

Survey of Significant Events during the Philippine Colonial Years as Reflected in Selected Poems

Suzette F. Valdez, Ph.D
AMA International University of Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain

ABSTRACT— *Literature in its broadest sense is life for it has in its scope man's expression and reaction to the events of his time. The diversity and richness of Philippine literature evolved side by side with the country's history. A great deal of historical writing ranks as literature, particularly the genre known as creative non-fiction. It records data or convey information because it is an allegiance to history and as an adequate response to human difficulties-individual memory, freedom and universal aesthetic ideals. Poetry with its aesthetics embroiders the feelings and emotions of the people thus; man reacts to the significant events around him. It is true that Philippine history and government would cover the important events of the past but they don't describe nor picture in details the feelings, thought, dreams and actual life of the Filipinos. Literature is the inexhaustible riches of the past from which ideas are handed down through the centuries, influencing the way Philippines develops its society and civilization. The study of Philippine poetry offers a glimpse of the sacrifices that people have endured for the sake of the nation. This study analyzed selected Philippine poems which reflect the significant events in the Philippines during its colonial years. It offers an alternative approach in studying an important stage of Philippine history. The deepest truths of history are found in literatures which are inscribed in language making the reading of the work an intelligent operation of expressions.*

Keywords: allegiance, creative nonfiction, aesthetic ideals

1. INTRODUCTION

Many Filipino poets continue to patronize the intellectual influence started by Rizal. Poems that survived from the early periods are a form of recorded cultural information about the people of the past. With the artistic and linguistic material exhibited in the poet's craft, he can fashion the rich multiplicity of meaning of the work. Through his skillful craftsmanship of form and content, he reveals the authentic state of human conditions. This is one of the great and noble traditions that he uses as foundations for assimilation of new culture and new civilization. (Ganir, 1990)

Poetry uses the language that can represent history; it does not settle for merely recording emotions. It depicts the time. The people must not be alienated from sources where aspirations and ideals are rooted because poetry can be an account for reality of history but still functions aesthetically. Poets' interactions to historical facts and memory are tools that construct the honest accounts in their own versions as they attach their emotions to the ideas (Hila, 2003).

All literary works are inscribed in language; the reader must have sufficient understanding of linguistic elements. He must consider extra-linguistic factors to know if the work succeeds in linking with his consciousness the poems aesthetic milieu- a certain process that will make the text intelligible. Poetry works almost in the realm of connotative language. Communication in this particular part of art is difficult. Contexts can be critical for understanding poetry and that prevents people without a strong interest in poetry from reading or listening to it.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The almost four centuries of foreign domination had made Filipinos proficient in several tongues. By learning English and Spanish, educated Filipinos came in contact with the works of the countries of the world. Philippines being a cosmopolitan conglomeration of races has multifaceted history. The significant events during its colonial are not only read and heard in daily news but even expressed in the verses. These are materials aid one to unravel history through the stuff of the figurative language. Hence, it is apt to say that poetry inclines one for its entertainment value but also for its intellectual benefits (Aguilar, 1997).

This study analyzed selected poems by investigating the figurative language which was utilized by the poets. The significant events that are embedded in these works during the colonial periods in the Philippines offer an

alternative approach in understanding an important part of Philippine History.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Together, the artists and their art have a voice and a vision of civilization. They reach out to others and introduce insight and vision about society and culture. This study anchored its basis from the theory of Literary Historicism which is a field of study devoted to grasping the relationship that links a literary work to its social and historical context. Each work is produced by an author who is in turn necessarily the product of a specific socio-historical context and from which the study of the work accordingly cannot be divorced. <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher believes that the study would benefit the following:

The Researcher Herself. The study would help her enrich her professional and academic discipline, widen her horizon in understanding people.

The Future Researchers. The study would encourage them to be more sensitive with the prevailing events of their time and to record to the effect of sharing their observations by pursuing further studies.

The Students of Literature and Humanities. The study would make them appreciate the genius of their forefathers and eventually understand the country's history and culture.

The Schools of Languages and Social Sciences. The study would help them aid the students with options of studying history and culture, hence make the students understand better the works of the poets worth or reading.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive method. This is an essential guide to the researcher's thinking. Knowledge of facts concerning the conditions desired to investigate and to gain knowledge gained from studies that deal with causation. Descriptive research describes and interprets what is (Sanchez, 2002). It is concerned with conditions of relationships that exist, practices that prevail, beliefs and processes, effects that are being felt, or trends that have developed and are developing. It involves an element of interpretation of the meaning or significance of what is described. Description is also a fact-finding with adequate interpretation and more and beyond just data-gathering.

Relatively, the researcher used historiography where the selected masterpieces were considered as reflection and product of the periods and conditions in which they were written. This approach works on the assertion that the history of a nation has telling effects on its literature. The literary pieces can be better understood and appreciated if one knows the times adjacent its creation. Moreover, the historians' two heuristics in handling evidence i.e. sourcing, and contextualization were also be used. Sourcing, or identifying the author, date of creation of a document, and the place it was created is one way of determining the authenticity or accuracy of information. Contextualization, or identifying when and where an event took place. <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

With these approaches, the selected works were taken into account as the manifestations and vehicles for understanding Philippine colonial years through poetry.

To communicate the total effect of the works, the researcher investigated the chosen excerpts by chunks to study its content and structure of sound meaning and of intellectual quality. Content and structure in literary pieces work together to form one organic whole: they do not exist as separate elements.

6. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

6.1 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS DURING THE PHILIPPINE COLONIAL YEARS

6.1.1 DEATH OF DR. JOSE RIZAL

“To the National Hero “, Cecilio Apostol, (1898)

The Philippine national hero – Jose Rizal was the most celebrated *illustro* during the Spanish period. He was brought before a military court on fabricated charges of involvement with the Katipunan – a secret society that aimed to overthrow the Spanish dominion over the Philippines. A brief trial was held on December 26 and with little chance to defend himself, Rizal was found guilty and sentenced to death. On December 30, 1896. He was brought out to the Luneta and executed by a firing squad. Rizal's death filled and left the rebels with new determination in the following lines:

*This is the date, the funeral day,
in which the bloody tyrant
made you suffer the last torment,*

*as if, in breaking the earthen amphora,
the essence that in the amphora is enclosed
would not impregnate the wind.*

Rizal's reputation was greatly enhanced by the publication of his socio-historical novels: *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Fibusterismo*. His books exposed the abuses of the Spaniards thus inflames the Filipinos love of country. The following lines show his immortal influence to his countrymen.

*Who felt not the flight of his grief,
reviewing you book, in whose pages
Making brothers of mockery and lament,
the sharp crack of candent lash
vibrates indignant in its robust accent.*

*Perhaps in your voluntary ostracism
you judged it was bold determination
to liberate our oppressed race.
Look at her now: she is arrogant virgin
that with august Freedom, you love,
in a fraternal embrace is locked.*

Rizal's name had become well-known for his patriotism throughout the country. Thus reveal the following lines:

*Immortal hero! Legendary colossus!
Emerge from the ossuary's abyss
where you sleep the slumber of glory.
Come; our love that your memory inflames,
calls you from the shadowy eternity
to crown with flowers your memory.*

The execution of Rizal incited the Filipinos to continue fighting to their independence. His death is depicted by Cecilio Apostol in the following lines:

*You fell like a fruit already yellow,
but with you fell the seed,
already a vigorous plant is the embryo
it has thrived in the furrow of the paths,
and, already free from mortal combat,
beneath its branches your brothers slumber.*

6.1.2 CRY OF BALINTAWAK "1896," Aurelio Alvero, (1921)

Bonifacio started the revolution with the "CRY OF BALINTAWAK. The Katipunan was discovered in August 19, 1896 in Kalookan (now Quezon City) and it immediately caused the revolution. The Philippine Revolution primary and immediate causes were: the abuses of the Spanish officials, the failure of Spain to grant the reforms, the persecution of the leaders who had defended the cause of the oppressed people, racial discrimination against the Filipinos and the desire to regain the independence which Filipino ancestors enjoyed. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cry_of_Pugad_Lawin

In an assembly held in the yard of Melchora Aquino's son the *Katipuneros* tore their *cedulas*-the symbol of the Filipino subordination to Spain while shouting "Long Live the Philippines"! Long Live *the Katipunan!* (Agoncillo, 1978). The *Katipuneros*' furious outrage is shown in the following lines:

*The cry awoke Balintawak,
And the echoes answered back- "Freedom!"
All the four winds listened long
To the shrieking of that song – "Freedom!"
I heard it from the planters in the vales-
I heard it from the traders tying bales-*

*I heard it from the fishers striking their sails-
“Freedom!”
All the people raised the cry,
Fearing not to bleed of “Freedom!”
All the tombs of slave and sire
Broke to voice that great desire- “Freedom!”
Up the mountain, down the plain,
Louder, louder rang the strain- “Freedom!”*

6.1.3 DEATH OF ANDRES BONIFACIO “Since You Passed Away”, Gregoria de Jesus, (1898)

Andres Bonifacio was the Katipunan’s Supremo but he failed in his plan to be the supreme leader of the revolutionary government. The Katipunan split into two groups: Magdiwang group and Magdalo. The conflicts between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo (the leader of the Magdalo group) intensified. Consequently, Bonifacio, his soldiers and Procopio were taken prisoners, investigated and tried on the charges of treason, conspiracy to assassinate Aguinaldo and bribing government soldiers to join the seditious plot. Guilty of treason, Bonifacio and his brother Procopio were executed by firing squad (<http://filipinojournal.com/alberta/our-columnist/journal-of-philippine-revolution/the-tragedy-of-the-revolution-the-death-of-andres-bonifacio.html>) Gregoria De Jesus laments her husband’s death in the following lines:

*Since you passed, beloved, I did not know
where to place my body and hear;
the flow of blood in my veins is slow,
remembering specially your largeness of heart.
To you, who love so joyously, farewell,
you who own my heart, the other half of my body;
farewell indeed, I let go freely,
farewell, my beloved, to you farewell.*

6.1.4 INAUGURATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY CONGRESS IN BARASAOIN MALOLOS “Malolos” Luis Dato, (1898)

Aguinaldo spotted a chance that the Philippines might attain its independence after the U.S. declared war against Spain. He went back to Manila on May 19, 1898 and declared Philippine independence on June 12. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/spain.html>

On September 15, 1898, the Revolutionary Congress was inaugurated at the Barasaoin Church in Malolos amidst colorful festivities. *Banda Pasig* played the national anthem outside the church. Spectators lined the streets as General Aguinaldo, his advisers and members of the Congress walked to the church where the ceremonies were to be held. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malolos_Congress). The spectacular parade of the delegates and soldiers is described in the following lines:

*Again I see a gay procession,
And men in bright attire;
A hundred delegates in session,
And soldiers in the mire.*

The altar of the church was draped for the assembly. General Aguinaldo convoked the assembly in the opening session. He urged the delegates to promulgate a constitution that would be the most glorious expression of the noble aspirations of the Filipino people. As the delegates converged at Malolos, they made it evident that they wished to enact a constitution and to establish a permanent government for the country. A proof that the Filipinos already had the capacity to govern is marked by the following lines:

*Malolos, once you rent asunder
A striding tyrant’s heels,
A day as this that sees us thunder
Down you with iron wheels*

6.1.5 SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR **“Moonlight at Manila Bay” Francisco Maramag, (1912)**

The United States declared war against Spain in April 25, 1898. The secretary of the navy, Theodore Roosevelt, ordered Dewey to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. The Battle of Manila Bay was one of the first hostile engagements of the Spanish-American War. In the darkness before dawn, Commodore Dewey’s fleet of vessels led by flagship Olympia passed under the siege guns on the island of Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay and by noon on May 1, 1898 had destroyed the Spanish fleet. <http://philippineamericanwar.webs.com/battleofmanilabay.htm>

*A light serene, ethereal glory, rests
Its beams effulgent on each cresting wave;
The silver touches on the moonlight lave
The deep’s bare bosom at the breeze molests;
While lingering whispers deepen as the wavy crests
Roll with weird rhythm, now, gay, now gently grave;
And floods of lambent light appear the sea to pave
Here bold Olympia, one historic night,
Presaging freedom, claimed a people’s care.*

Warships began arriving in Manila Bay from Britain, France, Japan, and Germany. The following lines describe Dewey’s victory.

*All cast a spell that heeds not time’s behests.
Not always such the scene: the din of fight
Has swelled the murmur of the peaceful air;*

How the Filipinos fought hard and helped the Americans is demonstrated in the following lines:

*Here East and West have oft displayed their might;
Dark battle clouds have dimmed this scene so fair;*

6.1.6 PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR **“San Juan Bridge”, Luis Dato (1898)**

The first blow of the Philippine-American war was struck by America. Private Robert Grayson shot and killed a Filipino soldier who was trying to cross the San Juan Bridge into American lines. Luis Dato discloses this conflict in the following lines:

*A shot the night’s centurial stillness tore,
The sleeping river startled from repose,
A flash, then darkness, but from darkness rose
Shouts that would echo far o’er Pasig shore.
The fateful winds, swift-wandering, bore
Voices and wails, a last lament, a groan,
A soldier’s cry became the plain with gore.*

The early battles of the war were fought in Manila. With the American superior arms, they easily routed the Filipino patriots everywhere. The hostility between the two is exhibited in the following lines:

*But cleaving friends, late comrades, into two,
And tinged with flood adown its channel ran,
While rifles barked and trumpets blared and blew.
And armies met, in combat man to man,
Raising to God the grievance of their woe.*

6.1.7 WORLD WAR II AND THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION (1941-1945) **“The Voices of Bataan”, Carlos Bulosan (1943)**

The Philippines was in its adjustment period to the American colony lifestyle when World War II broke out.

The country was drawn into this war as an ally of America. World War II was the most widespread war in history. Poverty emerged as the economy declines due to destruction. Thus, the effects of war are disclosed in the following lines:

*I saw it. I saw the banks that failed.
And the crowds rioting. I saw the crops plowed under,
And the masses starving. I saw the fields flower once more,
And the stock exchange rise in panic again
I saw the rise and fall of nations.*

At the onset of the attacks, civilian structures were burned and crumbled in succeeding explosions. Many were shocked. Bodies littered the ground together with the wounded. The Japanese superiority is displayed in the following lines:

*All through the years in that mythical land,
We followed the martial voices.
They burned the profound books of history,
They made us believe the power of the sword'
The splendor and glory of conquest...
"Move eastward to the rising sun" they shouted,
Pounding upon the horrid maps on the tables;
And our planes bombed and burned islands.*

No one could travel without a pass from the Japanese army. This prohibition in travel was lifted a month and half after the fall of Corregidor. The following lines describe the fears of the people:

*I find it hard to walk in the night.
But I watch history rush through the heart of America
From one ocean to meadow to another ocean, feeling
The voluminous downpour of blood from the lung,
The sudden snapping of red wires upon my side.*

The Philippines was drawn into this war as ally of America

*How many years did we fight the Beast together,
You in your violent way, in your troublous world,
I in my quiet ways we fought apart and together*

6.1.8 AMERICA SURRENDERS PHILIPPINES TO JAPAN "Bataan, Corregidor", Manuel Bernabe, (1944)

For one and a half months, small military action took place in Bataan. At the end of March, General Homma finally got the military support he needed. The Japanese brought in reinforcement from Singapore. On April 3, Good Friday (after Singapore surrendered to Japan) the enemy forces launched their final offensive in Bataan. Bombers attacked anything that moved. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/all-american-forces-in-the-philippines-surrender-unconditionally>

Manuel Bernabe elucidates the determination of the soldiers to win the battle in the following lines:

*Hundreds and thousands. Their armors glistened
in the sun like white hosts, refulgent gems.
Sweat exuded from their bodies because
the sun was harsh, the air fiery, and the wild beast
was redoubling its assaults, unleashing enormous fury,
For it rejoiced provoking multiform tragedy.
I saw them panting through ravines and gorges,
with breasts exposed, brows held high,
zigzagging serpent-like through the flanks
upwards, ever upwards.
amid thunder over stockades,
banner waving
machine-guns firing
and canons dragging.*

The troops of Bataan had been reduced by hunger, disease, and casualties to the point of military helplessness

on April 9, 1942. The food situation had become so serious that the daily ration had to be dropped below half rations. With injured soul, the willpower to survive by the Filipino and American soldiers is shown in the following lines:

*I saw them dine on herbs, drink of slime, garbed
In leaves,
defying danger with the ferocity of lions,
untiring and undismayed,
for they sought through a baptism of bloody waters
to sprinkle the plains, lighting calvaries
with the luminous bonfire of their dreams of freedom.*

Hope against hope, Macarthur and his troops were determined to hold Bataan and Corregidor. Saving glory and vested with perseverance, soldiers face death in the following lines:

*Such perseverance of will is revealed in the following lines:
But on and on they go.
For not even the knife of hunger nor the bomb with
its shrapnel
detain them in their epic leap skyward.
Enthralled, gall oozing through its fur,
stomps the wolf:
that quarrelsome, treacherous, carnivorous, beggarly
wolf of horror and fury,
that on earth despoils the rosebushes on the trail,
and kills the sprouts of love in souls.
Bataan!
Corregidor!*

The Americans were so short of basic medical supplies in Bataan. Even the hospitals were not safe for the sick and medical staff, including female nurses. The hospitals in Bataan even marked with Red Cross repeatedly bombed the hospitals in Bataan. <http://www.ualberta.ca/~vmitchel/fw6.html>

This barbarous behavior is shown in the following lines:

*Life is brief and only for the offering, like the candle.
And there they go. And there they go,
with the impulse of a hurricane.
up above, clouds of birds of steel
hover with bowels reloaded
with industries of death, that in blitzkrieg
bring death.
They are the messenger birds of Satan!*

It took the Japanese almost six months to be in complete control of the Filipino-American resistance in Bataan and Corregidor. Manuel Bernabe shows the bravery of the combating soldiers in the following lines:

*But on and on they go.
For not even the knife of hunger nor the bomb with
its shrapnel
detain them in their epic leap skyward.
Enthralled, gall oozing through its fur,
stomps the wolf:
that quarrelsome, treacherous, carnivorous, beggarly
wolf of horror and fury,
that on earth despoils the rosebushes on the trail,
and kills the sprouts of love in souls.
Bataan!
Corregidor!
Key of victory, thaumaturgic bread,
whose saintly yeast was sorrow!
Talisman*

*of valor,
and guardian
of honor!*

People in Manila could hear successive bombings directed against the island of Corregidor. The aggressiveness of the enemy forces, the long days in the battlefields and shortage of food and medicine claimed the lives of many. Surrender negotiations were conducted. General Wainwright decided to surrender Corregidor and the harbor forts which he addressed to General Homma in the morning of May 6, through the *Voice of Freedom*. The surrender of the exhausted fighters is highlighted in the following lines:

*He who killed was killed. He who wounded was wounded;
for life
to them was something without a meaning,
a lighted lantern
on the altars of martyrdom.
Die young, die strong!
What matters life? What matters death?*

The valor of the Filipino and American soldiers is celebrated yearly on April 9 in the Philippines, Valor Day or Araw ng Kagitingan.

*East and West will never forget you,
New Jerusalems of God Our Lord!
Whenever a challenge is hurled against honor and valor
always with the five continents pray”
Corregidor!
Bataan!*

6.1.9 DEATH MARCH FROM BATAAN TO PAMPANGA “March of Death”, Bienvenido Santos, (1944)

The 76,000 starving and sick American and Filipino defenders in Bataan surrendered to the Japanese on April 9, 1942 and the infamous *Death March* began in Mariveles and Cabcaben on April 10 of the same year. The Japanese led their captives on a cruel and criminal Death March on which close to 10,000 died or were murdered before arriving at the internment camps. The Filipino-American troops were forced at gunpoint to march with wounded legs or heads wounds bandaged with shirt uniforms. Some were carried on army wool blankets folded in hammocks, tied in bamboo poles and carried by other comrades. Other soldiers limped on crutches made out of tree branches. Consequently, who were too sickly to walk were left to die. This infamous trail death is languished in the following lines:

*Were you one of them, my brother,
Whom they marched under the April sub
And flogged to bleeding along the roads
we knew and loved?
March, my brother, march!*

The battered Filipino and American soldiers submitted to the enemy forces. Many of the weak and exhausted marchers died. Those who managed to stay alive endured the dirty surroundings, hunger and diseases in the prison camp; consequently, their number was reduced (<http://www.ualberta.ca/~vmitchel/fw6.html>).

Bienvenido Santos mourns in the following lines:

*The many young bodies that lie mangled by the roadside;
The blood-soaked dust over the bloody rage of men;
The agony and the morning and the silent tears;
The grin of yellow men, their blood-stained blades opaque in the sun’
The many months of hunger and torture, and waiting.*

6.2 THE LITERARY DEVICES THAT THE POETS USED IN OFFERING AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN UNDERSTANDING PHILIPPINE COLONIAL YEARS

6.2.1 Anthropomorphism. A figure of speech where inanimate objects are given attributes that are not are not likely human qualities but its meaning is suggestively portrayed by humans.

Luis D. Dato's poetic impulse concretizes the outright aggression of the Filipinos who are ready to defend honor against the Americans in "San Juan Bridge" as the following lines testify:

*While rifles barked and trumpets blared and blew,
And armies met, in combat man to man,
Raising to God the grievance of their woe.*

6.2.2 Apostrophe. It refers to an address to an inanimate object, an idea or a person who is absent/long dead. It is evident in "Since You Passed Away, Beloved" when Gregoria de Jesus longs for her dead husband-Andres Bonifacio in the following lines:

*.....Since you passed, beloved, I did not know what to do ,
.....At the spot when you sit usually
To you, who love so joyously, farewell,
you who own my heart, the other half of my body;
farewell indeed, I let go freely,
farewell, my beloved, to you farewell.*

Bienvenido Santos while in America pours out his anxiety over a brother in the following lines of "The Death of March"

*...were you one of them, my brother?
...No, you have not died, you cannot die!*

Cecilio Apostol hails the greatness of Jose Rizal in the following lines of "To The National Hero"

*Immortal hero! Legendary colossus!
Emerge from the ossuary's abyss
where you sleep the slumber of glory.
Come; our love that your memory inflames,
calls you from the shadowy eternity
to crown with flowers your memory.*

*Redeemer of a Motherland enslaved!
Weep not in the mystery of the tomb,
over the Spaniards; momentary triumph,*

In "The Voices of Bataan" Manuel Bernabe takes conceit in the following lines:

*They are afraid, my brother,
They are afraid of our mighty fists, my brother,
They are afraid of the magnificence of our works,
My brother,
They are even afraid of our songs of love, my brother.
The fatal trek of the captured soldiers after the siege of Bataan and
Corregidor*

Bienvenido S. Santos in "Death of March" asks and hopes for the safety of a brother from a distance in the following lines:

*Were you one of them, my brother,
Whom they marched under the April sun
And flogged to bleeding along the roads we knew and loved?
March, my brother, march!*

*No, you have not died; you cannot die!
I have felt your prayer touch my heart
As I walked alone the crowded streets of America!*

6.2.3 Imagery with Rhyme Scheme. A literary device which describes something in details that stimulate visual and sound images because of the rhyme.

Francisco M. Maramag in his sonnet “Moonlight on Manila Bay” describes the Philippines in the following sensuous lines that are complemented with the alluring end sounds.

*A light serene, ethereal glory, rests
Its beams effulgent on each cresting wave;
The silver touches on the moonlight lave
The deep's bare bosom at the breeze molests;
While lingering whispers deepen as the wavy crests
Roll with weird rhythm, now, gay, now gently grave;
And floods of lambent light appear the sea to pave-*

Likewise, Luis D. Dato in “Malolos” captures another glimpse of historical event that frames his description with the following rhyme scheme:

*The town is quiet, the houses still
And dark the house of God;
The heroes slumber up the hill,
And in my heart their blood.*

*Again I see a gay procession,
And men in bright attire;
A hundred delegates in session,
And soldiers in the mire.*

*Malolos, once you rent asunder
A striding tyrant's heels,
A day as this that sees us thunder
Down you with iron wheels*

6.2.4 Metaphor. A figure of speech that implies a comparison of a direct statement and that equates two seemingly unlike things or ideas. Cecilio Apostol likens Jose Rizal to a solitary star in the following lines of “To the National Hero”.

*How much the people owe you! In your calvary
yesterday you were the solitary star,
that illuminated the field of battle,
sweet apparition, laughter of heaven
that infused, consolation in the martyrs,
valor in the hero and dear in the canaille.*

*his words were the luminous torch
that in lightning the din of battle,
ended our great secular weakness*

Luis D. Dato resembles the soldier's cry with the plain with gore in the following lines of “San Juan Bridge”.

*Voices and wails, a last lament, a groan,
A soldier's cry became the plain with gore.*

History has the likeness of strange gush of wind in the following lines of Manuel Bernabe's “The Voices of Bataan”.

*History was a strange gush of wind from memory
That came to echo waterfalls of those years:*

Similarly, the conquerors (They) has the likeness of the messenger birds of Satan.

They are the messenger birds of Satan!

6.2.5 Metaphor and Allusion (reference to historic place). A literary device which comparison of two unlike things has a reference to historical place and is relative to the development of the poem.

Like daggers, the fierceness of Rizal’s ideas crystallizes the sentiments of the Filipinos. In” To the National Hero”, Cecilio Apostol enlightens in the following lines:

*Glory to Rizal! His sacrosanct name,
that with fires of Tabor blazes,
in the mind of the sage, is the light of idea,*

6.2.6 Metonymy. A figure of speech which uses one word to stand for a related term or replacement of word. In “1896’ Aurelio Alvero substitutes *protest that emerged in Balintawak to cry awoke; thunder* instead of *striking light and iron wheels* in place of the *rich*.

The cry awoke Balintawak.

In “San Juan Bridge” Luis D. Dato uses *blood that rages* in place of *aims* that the patriots have.

*The heroes slumber the hill
And in my heart their blood.
A day this that sees us thunder
Down you with iron wheels*

Manuel Bernabe gives a grand description of the Philippines in the following line in “The Voice of Bataan”:

Dark brown gray of great fertility

Ironically, this land was once under control of the colonizer-Spain. The *Beast* refers to the *conqueror*.

How many years did we fight the Beast together?

Oxymoron. A figure of speech that refers to the putting together of two opposite ideas in one statement. It is used to provide emphasis and create interest.

In “The March of Death”, Bienvenido Santos secludes himself in the warmth of winter. He defies his anxiety and grief in the following lines”

*I would be silent, too, having nothing to say.
What matters if the winters were bitter cold
And loneliness stalked my footsteps on the snow?*

6.2.7 Parallelism. It is literary technique which refers to the use of similar identical language, structure or ideas in different part of the poem. In “The Voices of Bataan”, Carlos Bulosan in the following lines emphasize that war exempts no one:

*For the worker and the unemployed,
For the colored and the foreign born:*

However, the invading forces cannot prevent him to express his unbridled pronouncement on his sentiment of nationalism. The following lines illuminates:

*Because we fight for truth, for beauty, for life,
We fight for the splendor of love...*

In “Bataan, Corregidor”, Manuel Bernabe describes the military action in the following lines:

*banner waving
machine-guns firing
and canons dragging.
I saw them dine on herbs, drink of slime, garbed
In leaves,
defying danger with the ferocity of lions,
untiring and undismayed,*

6.2.8 Parallelism, Simile and Allusion (reference to historic place).It is a literary technique which parallel construction is joined by expressions “as”, “like”, and “than.” and with reference to a place in history relative to the development of the poem. In “The March of Death”, Bienvenido Santos reminisces his youth with a brother in the picturesque lines:

*Dragging tree trunks from the forests,
Rebuilding homes-laughing again-*

Sowing the fields with grain, fearless of death

6.2.9 Personification. Is a figure of speech that refers to the giving of human attributes/characteristics to inanimate objects, an animal, force of nature, or an idea. In “Moonlight on Manila Bay”, Fernando M. Maramag details the coming of the Americans in the following lines:

*The silver touches on the moonlight lave
The deep’s bare bosom at the breeze molests;
While lingering whispers deepen as the wavy crests
Roll with weird rhythm, now, gay, now gently grave;*

The flickering brightness of the explosion blinds Carlos Bulosan in the following lines of “The Voice of Bataan.”

*Remember the bewildering upward thrust of buildings,
The amazing conflagrations of stabbing lights?*

6.2.10 Repeated Grammar Structure. This is a literary technique which a part or some parts of the poem is repeated in the whole poem. Carlos Bulosan stresses his testimonies of the conquering forces in the following lines of “The Voices of Bataan.”

*I saw it. I saw the banks that failed.
And the crowds rioting. I saw the crops plowed under,
And the masses starving. I saw the fields flower once more,
And the stock exchange rise in panic again
I saw the rise and fall of nations.
I saw mount intricate*

In “Death of March”, Bienvenido Santos urges his brother to continue fighting for life.

March, my brother, march!

6.2.11 Sarcasm. It is a figure of speech which refers to a bitter, cutting remark often ironical which is intended to hurt or to prove a point. In “To the National Hero”, Cecilio adheres and seeks an end to the torment and pain inflicted by the Spanish government. Hence, he asserts that the martyrdom of Jose Rizal, is threat to the Spanish authority. The following lines affirm his notion of Rizal’s influence to the patriots:

*as if, in breaking the earthen amphora,
the essence that in the amphora is enclosed
would not impregnate the wind.*

*for if a bullet your cranium destroyed,
your ideas, in turn, an empire destroyed*

6.2.12 Simile. It is a figure of speech that refers to the word or phrase such as “as” or “like” to compare seemingly unlike things or ideas. Jose Rizal left an immortal legacy that chains his patriotic sentiments to his country. Cecilio Apostol in his “To the National Hero” likens Rizal’s death to a seasoned fruit capable of another spring. Thus the following lines demonstrate:

*You fell like a fruit already yellow,
but with you fell the seed,
already a vigorous plant is the embryo
it has thrived in the furrow of the paths,
and, already free from mortal combat,
beneath its branches your brothers slumber.*

The grief of losing Andres Bonifacio, takes Gregoria de Jesus to nowhere in “Since You Passed Away, Beloved”

*I will walk, like smoke; when
white rises, it is like the spider web*

Manuel Bernabe delights in admiration to his father’s agricultural routine in the following lines of “The Voices of Bataan”

*The water glistened on his arms
Like the cool dew in the morning*

However, at the dawn of his youth, the Japanese come and claims superiority in the following lines:

*There came a day in my childhood, in the beginning
Of my conscious life,
that swung like a drawn sword and struck me full upon the face
And sent me bleeding into the world of lies.*

Freedom defenders as one and with armors welcome the conquering forces but vanish in the end. The following lines of “Bataan, Corregidor” by Manuel Bernabe witness:

*Hundreds and thousands. Their armors glistened
in the sun like white hosts, refulgent gems.
...Life is brief and only for the offering, like the candle*

6.2.13 Synecdoche. It is a figure of speech which refers to the naming of the parts to suggest the whole, or a whole to suggest a part. In “Bataan, Corregidor”, Manuel Bernabe abhors General Homa when the latter launched his final offensive. The following lines are witnesses to the gruesome acts of human destruction.

*that quarrelsome, treacherous, carnivorous, beggarly
wolf of horror and fury,
that on earth despoils the rose bushed on the trail,
and kills the sprouts of love in souls.*

In “The March of Death”, Bienvenido N. Santos’ heart succumbs to desperation as he fancies on behalf of a brother’s well-being who is under the cruelty of the Japanese. His agony is executed in the following line:

The grin of yellow men, their blood-stained blades opaque in the sun’

7. CONCLUSION

With constant wonders, undiminished even amidst the war, poets prove that poetry is language that is multi-tasking; poetry is one of the art forms that define history. The poet can turn his experience to poetry. Good poetry endures forever. It is a prudent and effective chronicler of the times. Poets’ response to historical facts and memory are the tools that construct the honest accounts of history. Poetry attaches its emotions to the ideas; the ideas are the facts. Poetry covers a range of experiences. It exposes feelings and attitudes about or on toward an event, an issue or subject and it slyly moves on with the temper and clime of the time, revealing life.

The following poems reflect the significant events in Philippine history: “To the National Hero”, Cecilio Apostol, (1898) describes the martyrdom of Jose Rizal, “Since You Passed Away, Beloved”, Gregoria de Jesus, (1898) relates the execution of Andres Bonifacio, “1896”, Aurelio Alvero, (1921) reveals the Cry of Balintawak, “Malolos”, Luis G. Dato, (1898) pictures the inauguration of the first Revolutionary Congress at the Barasaoin Church in Malolos, “Moonlight at Manila Bay”. Francisco Maramag, (1912) narrates the intrusion of American invasion of the Philippines, “San Juan Bridge”, Luis Dato, (1898) discloses the outbreak of US-Philippine war, “The Voices of Bataan”, Carlos Bulosan, (1943) gives an account of WWII and the initial stage of Japanese invasion of the Philippines, “Bataan, Corregidor”, Manuel Bernabe, (1944) visualizes the struggle of Americans and Filipinos as allies in fighting the imperial Japanese, “March of Death”, Bienvenido Santos, (1944) tells the infamous death trail from Capas to San Fernando of the American and Filipino soldiers.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions, this study recommends that the readers of poetry should have the discipline of the language of literature, familiarity of its milieu, and awareness with the significant events of the time.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author acknowledges the help given by Dr. Leticia Lava, Dr. Virginia Ganir and Ranz Elifred and Rogelio Valdez towards the realization of this academic endeavor.

10. REFERENCES

- Agoncillo, T. A. 1978, *Introduction to Filipino History*, National Bookstore, Gorotech Publishing House.
- Aguilar, C.G., 1997, *Critiques on Poetry*, Rex Book Store, Manila
- Hila, A.C., 2003. Culture and development: Government patronage of the arts in the new society. *Ad Veritatem (Multi-Disciplinary Research Journal)*, 2(2): 83-85
- Ganir, V.P., 2000. A handbook in philippine literature. MLQU Bookstore.
- Lacia, F.C., 2003. The literatures of the philippines. Rex Bookstore, Manila.
- Marcos, I.R., 1969. Message. *Music Journal of the Philippines*: 1.
- Sanchez, C.A., 2002. Methods and techniques of research, Rex Book Store. Manila.

Internet

- <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>
- <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/spain.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cry_of_Pugad_Lawin.
- <http://philippineamericanwar.webs.com/battleofmanilabay.htm>
- <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/all-american-forces-in-the-philippines-surrender-unconditionally>
- <http://www.ualberta.ca/~vmitchel/fw6.html>