

E-ISSN: 2581-8868

Volume-04, Issue-05, pp-133-142

www.theajhssr.com

Research Paper

Open Access

Biographical Synthesis in the Selected Poems of Dr. Jose P. Rizal

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the poems “In Memory of My Town,” “My Retreat,” and “My First Inspiration” written by Dr. Jose P. Rizal. This aims at finding the biographical synthesis in the selected poems. The text of the poems supporting the study’s objective is descriptively analyzed based on the historical-biographical theory. This literary research makes use of a qualitative method of discourse analysis. The textual investigation is guided by related literature and studies. In conclusion, it has been proven that Dr. Jose P. Rizal’s selected poems reveal a biographical synthesis of the poetic imageries and figures of speech. It is hoped that this paper gives a remarkable contribution to the individuals in the field of literary and biographical research. The result of this study further hedges to inform critics, researchers, educators, literature major students, and enthusiasts concerning the practicability of analyzing poems to understand the life of the author and the happenings in the period of history.

KEYWORDS –biographical synthesis, figures of speech, Philippine literature, poetic imageries, poetry, Rizal

I. INTRODUCTION:

Poetry refers to the artistic and imaginative use of language. In poetry, words are arranged and chosen to create a fervent effect on the readers. It is a literary and linguistic process that accentuates structure, sound, and sense; its offshoot is a poem: an imaginative text which communicates emotional and intellectual viewpoints in as few words as possible (Peskin, 1998). For Nuncio (2014), literature inculcates and offers a reflection of the past. Akin to the other genres in literature, poetry also provides a record of the event in the past that mirrors the personal life of the author. In fact, there are numerous eminent bards around the world. Poetic masterpieces written by Sylvia Plath, Walt Whitman, Maya Angelou, and Anne Sexton are widely read by numerous critics and reviewers. Their poems somehow proffer narration of self. Filipino readers, on the other hand, are fascinated by reciting the poems of these foreign muses. They do not realize that local writers are at par with their foreign counterparts. Take for example the Filipino historical-biographical poets, Francisco Balagtas, Bienvenido Lumera, and Virgilio Almario. Another eminent author in Philippine literature who makes poetic masterpieces parallel to his situation is Dr. Jose P. Rizal. Almost every scholar and critic has something to say about the distinguishable facts and characteristics of Rizal. He was a martyr-hero who was born on June 19, 1861 and was executed by firing squad on December 30, 1896. Herrmann (2018) declares that his martyrdom provokes the nationalistic fervor of the native Filipino.

During the Spanish colonization in the Philippines, he was one of the courageous heroes who fought against the ill and cruel demeanor of the Spaniards. Unlike other Filipino heroes, Rizal uses his pen to combat influential foes in colonial society. He proves that the pen is mightier than the sword. His patriotic ideals are reflected in his writings. Akin to his novels *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) and *El Filibusterismo* (Reign of Greed), his notable poems have a sense of realism. For Rizal, the hypocritical ideals, supernatural practices, and commercial methods of Philippine Christianity are the three pious iniquities during the Spanish colonial epoch (Amit, 2016). There are scholarships and articles written about Rizal's reflection of his writer's presence. However, the number of the investigated masterpieces is not ample enough to supply the curiosity and the thirst for knowledge of the scholars. Thus, this paper aims to add the existing literature about the biographical synthesis in Rizal's selected poems. Among other poems, “In Memory of My Town,” “My Retreat,” and “My First Inspiration” are chosen because of their historical significance. These masterpieces were written during the Spanish subjugation

in the Philippines. “In Memory of My Town,” and “My First Inspiration” were the poems Rizal wrote when he was a teenager and “My Retreat” when he was already a grown man who was in exile. These poems could be the best synopsis of Rizal's life. These poetic masterpieces are also chosen and used as the main reference of the study since they speak of Rizal and the people around him, and that complies with the necessary problems of the study. The original rendition of the poems is written in Spanish. However, this study uses the English translation considering that most of the readers, if not all, have a wide knowledge of the English language than Spanish. As discourse analysis, it is done through the interpretation of the text to disclose the writer's presence. The investigation is limited to the aforementioned poems within the poetic elements as the parameters of the textual analysis.

Castroverde (2013) deduces that there is no paucity concerning the scrutiny of Rizal's life, works, and writings. In fact, there is no law declaring Rizal as the Philippine national hero. However, there are laws like Republic Act No. 646 and Republic Act No. 1425 emphasizing the compulsory reading of Rizal's life, works, and writings for Filipino students. As such, this qualitative study is an addendum to the existing literature about Rizal, specifically the concept of biographical synthesis. Further, this literary research is hoped to give a remarkable contribution to the individuals in the field of literary and biographical research. This serves as supplemental information for critics, researchers, literature major students, and educators in comprehending Rizal's poetic masterpieces. Further, this study is significant to all millennials who endeavor to become poets that they may see a reflection of Rizal's idealism. Comprehending Rizal's poetic masterpieces can deepen one's perspective concerning the happening in Philippine society during the Spanish colonial era. More so, decoding Rizal's poems incites understanding the kind of life Rizal experienced in the past.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

The theoretical argument of this study assumes that Dr. Jose P. Rizal's selected poems reveal biographical synthesis. Grant & Osanloo create an analogy to understand the theoretical background in the study (2014). They declare that these theoretical underpinnings are schemes that are used to support and construct the research.

Numerous people are bemused when they hear the word “poetry.” For them, it is something beyond someone's comprehension. However, there are many ways of understanding and decoding poetry. Abing asserts that the theories of literature are ample lenses in apprehending certain masterpieces (2018). On a related note, Turner, Baker & Kellner (2018) venture to say that these literary theories are excogitated by great theorists who get inspiration from their milieu. This literary study is supported by the historical-biographical theory. One theory perhaps differs from the other due to the language used by the theorist. Every theory has its parameter and scope. In this way, critics who want to utilize a certain approach in illuminating the text will be guided accordingly to its concept. Vishnu (2017) goes on elaborating that one theory provokes another idea that directs a new theory. The historical-biographical theory is also known as expressive criticism. Sherry & Schouten (2002) infer that poetry encompasses the analysis of biographical standpoints and structural identities. Historical-biographical critics are fascinated with the biography of the author. They read the masterpiece and connect it to the personal life of the writer. Bennett & Royle (2004) deduce that people should not desist in analyzing the text through the writer's presence. The biographical synthesis of the author is essential for historical-biographical critics. For them, the author's personal encounters hone his masterpiece. This criticism, on the other hand, has multifold literary adversaries who try to reprobate its theoretical standpoints. Critics who oppose its general principles affirm that the author is not necessary for interpreting the text. On the contrary, historical-biographical critics proclaim that every masterpiece is a reflection of the author's practices and experiences (Obeso, 2019). Nevertheless, it never loses its significance because of its applicative edge in irradiating the text. Historical-biographical critics, however, must be cautious in utilizing this approach. They must avoid falsifying the biographical data of the author for literary impact and intention.

The discussion on the biographical synthesis in Rizal's selected poems is semi-autobiographical and hence the use of historical-biographical theory.

III. METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a qualitative method of discourse analysis in analyzing the biographical synthesis in Rizal's selected poems. Discourse analysis in qualitative research encompasses the critical examination of the text to

unfold sociological realities (Mogashoa, 2014). Hence, this method adheres to the close systematic inquiry of the text rather than the interpretation of the numerical data. The passages of the poems are decoded and investigated comprehensively using historical-biographical theory to reveal the answers to the main problem and sub-problems of this study. The main source of data is the selected poems of Dr. Jose P. Rizal that can be found in Gregorio Zaide & Sonia Zaide's book entitled *Jose-Rizal: Life, Works, and Writing of a Genius, Writer, Scientist, and National Hero*; and Christopher Fuster Bueno's book entitled *Jose P. Rizal: The National Hero*. The representative poems are also available in an online article entitled "Jose Rizal's Poems: A Compilation." Essays, letters, journals, theses, and dissertations related to the topics in the study are secondary sources.

This study adheres to the analysis of Dr. Jose P. Rizal's poetic masterpieces, "In Memory of My Town," "My Retreat," and "My First Inspiration" dealing with the poetic imageries and figures of speech. These literary elements are essential in extracting the related biographical motifs of the representative poems. To extract any relevant information about the biographical synthesis, the researcher read the whole poem and analyze its structural elements to draw a conclusion. This critical analysis follows two fundamental phases to arrive at the principal result: Phase one is on the investigation of the poetic imageries, and phase two is on the scrutiny of the figures of speech.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This section presents the data for analysis and the interpretation of the biographical synthesis in Dr. Jose P. Rizal's selected poems: "Memory of My Town," "My Retreat," and "My First Inspiration" in accordance with the sub-problems: poetic imageries and figures of speech.

Poetic Imageries:

"In Memory of my Town" (*Un Recuerdo A Mi Pueblo*, 1876) is a seven-stanza poem. Each stanza has eight lines. Rizal wrote this poem during his schooling at the Ateneo de Manila. This poem, as the title suggests, depicted his reminiscence of events that happened in his hometown. José Protasio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda or simply known as Dr. Jose P. Rizal was born in Calamba, Laguna Philippines to Francisco Engracio Rizal Mercado y Alejandro and Teodora Morales Alonzo y Quintos. This poem contains visual, thermal, kinesthetic, and aural imageries. Visual, thermal and aural images are evident in these lines in the first stanza: "spent on the green shores/of a murmurous lagoon/ when I remember the coolness/ delicious and refreshing." Rizal, a boy who is fascinated with nature's aestheticism, vividly describes the things around his native town. Rizal, in fact, spent most of his time in lakefront town. The sharing of his personal experiences with his milieu carries on in the succeeding lines of the second stanza: "When I inhale the dear/intoxicating essence/the flowers exude when dawn/is smiling on the land." These lines include olfactory imagery which evokes recollection of his childhood while looking at the bosoms in their place. Rizal tries to tell his readers that in Calamba roses and sunflowers bloom during an aurora.

At times, Rizal was left alone to ponder in the beauties of nature. The third stanza and the following stanzas have kinesthetic imageries. Rizal compliments his hometown and expresses his delectation, "I recall a simple town/my comfort, joy, and cradle/beside a balmy lake/the seat of my delight." Rizal who had many beautiful childhood memories captures his native town uprightly. He, however, laments that his hometown has a caliginous atmosphere as stated in this line: "Explored your sombre woodlands." This line reflects Rizal's sense of letdown. It further mirrors the actual happening during the Spanish colonial period. Rizal views the timberland in his town as a depressing and dismal life of the native folks. The passage "sombre woodland" somehow educes the land in Calamba. He describes forestland in his hometown as pensive and serious. Perhaps, he prophesies that something nasty will occur in the future and it does. There is a land dispute that happens in hometown. Although the land disputation was almost ten years after this poem was written, there were still facets of the personal attachment of the author being disclosed. Donesa (2009) declares that the issues on land ownership and agricultural interest are the factors contributing to the uprising of the Filipino. In fact, haciendas were mostly owned by the friars during Rizal's times. Some scholarly journals inferred that the land and agrarian controversies inflamed the aboriginal Filipino landowners including the Rizals'. The Spanish friars, however, addressed the issue as an act of insurgency rather than an agrarian reform.

Rizal is a pious man. Alicamen et al., (2016) wrote that Rizal loved to read the Bible and often went to church. His childhood experiences prove this: "I prayed in your rustic temple/a child, with a child's devotion." Another childhood memory of Rizal was the daily Angelus prayer along with his parents and siblings. One of the contributions of the Spaniards that alter the belief and tradition of the Filipino is religion, specifically Roman Catholicism. Amit (2016) goes on elaborating that the Spaniards were triumphant in converting the native

Filipino to Christianity. With their scientific and empirical expedition, Ferdinand Magellan along with his compatriots flourishingly landed on one of the islands in the Philippines (Del Castillo, 2015). They use sword and religion to colonize and poison the mind of the Filipinos. Gaining control over the Philippine territory, Spanish friars and authorities initiate in imposing unjust ordinances and laws (Diokno, 2011). They commence in collecting taxes and forcing the native proletariat for personal service and public works. The autochthonous Filipinos experienced the cruelty of the Spanish colonizers, thereby provoking a revolution. Rizal is criticized by many people because of his anticlerical philosophies. De Joya (2016) deduces that Rizal's writings are viewed by numerous critics as a transgression of the divine law. However, he is only against the misleading teaching of the unscrupulous friars. In fact, he has many comrades that are ecclesiastic. He befriended Fr. Faura, Fr. Pastells, Fr. Balaguer, and Fr. Sanchez. At his youthful age, Rizal finds joy in nature than someone's gentleness and affection. He utilizes visual images to express his beatitude as described in these lines: "while at your azure skies/I gazed, neither love nor tenderness/failed me, for in nature/ lay my felicity." In the sixth stanza, Rizal acclaims his locality. For him, the "beautiful town" "rich fountain" and "harmonious music" help him get rid of life's tribulation. Those things are his treasures that keep coming back on his heart. The last stanza of the poem evokes his genuine adieus to his native domicile. It is his hometown's "peace" "joy" and "sleep" whom he proffers his endeavors and prayers.

"My Retreat" (MiRetiro, 1895) is a twenty-four-stanza narrative poem. He wrote this poem upon the request of his mother. Critics complement this poem as one of the superb poetic masterpieces of Rizal. This poem recounts Rizal's tranquil life in Dapitan ("Jose Rizal's Poems," 2013). His exile is abundantly fruitful with myriad achievements. Prior to his expatriation, Rizal thought of bringing his family and relatives who were challenged and dispossessed of their land in Calamba to Dapitan. After winning second prize in a lottery, he bought seventy hectares of land which was situated along the coast of Talisay, about one kilometer away from Dapitan. In Dapitan, he spent most of his time exploring nature and educating children. Bayron reasons that his endowment gives a noteworthy contribution to the native folks (2018). Rizal is indeed a pioneer in the field of economic, literary, and scientific research. This poem contains kinesthetic, visual, aural, and tactile imageries. The first stanza of the poem has kinesthetic and visual images. This stanza evokes an image of a man who is narrating his serene life. Although Rizal relishes the peaceful and quiet atmosphere of Dapitan, he apperceives in anguish as time goes by as described in these lines: "seeking in the still serenity of the woods/repose to my intellect and silence to my grief." He is racked by emotional distress as a result of his displacement. Further, the line "I planted my humble hut beneath a pleasant orchard" evokes his modest living.

The second stanza has tactile imagery. This manifests in these lines: "Its beams and posts are rough as rough-hewn wood can be/of no worth, it is certain, is my rustic cabin." These lines evokes his simple way of living. He built his house by the seashore of Talisay, environ by fruits and trees. In a letter to Blumentritt dated December 19, 1893, Rizal wrote: "I am going to tell you how we live here. I have a square house, another hexagonal, and another octagonal – all made of bamboo, wood, and nipa. In the square one my mother, my sister Trinidad, a nephew, and I live." ("Rizal – Blumentritt Correspondence," 1996). The second stanza is a continuative depiction of Rizal's hutment.

The tactile imagery is further accentuated out of this delineation: "fragile nipa" brittle bamboo" and "rustic cabin." This only attests that Rizal is a poet with a gift of description. The third stanza includes visual and kinesthetic imageries as illustrated in these lines: "The overflowing brook, that from the shadowy jungle/descends between huge boulders, washes it with its spray." This time, Rizal makes a vivid portrayal of his milieu. He shifts his attention to nature: "donating a current of water through makeshift bamboo pipes." The fourth stanza contains aural imagery. This is evident in these lines: "strumming on its invisible zither unceasingly... to hurl itself with a frenzied roaring toward the sea." Rizal provides a picturesque delineation of the sky during its sunny disposition and gloomy days. The aural imagery carries on the next stanza as vividly exemplified: "The barking of the dog, the twittering of the birds/ the hoarse voice of the Kalaw are all that I hear." Rizal makes a placid attachment with the nature-related animals like dogs, birds, and Kalaw. The underpart of the stanza depicts his conception of detachment and declares: "Only the forests and the sea do I

have near.” In a letter to Blumentritt dated December 19, 1893, Rizal wrote: “From my house I hear the murmur of a crystalline rivulet that comes from the high rocks. I see the beach, the sea where I have two small crafts – two canoes or barotos, as they call them here. I have many fruit trees – mangoes, lanzone, guayabanos, baluno, nanka, etc” (“Rizal – Blumentritt Correspondence,” 1996). Furthermore, Rizal is a man who loves to travel from different countries prior to his expatriation in Dapitan. He utilizes visual imagery to elucidate his longing as manifested in the passages: “The sea, the sea is everything! It’s sovereign mass/brings to me atoms of myriad faraway lands.” He even laments over the loss of his fruitless endeavor and promulgates that “when at the end of the day my faith has proven futile/ my heart echoes the sound of its sorrow on the sands.”

The seventh stanza contains thermal imagery. This manifests in this line: “the wandering breeze is cool.” Rizal describes how it is to be with the elements of nature during nighttime. The line “thousands and thousands of lights that climb” evokes the vast number of luminaries in the night sky. Rizal can feel the light gentle wind coming from the enormous ocean during the night as stated in these lines: “the waves narrate with many a sigh to the mild wind/histories that were lost in the dark night of time.”

In the eight stanzas, the dominant imagery is kinesthetic. The people are preoccupied with preparing the things for their everyday living when the nighttime fades into daylight: “Tis said they tell of the first morning on the earth/of the first kiss with which the sun inflamed her breast.” The ninth stanza contains kinesthetic and aural imageries as exemplified: “a chorus of voices praying, a lamentation that seems/to come from those who, long ago, drowned in the sea.” These lines induce memories of the people who are saddened over the death of their loved ones. The aural imagery carries on the next stanza. It is also a continuation of the picturesque depiction of Rizal about lamentation for the dead, which runs as follows:

Then do the mountain ranges on high reverberate;
the trees stir far and wide, by a fit of trembling seized;
the cattle moan; the dark depths of the forest resound;
their spirits say that they are on their way to the plain,
summoned by the dead to a mortuary feast.

This stanza is analogous to his own situation. In Dapitan, Rizal was saddened over the death of Leonor Rivera, his sweetheart for 11 years. Their relationship is a poignant story of a love affair. His lamentation extends after the death of his son with his wife, Josephine Bracken. The eleventh stanza of this poem has visual and aural imageries as demonstrated in these lines: “The wild night hisses, hisses, confused and terrifying/ one sees the sea afire with flames of green and blue.” These lines induce the pestered bearing of the author. Rizal could hardly slumber because of his bothering thoughts about the things that might happen spitefully. He, however, contrives to escape from worry as illuminated in this line: “but calm is re-established with the approach of dawning.”

The twelfth stanza incorporates kinesthetic imagery. In this stanza, Rizal has come to realize that his banishment is a benison. He considers his personal encounters as “rare good fortune.” He gives thanks to the Almighty for his good condition which he considers as his magnificent treasure: “Providence be praised for my condition:/a disregarded pebble that craves nothing but must hide from all the treasure that in myself I bear.” The thirteenth stanza contains kinesthetic and aural imageries. In this stanza, Rizal becomes ardent and proud concerning his past life as described: “Some already are dead, others have long forgotten/ but what does it matter? I live remembering the past/ and no one can ever take the past away from me.”

The fourth tenth stanza contains kinesthetic imagery. Rizal deems his comrades in their place as his steadfast supporter. In fact, he befriended Captain Carnicero, the warden in Dapitan. Their relation was amicable. He also kept extensive correspondence with his family, relatives, and friends abroad despite his numerous activities. In the middle and bottom part of this stanza, Rizal, on the other hand, shifts his engrossment in the spiritual compatriot who safeguards him in nightfall: “that in my sleepless nights keeps watching with me and prays/ with me, and shares with me my exile and my cabin.”

The fifteenth stanza contains aural imagery as demonstrated: “a voice more eloquent and happier than my own/will then know how to utter victory’s canticle.” Rizal heralds that all his pain and distress will be gone soon because he has faith in God and believes that his operative ideals will subdue all the life’s sufferings. Further, the sixteenth stanza includes visual imagery as manifested in these lines: “I see the heavens shining, as flawless and refulgent/as in the days that saw my first illusions start.” Rizal’s optimistic demeanor is accentuated in this stanza. For him, it is the heavenly benediction and the force of nature that make him an avid admirer of his own country.

The seventeenth stanza contains kinesthetic imagery. Rizal reminisced the people he met prior to his exile. In this stanza, he feels the absence of his parents and siblings. In fact, God blesses his parent’s marriage with eleven children—two boys and nine girls. His siblings are vigorous supporters of his goals. Paciano, Rizal’s brother, plays a vital role in making him the greatest Filipino hero. He is Rizal’s air beneath his wings. The underpart of this stanza educes romantic attachment as stated in these lines: “the sighs and kisses of a person idolized/and the sweet secrets of a virginal romance.” Rizal harkens back to his erstwhile inamoratas. In fact, he has numerous ladyloves in the past. There were at least nine women linked with Rizal, namely Segunda Katigbak, Leonor Valenzuela, Leonor Rivera, Consuelo Ortiga, O Sei San, Gertrude Beckett, Nellie Boustead, Suzanne Jacoby, and Josephine Bracken (Zaide&Zaide, 2018).

The eighteenth stanza contains visual imagery as vividly demonstrated in these lines: “On seeing the same moon, as silvery as before/I feel within me the ancient melancholy revive.” This stanza evokes his memory of his youth. He has multifold sojourns in different countries. His bygone journey is filled with “a thousand memories of love and vows awaken /a patio, an Azotea, a beach, a leafy bower.” The visual imagery persists in the next stanza as illustrated: “A butterfly athirst for radiance and colors/dreaming of other skies and of larger strife” This stanza evokes Rizal’s journey to another country. The “butterfly” is a pellucid emblem of his self. According to Fadul (2010), the butterfly he found in Dapitan is an *Aristarchus*, an azure-colored species which is endemic in the forestland of Mindanao. Akin to butterfly, he equips himself with intellectual supremacy for much wider opportunity from other place. The lines “I left, scarcely a youth, my land and my affections/ and vagrant everywhere, with no qualms, with no terrors” delineate his abandonment of his own country without skepticism and trepidation. He, on the other hand, declares that his legion sojourn is foolish and calls it: “April of my life.” Nevertheless, he has learned multifold things abroad. Rizal’s first travel was in Spain. He decided to complete his study in Spain after finishing fourth year of medical studies at the University of Santo Tomas. Rizal, on the other hand, deems his travel as a secret mission. His premier goal is to prepare himself for liberating the oppressed native Filipino from the Spaniards; thus, he keenly observes the customs, culture, commerce, and language of the European. Devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, Rizal journeyed to much distant places and countries: Parish, Germany, Hong Kong, Macao, Japan, United States, London, Paris, Belgian Brussels, Madrid, and Biarritz Vacation. Castroverde infers that Rizal’s experiences abroad hone his capability as a writer (2013).

The twentieth stanza contains aural imagery as illustrated in this line: “suddenly fiercely roared a violent hurricane.” The entire lines in this stanza evoke his first and second homecoming. Rizal, arrayed herself in superior intellect, decided to return home because his family in the Philippines was hunted by the Spanish authorities. He firmly believed also that his liberal ideals must be fought in the Philippines, not in abroad. Rizal was frustrated when he came back because his beloved fatherland was tortured and pulverized by the Spaniards as picturesquely exemplified in these lines: “and I found my wings broken, my dwelling place demolished/ faith now sold to others, and ruins everywhere.” Schumacher declares that Spaniards’ thwarted endeavors and political ideologies also provoke the Filipinos desire for revolution (2001). More so, Camposano (2019) infers that Rizal, a man who acquires political and social enlightenment from his experiences, deems Spanish friars as extremist in Philippine society. The next stanza has visual and kinesthetic imageries as amplified in these lines: “Hurlled upon a rock of the country I adore/ the future ruined; no home, no health to bring me to cheer.” These

lines delineate Rizal's dissatisfaction. He ventures to say that his fatherland has undergone captious alteration and adaptability.

Kinesthetic imagery carries on in the next stanza. This time, Rizal addresses his beloved country with "full of fire and life, offering a thousand crowns to immortality." He reasons that he will remain steadfast to his motherland no matter what happens: "if now no longer as merry, if now no longer as vivid/nor bear the superscription of fidelity." In the following stanza, Rizal commenced being grateful for what he had. He is thankful for the "hurricane" and "winds of heaven." The last stanza contains visual imagery. Some lines in this stanza, in fact, are taken from the first part of the poem. Both the first stanza and the last stanza have these poetic lines: "Besides a spacious beach of fine and delicate sand/ and at the foot of a mountain greener than a leaf... repose to my intellect and silence to my grief." In the first stanza, Rizal declares that he has built his "humble hut beneath a pleasant orchard/seeking in the still serenity of the woods"; whereas, in the last stanza, he concludes that he has finally found a serene asylum: "I found in my land a refuge under a pleasant orchard? and in its shadowy forests, serene tranquility"

"My First Inspiration" (MiPrimeraInspiracion, 1874) is an eight-stanza poem. This poem depicts his commendation and admiration for his mother. In fact, it was the first poem he wrote as a student at the Ateneo. In Craig's words (1909), Rizal's mother taught him how to read and write. According to Pajares, Leyte & Fernandez (2014), Rizal's literary skill is inherited from his mother. Rizal is grateful to have such mother who is clever and affectionate. As Bueno (2012) puts it, his mother is a gift from heaven who emboldens him to work even harder. It was his mother who fostered him to be a good citizen. For Rizal, she is like a Spartan who has gallantry and self-discipline. In fact, he began writing poetic and dramatic masterpieces at an early age. With his genuine love for his mother, he crafted a poem (that is, "My First Inspiration) in honor for his mother's birthday. This poem contains visual, olfactory, aural, and kinesthetic imageries. Olfactory imagery is evident in the first stanza: "Why falls so rich a spray /of fragrance from the bowers /of the balmy flowers /upon this festive day?" These lines evoke a delighted celebration. Rizal employs environmental images to express his appreciation for his mother. The second stanza includes aural imagery as described in these lines: "Why from woods and vales/do we hear sweet measures ringing/ that seem to be the singing/of a choir of nightingales?" These lines educe his memory of his mother while singing her a "happy birthday song." The aural imagery carries on in the third stanza: "Why in the grass below/do birds start at the wind's noises,/unleashing their honeyed voices/as they hop from bough to bough?" This stanza provides aural images relating to special events. The bird in this stanza emblemizes his beloved kith and kin who are jubilantly greeting and singing happy birthday. The fourth stanza also contains aural imagery. This stanza evokes Rizal's delighted and still deportment as he equates his mother's bearing with the "the spring that glows its crystalline murmur be tuning." The fifth stanza has visual imagery. For Rizal, everything is "more endearing" and "fairer." He goes on declaring that his mother, like the dawn, holds the attention of others by being fascinating and gorgeous. The next stanza contains olfactory and aural imageries. Rizal initiates on complimenting his mother. He cites the reason why other living things are gratified, which runs as follows:

The reason, dear mother, is
they feast your day of bloom:
the rose with its perfume,
the bird with its harmonies.

The seventh stanza contains aural imagery. In this stanza, Rizal wishes his mother a good life. Akin to fairy tales, he goes on saying: "Live happily ever after!" The aural imagery continues in the last stanza. His mother is delighted with his sudden love with his poetic composition: "that from my lute I emote/to the impulse of my love." Critics conceive that the persona of the poems that have been cited in the poetic imageries is a grown-up man who recounts his indelible moments in his hometown, his appreciation with his mother, and his personal encounters as an exile; however, the poems cannot be detached with the personal experiences of the author. The utilization of nominative pronoun "I" and the pronominal adjective "my" makes these poems analogous to his own situation.

Figures of Speech :

The first poem “In Memory of My Town” contains personification. This manifests in this line: “of a murmurous lagoon.” In this line, Rizal equates lagoon with human characteristic who can utter and act with quite expression. Personification, in addition, is evident in these lines: “the flowers exude when dawn/ and is smiling on the land.” Dawn is deemed to have human traits. This type of figurative language delineates the imaginative thoughts of the author. He makes use of personification to emblem the people of his native town. It is therefore not genuinely the lagoon that murmurs and the dawn that smiles but his childhood comrades and relatives.

The second poem “My Retreat” has metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. The metaphor in this poem is manifested in this line: “the silent night is melody and music.” The “silent night” is compared directly with the “melody” and “music.” This line educates the personal encounters of the author in bedtime in Dapitan. In fact, it was the tranquillity of the countryside that helped him fall asleep. In Dapitan, he engaged in scientific research and pursuit (Zaide&Zaide, 2008). He made natural exploration in the dense woodland. He even studied the local medicinal plants for those patients who could not afford to buy imported medicine. He also collected species and sent it to his comrades abroad in exchanged of scientific book and surgical instruments. In fact, there are five species that are named after him: *Draco rizali*, *Rhacophorusrizali*, *Apogoniarizali*, *Spathomelesrizali*, and *Hydropsyche rizali*. Furthermore, personification manifests in this line: “the waves narrate with many a sigh to the mild wind.” The waves are assumed to have the human attribution that can recount people’s weariness. Hyperbole is apparent in this line: “one sees the sea afire with flames of green and blue.” This line is an undiluted exaggeration of Rizal’s sentimentality. It depicts his ardent emotion which is filled with confusion and vexation.

”The third poem “My First Inspiration” contains personification as described this line: “to the zephyr's mellow crooning.” Zephyr is given human characteristic that can vocalize a poetical composition. This line calls forth motherly encounters. His mother crooned as she rocked him during the springtime of his life. Rizal, in fact, conceives that the Filipino mothers are essential in honing the capabilities of their children (Ruiz et al., 2016). Akin to Filipino mothers, Rizal endeavors to secure the well-being of the Filipino children. Perhaps, his upbringing instigates him to underscore the femininity in the Philippine society. Moreover, this poem is not just a naïve appreciation of his mother but also commendation of women’s felicity. This poem further provides the idea of feminism. For critics, women’s empowerment is about recognizing women’s rights and interests. The characteristic of an ample mother is foregrounded in his letter: To the Young Women of Malolos. In this letter, he stated that the Filipino mothers are tasked to manage the current enslavement and help their children to be a competitive person in the future (Viana, 2011). On a related note, San Juan infers that Rizal, indeed, honors women and is willing to defend their rights (2011). Rizal genuinely loves his mother. In fact, the imprisonment of his mother is one of the reasons for his radical ideals (Alicamen et al., 2016). After his medical studies abroad, Rizal returned to his native town to perform ophthalmologic practices and explore a number of controversial issues in Philippine society. Lapeña (2011) declared that Rizal was the one who successfully operated his mother’s left cataract in 1892.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the historical-biographical analysis of Dr. Jose P. Rizal’s selected poems, the following findings are hereby presented: (1) the poetic imageries depict narration of self; (2) the figures of speech delineate encounters that are analogous to his situation. More so, this study shows biographical and nature-related images that are produced by visual, thermal, kinesthetic, tactile, olfactory, and aural sensations. The textual analysis further unveils metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. These poetic elements help to uncover the author's presence in the text. In conclusion, Dr. Jose P. Rizal’s “In Memory of My Town,” “My Retreat,” and “My First Inspiration” reveal biographical synthesis of the poetic imageries and figures of speech. Significantly, the result provides deeper insights into Rizal’s personal life which could also be a better way of understanding the happening during the Spanish colonial era. Based on the findings and the conclusion, it is therefore recommended that the details of the poetic imageries be used as supplemental information in comprehending Dr. Jose P. Rizal’s poems in Philippine literature classes. These help enthusiasts, educators, and students in analyzing the imagism in Rizal’s masterpieces. The list of figures of speech be used in decoding the rhetorical devices in poetry as an

introduction to literary studies. These help critics, reviewers, and researchers in understanding the different types of figures of speech in the poems. The findings of this study are limited to the main problem and subproblems formulated by the author guided by the literature reviewed and supported by a literary theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to my professor, Dr.LitoDiones for his continuous support, invaluable advice, and patience during my undergraduate study. My gratitude extends to Dr. Niña Jen Ruta-Canayong and Dr.Reynaldo Caturza for their support which was influential in inspiring and honing my capabilities as a literary researcher. Lastly, I would like to thank all the ESOL educators for patiently and graciously supplying me with wisdom.

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