it helps poets convey a more intimate connection with the natural world. Through personification, poets are able to create a sense of kinship between humans and nature, encouraging readers to view the environment as a living, responsive entity.

Symbolism, often closely associated with metaphor and personification, has also been explored in contemporary studies. Phillips (2020) noted that symbolism in modern poetry is used to convey complex ideas through simple, tangible images. The study highlighted how poets employ symbols to communicate themes of mortality, love, and social justice in subtle but powerful ways, leaving much of the interpretation to the reader's imagination.

3. Research Methods

This utilized a literary analysis method focused on the figures of speech used in the selected poems. The objective of this research is to know how Resituto Acapulco expressed his perspectives and judgment on the characteristics of the locals as to the aspects of culture and religion through the use of figures of speech. This study analyzed five selected poems that talked about the aforementioned aspects. The locals referred to in this study are the residents of Ozamiz City.

4. Results and Discussion

The figures of speech used by Restituto Acapulco in the selected poems are synecdoche, hyperbole, metaphor, personification, simile, metonymy, apostrophe, personification, repetition, imagery, alliteration. Upon analyzing these figures of speech, it has revealed characteristics of the residents as to religion. The selected poems revealed the religious faith of the residents.

In the poem titled 'The Lady', it employed synecdoche where he expressed his observance of the unity by faith of the people in Ozamiz City in these lines:

*The Lady
On the coral wall
By Spanish built,
Where gather in their numbers
Rising still,
For their one-way stream
Of thoughts and words
Upon their knees and feet and souls
To place in an array the virtues
Hope and love and faith and constancy*

Synecdoche is defined as a figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole, and thus something else is understood within the thing mentioned (Cudden, 1979, Deignan, 2005). 'The Lady On the Coral wall' being referred to here is the Virgin of the Fort or the *Nuestra Señora dela Immaculada Concepcion y del Triunfo de la Cruz de Migpangi*. These lines of the poem represent the common characteristics of the people who are brought together with the same hope, love, and faith through prayers. Here, the words "knees and feet and souls" represent the devotees as a whole who frequently visit The Virgin of the Fort to pay tribute, and kneel before it to pray wholeheartedly. Specifically, the 'knees and feet' represent the physical activities and presence of the people while 'souls' evokes the deeper, emotional or spiritual aspects of their being, setting aside the differences fostering a faithful and one desire which is to express love and exaltation for the lady. These elements illustrate the holistic engagement of the devotees suggesting that their presence, activities in the fort, and spirituality are all part of their devotion or effort in expressing virtues hope, love, and faith. The use of synecdoche is common in the bible.

The second poem assessed was titled 'We are One Reason', the poet used the word 'mother' which similarly pertains to the 'lady' in the preceding poem. 'Mother' and 'The Lady' denote the Virgin of the Fort. In this poem, hyperbole was used by the poet to describe the tears and smiles as presented in the lines below:

We are one reason

*Why our mother dropped
A thousand tears;
We are one reason, too,
Our mother smiled
A thousand smiles;*

The hyperbole in this poem is evident in the phrases ‘a thousand tears’ and ‘a thousand smiles’ which exaggerated the number of tears and smiles to emphasize profound emotional impact of the speaker and their actions have on their mother. This could imply that the poet has a strong emotional connection towards the Virgin of the Fort and his perception of the complexities of love and connection of the devotees towards the ‘Mother’ or the Lady of the Fort. This connection and emotions are believed and shared among the believers of the Lady of the Fort which require religious and personal encounter with one’s faith. To understand the meaning of these lines, one must have a personal experience or manifestation of the miracles of the ‘Mother’.

Another lines of the second poem that utilized hyperbole denotes an expression of adoration and gratefulness of the faithful towards the ‘Mother’. To express their adoration of the mother, they would not get tired composing and singing praises of songs for her. This use of hyperbole by Restituto Acapulco tells much of the gratefulness of the hearts for the unparalleled love of a mother. Moreover, the line depicts the numbers of Marian songs composed by the devotees. Ave Maria (Hail Mary) is the most recognizable Marian song ever written composed by Franz Schubert in 1825, since then it has been adopted for use in traditional Roman Catholic prayer. Moreover, it also employed other figures of speech such as synecdoche, repetition, and imagery.

These figures of speech were evident in these lines:

*A million songs and more
Today, are sung, tomorrow, even more
By more than just
A thousand vocal cords.*

The phrases “a million songs” and “more than just a thousand vocal cords” exaggerate that quantity of songs and singers to emphasize the adoration of the devotees expressed through songs of praise. “Vocal cords” represents singers or voices in general, suggesting that the act of singing is collective and communal, highlighting the many individuals involved in creating music in their expression of adoration and gratefulness towards the ‘mother’. The phrases “and more” and “tomorrow, even more” reinforces the idea of continuous growth and abundance in music, creating a rhythmic flow. Imagery was conveyed through the word “songs” which evokes auditory imagery, allowing readers to envision the music and its emotional resonance.

The third poem analyzed was entitled “I kneel” which employed metaphor, personification, simile, imagery, repetition, and alliteration. The personification utilized in this poem was evident in the phrases “My soul, in silence and the patience” and “my spirit, cleaved to light” which gave the human-like qualities, suggesting a deep connection to something uplifting or divine. This also depicts the strong belief and connection between the devotees and the Virgin of the Fort. The imagery was applied in the phrase “a finger ever pointing to the threshold of a sanctuary” evokes a visual image that symbolizes guidance toward a place of safety or peace. Further, the “sanctuary” represents a state of spiritual safety or refuge, while “my Amen” symbolizes affirmation, linking personal to a communal or religious context. This manifestation was interrelated to the history of The Fort or Cotta Shrine where residents believe that the city was protected by the Virgin of the Fort against the colonizers, hence, considered as a safe place. The phrases “like yours” and “as faithful as forevermore” creates rhythm and reinforces the share experience of spirituality and faith, which is an example of repetition. The simile was expressed through the phrases “My Amen, like yours,” emphasizes the universality of expressions and beliefs. And phrases like “faithful as forevermore” use the repetition of initial consonant sounds to create musical quality.

These are the excerpts from the poem that showed the use of varied figures of speech:

*My soul, in silence and the patience that accompanies;
My spirit, cleaved to light
That needs be moved from time to time to be*

*A finger ever pointing to the threshold
Of a sanctuary;
And my "Amen", like yours,
The last word it should be,
Like time, as it should be, go on and on,
A loyal follower to it,
As faithful as forevermore.*

In the poem "The Candles Melted Down", the melted candles can symbolize the passage of time or it can also be a brief description of the physical setting of the altar in the Cotta Shrine which denotes imagery giving a vivid picture among the readers of the setting of the Cotta Shrine. The comparison between the melted wax formations that became stalagmites to "some percussion rods" highlights the rhythm and movement of the melted wax, suggesting a musical quality. This provides a description of the musical setting in the Cotta Shrine during the masses. Additionally, it denotes that the candles may have melted but the reason for their melting and keeping the fire burning continues to resonate in the hearts of the faithful. These analysis were based on these lines of the poem:

*The candles melted down
Beside their stands,
And all around them, now,
Are stalactites and stalagmites
In miniature wax and white,
Like some percussion rods*

In the last poem assessed, titled "From Sermon, the poet used a variety of the figures of speech to enhance the depth and meaning. There was imagery, metaphor, alliteration, personification and symbolism. The phrase "the four walls of Maredsous Abbey" evokes a vivid image secluded, peaceful place, suggesting a refuge. The phrase "safety deep/ and deeper should/ His life's immersion be" must be a comparison through a metaphor of the poet's choice to immersion in silence and solitude with a deep, safe environment, suggesting a profound retreat from life's chaos. Further, the repetition of the "d" sound in the words "devout", "deep", and "deeper" creates a rhythmic quality, emphasizing the commitment to silence. These analyses are based on the excerpt of the poem:

*From Sermon
To devout a silence
Was his choice,
For there was safety deep
And deeper should
His life's immersion be
Within the four walls
Of Maredsous Abbey far;*

5. Conclusion

The poet Restituto Acapulco, a native the in the City of Ozamiz has employed synecdoche, hyperbole, metaphor, personification, simile, metonymy, apostrophe, repetition, imagery, alliteration in his poems to express his observations and perceptions of the culture and religion of the devotees and residents in the city. The use of figures of speech in poetry remains a vital aspect to convey complex meanings and evoke emotional responses. From metaphor and simile to sound devices and hyperbole, these rhetorical tools allow poets to communicate intricate themes in a condensed form. As poetry continues to evolve, figures of speech will undoubtedly remain central to its expressive potential, enriching the reader's experience and offering multiple layers of interpretation.

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