



Symbols and Archetypes: A Formalist and Archetypal Analysis of Peter Solis Nery's Three Hiligaynon Short Stories

Atasha Rose Salva^{1,2} , Pearl Joy B. Materbonia^{1,3} ,
Ma. Rebecca A. Canono^{1,4} , Alyka Marie G. Guanzon^{1,5} ,
Dr. John Jonathan N. Normandia^{1,6} 

¹ Philippine Normal University Visayas, Cadiz City, Philippines

² salva.arn@stud.pnu.edu.ph

³ materbonia.pjb@stud.pnu.edu.ph

⁴ canono.mra@stud.pnu.edu.ph

⁵ guanzon.amg@stud.pnu.edu.ph

⁶ normandia.jjn@pnu.edu.ph

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70922/t55vj346>

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Article History:

Date received: January 25, 2026

Date accepted: April 6, 2026

Other citation formats:

How to Cite this paper:

Salva, A. R., Materbonia, P. J. B., Canono, M. R. A., Guanzon, A. M. G., & Normandia, J. J. N. (2026). Symbols and Archetypes: A Formalist and Archetypal Analysis of Peter Solis Nery's Three Hiligaynon Short Stories. *Social Sciences and Development Review*, 18(1), pp. 61–88. <https://doi.org/10.70922/t55vj346>

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⁴ canono.mra@stud.pnu.edu.ph

⁵ guanzon.amg@stud.pnu.edu.ph

⁶ normandia.jjn@pnu.edu.ph

ABSTRAK

Philippine regional literature, specifically Hiligaynon, encompasses a multifold of genres that reflect the region's culture and literary excellence. Authors in the language excel in the craft of putting narrative and other elements together to create stories that provide insights into the lives and values of the Hiligaynon community. This study aims to contribute to the visibility of regional literature in academic research by exploring Hiligaynon literature through the works of Peter Solis Nery, particularly in the aspect of symbolism. Employing a Qualitative Textual Analysis design, this study sought to find (1) the symbolisms in the short stories *Lirio*, *Donato Bugtot*, and *Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios*, and (2) how the symbols align with or diverge from universal archetypes. Using I.A. Richard's Formalism, the study examined the symbolisms in the three short stories to uncover layers of representations and meanings. Guided by Carl Jung's Archetypal Theory, the symbols were then compared to collective mental constructs that have resonated among individuals for thousands of years. The findings show that the symbols play important roles in the stories, serving as vessels through which the characters' struggles, experiences, and faith are illustrated, illuminating the truths often unspoken within Filipino society, such as abuse, social rejection, and the struggle of faith. Among the eighteen symbols, fifteen were found to align with universal archetypes, highlighting the universality of Hiligaynon literature. Meanwhile, the three symbols, specifically the lily flower, Donato's hump and kidney, hold distinct meanings in the narratives, showing the contextual nature of symbolism.

Keywords: *archetypes, formalism, Hiligaynon short stories, Peter Solis Nery, symbolism*

INTRODUCTION

Philippine literature offers a rich array of works that reflect the country's diverse cultural identity and literary excellence at both the national and regional levels. In the contemporary study of Philippine national literature, regional literature emerged as equally important, providing insights into the lives, values, and perspectives of local people. Whether written or oral, regional literature carries distinct identity and traditions despite migration and cultural mixing. Yet, there remains a lack of further exploration of diverse regional literature in academic studies (Mojares, 2023). According to Mojares (2023), the study of regional literature aids in understanding how culture changes, leading to the creation of unique traits in each region. Similarly, Simbolon et al. (2025) argue that literary scholars must study vernacular and regional literature more systematically because in this lies the definition of national identity. Hiligaynon literature constitutes a vibrant tapestry of literary forms such as novels, prose, poetry, and especially short stories that carry the distinct culture of the Hiligaynon community (Tribunal-Nemenzo, 2023). Authors in the language have produced a great number of outstanding works that have gained recognition from various literary awards in the country. Despite this, the recent body of research on Hiligaynon literature shows a significant gap in studies on various aspects. While some notable research has been conducted on translating Philippine stories from Tagalog to Hiligaynon for contextualized instruction materials and ongoing efforts to improve translation capabilities and accessibility across Philippine languages, Hiligaynon literature itself remains underexplored in other aspects, such as literary elements and techniques, particularly symbolism. As a literary tool, symbolism uses symbols to represent an abstract idea beyond its literal meaning (Kumar, 2020). According to Carl Jung's "collective unconscious," universal symbolism suggests that some symbols have a psychological resonance shared across the world.

Peter Solis Nery is a well-known Filipino author whose works, mainly written in Hiligaynon, have received recognition from prestigious literary contests, such as the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards, the Cultural Center of the Philippines Literary Grant, and the All-Western Visayas Literary Contest of the NCCA. While studies like Villanueva and Mendoza (2021) and Dimo (2022) have explored some of Nery's works in the aspect of themes, social issues, signs and meanings in Hiligaynon contemporary stories, there is a lack of in-depth study of his use of symbolic elements as deliberate literary device that not only enrich the text but also reinforce the collective mental constructs embedded in the mind of individuals. This gap is evident in the lack of formalist analysis that focuses on how Nery uses symbols to convey meaning in his stories. Thus, this study examines Nery's symbolic patterns and imagery and how they relate archetypally, drawing on the shared ancient heritage of every human being. Lastly, this research aims to contribute to literary discourses surrounding Hiligaynon literature and acknowledges local writers.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Texts

This study analyzes three representative Hiligaynon short stories by Peter Solis Nery—*Lirio*, *Donato Bugtot*, and *Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios*—purposively selected to form the research corpus. Three primary considerations guided the selection of these specific texts, namely, (1) accessibility and authorship under a single writer, (2) thematic diversity, and (3) symbolic element. First, their accessibility and authorship under a single writer ensure a focused and coherent analysis of symbolic patterns. Second, their thematic diversity captures significant human experiences, including abuse, transformation, and death; rejection and redemption; and faith amidst communal struggle and God's trial in faith. Third, the narratives are rich in symbolic elements. It consists of recurring objects, characters, and settings that add depth to the overall themes, making the narratives highly conducive to formalist and archetypal analysis. Taking these into account, this corpus provides a robust foundation for examining how Nery's Hiligaynon fiction utilizes local symbols and how these elements align with or diverge from universal archetypes.

Employing a Qualitative Textual Analysis design, the study sought to find (1) the symbolisms in the three selected short stories and (2) if the identified symbols align with or diverge from universal archetypes. Guided by Altheide and Schneider's (2013) five steps to textual analysis and I. A. Richard's Theory of Formalism, the stories were closely analyzed to examine the symbolisms used and uncover layers of inherent meanings in the texts. After the formalist analysis of the symbols, Carl Jung's Archetypal Theory was then applied to compare the symbols to collective mental constructs that have resonated among individuals for thousands of years.

To ensure credibility, the analyses have undergone validation from literature critics and professors. The validators scrutinized the first phase of the analysis (formalist literary analysis) and the second phase (archetypal comparisons), guided by a set of criteria, with a rating scale from 1-5. The validation results showed high marks in both phases. The formalist analyses scored 15 from the combined ratings, while the archetypal comparisons scored 10 from the combined marks of two similar validators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Symbolism in Lirio, Donato Bugtot, and Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios

STORY	SYMBOLS	MEANING IN THE STORY
Lirio	Lirio Apa	purity, innocence, and resilience despite silence and abuse
	lily flowers	pure love, escape, and transformation
	the garden	silent companionship and sanctuary
	the butterflies	mystical guardianship and Lirio’s emotional reflection
	the black butterfly	omen of death and forewarning
	Number Three	transition and change
	Itik Lugay	totality of abuse—physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual
Donato Bugtot	Donato’s hump	rejection and Donato’s burden
	the necklace and the letter	Marita’s conflicted love and maternal guilt
	Nay Tiling and Padre Tino	compassion and acceptance
	Donato’s kidney	redemption and Donato’s self-definition
	Donato and Jed	tension between appearance and essence
Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios	El Niño	God’s trial of faith and a call for stronger collective faith
	Padre Olan	the struggle of faith and priestly responsibility
	the rain	renewal
	church	communal faith
	Three o’clock in the afternoon	sacred hour for God’s mercy
	Don Beato Yngala	transformative power towards a common good

LIRIO

1. Lirio Apa

Lirio Apa is the central character in the story. Her silence started at birth and ended the night before she became a flower. Lirio's silence becomes a powerful symbol of repression, particularly in an abusive home ruled by her husband, Itik Lugay, whose "*kapintas*" or cruelty shaped Lirio's life of violence, injuring her physically, sexually, and emotionally.

Despite this trauma, Lirio remains pure and innocent. Her final, pure-hearted prayer to be turned into a lily was a plea for peace and transformation—not for help or revenge—making Lirio a symbol of purity, innocence, and resiliency.

2. Lily flower

The "Lirio," or Lily flower, carries two symbolic meanings in the story. First, it symbolizes pure love. The lilies appear during two significant religious sacraments: Lirio's baptism and wedding. The word "*nag-anaw*," or flooded, enhances the image of overflowing purity and love present in both ceremonies. Noli often gives three Lily flowers to Lirio as a sign of his pure and enduring "*paghigugma*" or love.

Second, it symbolizes escape. At the end of the story, Lirio makes a final hard-hearted invocation to become a lily. Long before she transformed into a flower, Lirio had already expressed her desire to become one for her lilies, to be free from pain and suffering. Her transformation into one symbolizes her final escape.

3. Garden

The "*hardin*," or garden, appeared three times in the story. The tranquil place filled with various flowers symbolizes Lirio's silent companionship and sanctuary as she finds a sense of belonging among the flowers she cultivates.

Lirio connects with the flowers in her garden for they, too, do not need words or "*mga tinaga*" to exist meaningfully or to communicate their feelings to be understood.

The garden also serves as her sanctuary, a place where Lirio takes refuge when her abusive husband forces himself on her or when she deals with her life's daily trials.

4. The Butterflies

The “*mga alibangbang*,” or butterflies, are the most prominent recurring symbols in the story. They appear at important moments in Lirio’s life: at Lirio’s birth, christening, wedding, and transformation.

The most mysterious and powerful appearance of the butterflies happened the night before Lirio became a lily flower. The night her husband attempted to kill her, Lirio went into her garden and prayed to be turned into a Lirio flower, and suddenly, butterflies came out of her mouth. Described in number as “*daw tinipon*,” or gathered largely, this magical moment proves that the butterflies were watching over Lirio, acting as her mystical protectors and guardians.

The butterflies also serve as reflections of Lirio’s emotions, sharing in her moments of joy, heartbreak, sadness, and pain.

5. The Black Butterfly

Before Lirio accepted Itik Lugay’s hand in marriage, a huge “*alibangbang nga itum*,” or black butterfly, alighted on the front door of the hut which Lirio failed to notice.

Apang kon ginhatagan lang ni Lirio sang pagtamod ang ganhaan sang ugsaran bago niya ginbaton si Itik, ayhan nakita niya ang paghapon sang isa ka daku nga alibangbang nga itum.

This line proves that the butterfly appeared as a warning of the ill fate that awaits her if she marries Itik. Shortly after her marriage, her parents passed away. These events support the idea that the black butterfly symbolizes a warning or an omen of death, as it appears before tragic moments in Lirio’s life.

6. Number Three

The repetition of “*tatlo*,” or the number three—three days of not eating after Yasmin left, three white lilies from Noli, three months after she accepted Noli’s love, three months of grief, and three bruises from Itik—marks important transitions in Lirio’s life.

Yasmin and Lirio found friendship in their differences. Yasmin was a brave girl, a quality Lirio admired. When Yasmin left, Lirio cried for three days and refused to eat, overwhelmed by the loss. This three-day sorrow marked a turning point. Their separation brought “*kasubo*,” or great sadness, to Lirio, leading her to drop out of school, stay at home to weave and tend her garden, and become more withdrawn and isolated. This shift shows her escape into a world of silence and beauty.

Next are the three white lilies from Noli. After Yasmin left, Lirio lived quietly and alone. Surrounded by flowers and butterflies, she had never experienced romantic love or deep emotional connection, not until Noli entered her life. Noli offered her three white lilies—a sign of his “*paghigugma*” or pure love. Her world, once silent, felt alive again. This was a transition from loneliness to love. However, three months later, after Lirio accepted Noli's love, he left for Japan to escape poverty. This moment marked a new transition, from love to loss.

After some years, Lirio accepted the hand of Vicente “Itik” Lugay, a police sergeant. In the first month of their marriage, Lirio received “*tatlo ka bukol*” or three bruises, marking a transition into a life of suffering and abuse.

7. Vicente “Itik” Lugay

Vicente “Itik” Lugay symbolizes the totality of abuse that Lirio endured: physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual. The bruises and violent beatings Lirio suffered in their marriage show Lirio's physical and emotional suffering.

Lirio felt alone and unprotected, only finding refuge in her garden and supplicating to become a flower.

She never allowed her parents to hear the painful “*ugayong*” or cries that slid from her silent lips, an act showing her silent resilience.

Her husband's harsh insults to her parents like, “Zombie,” “*Demonyo ka!*,” “Zombelina,” and “The Living Dead,” which oftentimes are the subjects of Itik and his friends' drunken talk, added to Lirio's emotional trauma.

Sexual abuse is also evident in the story with Itik forcing himself on Lirio.

These events in the story show how Vicente “Itik” Lugay embodies every form of abuse in Lirio's life, making him a symbol of total suffering and oppression.

DONATO BUGTOT

1. Donato's Hump

Donato's “*bukol*,” or the hump on his back, is a central symbol in the story that marks his otherness and shapes his relationships with other characters. Many key events in the narrative and how Donato was treated were primarily rooted in his deformity, highlighting its symbolic representation of rejection and Donato's burden.

While Donato's hump causes his rejection by his family and friends, it also shapes how he perceives himself, manifesting in deep self-depreciation, and also standing as a symbolic representation of the emotional burden it creates. This detail is evident from Donato's internal monologues in certain parts of the story wherein Donato repeatedly beat himself with words like "*sinumpa kag law-ay*" or cursed and ugly.

These internal thoughts of Donato show how his deformity has not only defined his relationship with other characters but also created a self-criticism that puts an emotional weight on him, making his "*bukol*," or hump, also a symbol of emotional burden.

2. Marita's Necklace and Letter

Marita's "*sulat*," or letter, and "*kulintas*," or necklace, which she left alongside Donato by the convent, are notable symbols that represent her conflicted love and maternal guilt.

Three days after Donato was born, his mother placed him in a box and left it by the stairs of the convent, believing he would have a good fate in Father Tino's hands than his own biological father, Danny.

Although the content of the letter was not explicitly stated, Padre Tino taking Donato in after reading the letter suggests that Marita did not leave him without a thought. She was carefully considering his state and ensuring that she left him in good hands. Alongside the letter, Marita left her necklace, an intimate and personal object that serves as a placeholder for Marita's presence and "*pagpalangga*," or affection.

Instead of leaving nothing when she abandoned Donato, Marita chooses to include a letter and her necklace, representing her maternal guilt and love held in tension.

3. Nay Tiling and Padre Tino

Nay Tiling and Padre Tino are symbolic contrasts to the rejection and mockery Donato experienced from his biological family. Their unconditional love and care sustained Donato and shaped him into a morally upright and virtuous person, making them symbols of compassion and acceptance, one that was not based on physical appearance, but on being.

Under Nay Tiling and Father Tino's guidance, Donato found love and belonging even after rejection. While other characters, especially his family, treated Donato with otherness and rejection, they approached him with compassion and acceptance, seeing him as the human being that he is. Their "*pagkabig*," or gesture towards Donato, shows that one with deformity does not automatically call for rejection, and that one can choose compassion even if society and family fail.

4. Donato's Kidney

Donato's "*bato-bato*," or kidney, which he unconditionally gave to his brother, is not only a physical gesture of compassion but also a significant symbol that represents redemption and self-definition.

Literally, Donato gave his kidney to save his twin's life. Yet on a symbolic level, this element is a defining moment for Donato, in which he asserts his agency and defines himself. For most of the story, Donato has been a subject of abandonment, rejection, and mockery. But in choosing to help his twin out of his own "*kabubut-on*," or free will and not of obligation, Donato silently redeems and asserts who he is—a person who is not defined by how he appears, but by what he chooses.

As a symbolic element, Donato's act of giving his "*bato-bato*," or kidney, highlights his inner nobility and moral uprightness that transcend his deformity. It is in this moment that Donato shows that he is a person who is deeply human and whole in character.

5. Donato and Jed

The "*kapid*," or twins Donato and Jed, are striking symbolic characters who mirror each other in opposite ways. Their contrasting traits highlight the tension between appearance and essence, placing them as central symbols that explore the nature of wholeness in a person.

Jed was endowed with "*katahum*," or physical beauty. Yet, despite ideal appearance and privileges, Jed turns out to be emotionally broken and shallow in character with Donato describing him as "*garuk*," or rotten on the inside.

Unlike Jed, Donato was born "*bugtot*," or a hunchback, yet he displays a character with emotional and moral worth. His deformity mainly drove his abandonment and made him a subject of ridicule. Nonetheless, Donato grew as a kind and forgiving person.

Moreover, Donato showed his moral wholeness in the story's defining moment when he unconditionally gave his other kidney to Jed without expecting anything in return.

Donato and Jed's contrasting traits create a symbolic tension that highlights the story's central theme that true worth is defined not by one's physical form but by one's character and choices.

SI PADRE OLAN KAG ANG DIOS

1. El Niño

El Niño serves as the central symbol in the story. Beyond its physical impact, it carries symbolic weight as a trial of faith from God and a call for stronger collective faith. It tests people's "*pagtuo*," or faith through the sufferings it brings, especially in meeting their basic needs like food and water.

This idea is emphasized in the line, "*May rason ang Dios ni Padre Olan kon ngaa nag-antus kita sang El Niño... wala sia sa posisyon para tungkaron ang huna-huna kag pagbuot sang Dios*," suggesting that El Niño has a divine purpose.

2. Padre Olan

Father Roland Javellana, or "Padre Olan," is a conflicted priest who struggles between following Church rules and responding to his community's needs during the drought. He faces pressure to hold a special prayer for rain to fall but holds doubts in his heart as he feels "*nagasinamu-samo*," or conflicted feelings, making him a symbol of personal struggles of faith, which is entirely human. Despite his fears and doubts, he answered the plea of the people and held a mass where the community gathered to express their collective supplications and faith.

3. The rain

The "*ulan*" or rain in the story is more than just a natural phenomenon; it symbolizes physical and spiritual renewal. First, it symbolizes the physical renewal of nature. The drought dried the land and withered the plants, threatening people's survival. Don Beato is concerned that without rain, there will be no food and people will starve. The word "*nagmalala*," or parched out with heat, shows the gravity of the drought, and he asked for a collective mass for rain to restore nature and meet daily needs.

Next, the rain symbolizes communal renewal. Don Beato, though not religious, suggests a special day of prayer for rain, surprising even Padre Olan. Religious groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, Legion of Mary, and Apostles of Prayer support the idea. On that day, the church and neighboring communities unite, showing renewed communal unity through shared faith and action. Personal renewal is seen when people request a communal prayer. Afterward, Padre Olan sees the people joyful and more Christian than before. He witnesses Don Beato humbly accepting food from an old woman and reflects on the miracle that touched their hearts.

Lastly, the rain brings spiritual renewal and awakening. Everyone stops and looks to the sky in awe and reverence when their prayer is answered. Padre Olan experiences

God's "*pagpalangga*" or grace as he feels the rain, becoming a symbol of the renewal that transformed the land, the people, and their souls.

4. The Church

The "*simbahan*" or church symbolizes the people's communal faith. This was first proven when Don Beato went to Padre Olan and hesitantly suggested holding a special day praying together for rain, showing his respect for the church as a sacred place where collective prayer stands strong.

In addition, this need for communal faith is emphasized when Knight Enying points out that praying as a single congregation within the church makes their prayer more significant, meaningful, and "*mabaskog*," or strong.

Lastly, the effect of this communal faith is seen when Padre Olan is amazed at the number of people who came, showing that the church is not merely a place but a sacred space representing collective faith and the belief that praying collectively is more powerful than praying individually, a space where people's "*paglaum*," or hope, rests firmly.

5. Three o'clock in the afternoon

The day after the people collectively prayed for rain, God answered their prayer at "*alas tres*," or three o'clock in the afternoon. The rain happened in the sacred hour, turning a simple afternoon into a moment of divine encounter, met by grace at God's chosen time.

6. Don Beato Yngala

Don Beato Yngala is a rich and influential figure in the town of Buenavista who initiated the idea of holding a special day of collective prayer for rain. His concern is rooted in the impact of extreme heat and dryness on people's livelihoods, especially on food and water.

His character symbolizes conversion and power. Although not known as religious, he is one of the most respected and powerful individuals in the community. His public presence in the church is more about maintaining his powerful image than genuine faith. Despite this, Don Beato uses his influence to propose moving the town's fiesta to prioritize a day of prayer for rain.

His political and social power became an instrument that brought people together for a faithful action. During the communal prayer, Don Beato participated fully in a "*takus*," or sincere way, marking the beginning of his symbolic conversion, moved by the sincere, collective faith of the people.

Another powerful symbol of his transformation is when he humbly accepts a “*tinanok*,” or boiled banana, from an old man, reflecting his humility and spiritual equality despite a difference in social status.

In the end, Don Beato’s character becomes a bridge between power and faith. He is changed by the sincere belief and communal spirituality, showing that no one is beyond the reach of grace.

Table 2

Archetypal Comparisons of the Identified Symbolisms in Lirio, Donato Bugtot, and Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios

STORY	SYMBOLS	MEANING IN THE STORY	ARCHETYPAL MEANING	ALIGNMENT
Lirio	Lirio Apa	purity, innocence, and resilience despite silence and abuse	The Innocent	Aligned
	lily flowers	pure love, escape, and transformation	purity, innocence, and virginity	Not Aligned
	the garden	silent companionship and sanctuary	paradise and enclosed sanctuary	Aligned
	the butterflies	mystical guardianship and Lirio’s emotional reflection	angel, guardian	Aligned
	the black butterfly	omen of death and forewarning	death	Aligned
	Number Three	transition and change	transition or transformation	Aligned
	Itik Lugay	totality of abuse—physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual	The Sadist	Aligned

STORY	SYMBOLS	MEANING IN THE STORY	ARCHETYPAL MEANING	ALIGNMENT
Donato Bugtot	Donato's hump	rejection and Donato's burden	good omen, being favored, and inborn extraordinary gift	Not Aligned
	the necklace and the letter	Marita's conflicted love and maternal guilt	social ties and bonds	Aligned
	Nay Tiling and Padre Tino	compassion and acceptance	The Mother Archetype	Aligned
	Donato's kidney	redemption and Donato's self-definition	seat of desires and feelings	Not Aligned
	Donato and Jed	tension between appearance and essence	harmonious dualism or dualistic tension	Aligned
Si Padre Olan kag ang Dios	El Niño	God's trial of faith and a call for stronger collective faith	punishment from the divine; spiritual dryness or aridity	Aligned
	Padre Olan	the struggle of faith and priestly responsibility	The Everyman Archetype	Aligned
	ulan (rain)	Renewal	life; spiritual purification; renewal	Aligned
	simbahan (church)	communal faith	The bride of Christ, a boat, a tower, unity and diversity	Aligned
	Alas Tres (3 o'clock)	sacred hour for God's mercy	mystical intervention; three stages of mystical development; divine duality	Aligned
	Don Beato Yngala	transformative power towards a common good	The Ruler archetype	Aligned

LIRIO

1. Lirio Apa

Lirio's character, which symbolizes innocence, purity, and resilience in the face of silence and abuse, is directly associated with Carl Jung's Innocent archetype—a pattern of character who is pure, loyal, innocent, childlike, typically a traditionalist, saintly, and a symbol of rebirth, which Lirio Apa embodies in the story (Berezhna, 2022).

2. Lily Flower

The lily flower in the story is a symbol for unconditional love, escape, and transformation—a multifold representation which differs from the flower's archetypal association with purity, innocence, and virginity.

The lily flower appears in many literary works such as Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion*, Alexander Pope's *Imitation of Cowley*, and William Blake's *Book of Thel* as an image of female divine and human virginity. Similarly, Honoré de Balzac's novel, *The Lily of the Valley*, uses the lily to signify the heroine, Mme de Mortsau, as a symbol of innocence and virtue.

Lilies have also been associated with virginity, purity, and innocence in several societies (Michniewska, 2021). Depictions from the 12th century show that virginity and purity of the Virgin Mary are symbolized by the Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*). Aside from Western cultures, Zou (2023) forwards that Chinese and Polish culture hold lily as a symbol of purity and holiness.

The lily flower's white pigment is the basis for why it has been used interchangeably for white in the universal vocabulary of symbols for centuries (Ferber, 1999, pp. 114–115; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 872–874; Cirlot, 2001, pp. 188–189; Tresidder, 2002, p. 123). This physical trait is the basis on which its connotation of purity depends, one that coincides with the characteristics of Lirio Apa but not the distinct symbolism of the Lily flower in the text.

3. The Garden

The garden is a notable symbol that serves as a sanctuary and a source of silent companionship for Lirio Apa. Its symbol in the story is consistent with its universal association with paradise and enclosed sanctuary.

Michael Ferber (1999, p.82), and Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996, pp. 605–606) note that the word is commonly associated with paradise in Old Persian, Greek, Persian and Islam.

Ferber also highlights that the garden is identified as an enclosed sanctuary in the Song of Solomon (4.12).

Moreover, Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996, pp. 605–606), and Baert (2016) note how gardens are symbols of both earthly and heavenly paradise, as exhibited in historical sites such as the Chinese's The Forbidden City's round garden and Mount Kun-Lun, in Islamic gardens, the Augustinian Mechelen Hospital Sisters' Enclosed Gardens in the early 1500s, as well as in Persian rug designs, and monastery cloisters.

In literature, J. E. Cirlot (2001, p. 71) highlights how gardens are commonly associated with either endless bliss or divine presence and have been symbolized as lost or regained paradises in several cultures, such as in Chinese, Persian, Islamic, and Biblical literature. A garden is "enclosed," indicating a protected and sacred area.

4. The Butterflies

The butterflies in the story symbolize guardians and companions of Lirio Apa, a twofold symbolism that echoes the symbol's universal pattern as guardians and spiritual messengers.

Butterflies appear in myths and cultures as guardians and vessels of souls. In Courtship of Etain, an Irish mythological cycle story, a worm that became a butterfly from the goddess transformed into puddle healed all it visited of suffering, sickness, and plague, serving as a guardian and healer that mitigates pain and rewards others for its presence (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 847 – 851). The Aztecs also held that butterflies were dead warriors who followed the sun in the first half of its visible journey until noon and who guided and followed it through the darkness (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 208 – 211; Tresidder, 2002, p.33). Similarly, the Dolpa district in West Nepal worshipped butterflies because they were believed to be the nine sisters of the Hindu goddess Nawa Durga, who appeared in the form of nine butterflies. Michael Ferber (1999, pp. 37–38) reinforces this symbolism in his entries of symbols, noting that butterflies are vessels of angels or spiritual messengers who come to humans in their time of need.

5. The Black Butterfly

The black butterfly in the story stands as a symbol of an omen of death or forewarning of ill fate. Although there is no specific meaning in all the dictionaries of symbols about the symbol, there are citations of black animals that are considered to bring bad luck and misfortunes such as crows, blackbirds, and black cats (Colin, 2000, pp. 59–60). How the

symbol resonates with its universal association is linked to the individual symbolism of the color black and a butterfly.

Black has long been associated with negative connotations. Ferber (1999, pp. 28–29), Tresidder (2002, p.16), and Colin (2000, pp. 59–60) all listed black in terms of death, bad fortune, and warning based on various cultural associations. Black is the color of Satan and his worshippers who hold black masses. Similarly, black is the color of Osiris’s funeral ceremonies and the color of Anubis, who guided the Egyptians to the afterlife. Likewise, ancient Greece uses the color as a symbol of sacrifice, while Western culture associates black with mourning and death.

Butterflies share the same connotation of death as the color black, mainly due to their symbolic pattern of representing the soul of the deceased, such as in Siberia, the Aztecs, and Greece (Jobes, 1961, p. 266; Ferber, 1999, pp. 37–38). It is also believed that they foretell family death (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 208–211). In *Fancy Shawl Dance*, Antil & Kanaujia (2024) notes that aboriginal America links black butterfly to bad news.

While the black butterfly possesses a single composite meaning, coming from indigenous America and meaning the same, as well as a symbol of the butterfly in the story, the symbolism of black and butterfly individually reveals the same.

6. Number Three

The recurring pattern of three in the narrative represents change and transition. Change, or shift, occurs whenever the events reach 3rd phase, a sign that has resonated with its universal meaning of unity and culmination of manifestation (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 1413–1419; Cirlot, 2001, p. 288).

Cirlot (2001, p. 288) noted the miraculous solution depicted by number three, explaining that the third phase, which is the completeness and myth of life, indicates the end of the cycle, whether expansion or decline.

In myths, three appear as a pattern of ritualized change is established through the repetition of three acts, three days, or three steps; each act is a progression toward a new state, and completion of the third act is often the deciding factor in success (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, pp. 1413–1419).

7. Itik Lugay

Itik Lugay is a character in the story who represents the entirety of abuse, a character pattern that aligns with Jung’s idea of the Sadist Archetype, the energetic pole of the Warrior’s

shadow. In Jeffrey Scott's article, based on psychologist Robert L. Moore's research, the Sadist is the "demon of cruelty," who is either cruel with or without passion (Jeffrey, 2025; Moore, 2009)—a definition of Itik Lugay's character. The Sadist despises "the weak," preying upon the vulnerable and helpless, similar to what Itik Lugay repeatedly does to the "Innocent" Lirio.

DONATO BUGTOT

1. Donato's Hump

Donato's hump is a central symbol in the story, which marks his rejection and burden, a representation that challenges the deformity's traditional association with good omen, being favored, and an inborn extraordinary gift.

Physical abnormality in primitive magico-religious thinking and African societies is believed to be a price one has to pay for an extraordinary gift, such as how African people see the blind and the intellectually disabled as "seers" (Cirlot 2001, p. 57; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, p. 412). Similarly, Ad de Vries in his 1974 book *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (pp.1–2, 264) noted how the 10th and 11th centuries in France associated hunchbacks with good omens, often considering them as luck-bringers to people they met. Eventually, this perception changes over time, with characters like Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's 1831 "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" portrayed as outcasts, reflecting the French society's changing attitude towards deformity (Andreotti et al., 2018).

The hump's symbolism in the narrative rather resonates with how Western literature and art use deformed characteristics to demonstrate otherness, deformity and societal exclusion, challenging its traditional representations (Trentin, 2015).

2. Marita's Necklace and Letter

The necklace and letter serve as Donato's only link to his mother after abandonment, resonating with the common association of a necklace and letter as social ties and bonds.

Necklace is commonly noted to universally represent the link or bond between the owner and whoever they have given it to (Cirlot, 2001, p. 283; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, p. 997; Tresidder, 2002, p. 142; de Vries, 1974, p. 338). On the other hand, the letter as a message is a universal tangible mean of human connection (Lupascu, 2025). Although the characters, styles, and associated rituals vary across cultures and countries, their social value is consistent across non-Western and Western societies alike, serving as a symbol of social bonds, personal intent, and communal values.

While the necklace and the letter in the story primarily represent Marita's conflicted maternal love, the objects serving as a familial link and Donato's trace of origin show parallels to how the symbols are universally regarded.

3. Nay Tiling and Padre Tino

Nay Tiling and Padre Tino stand as symbols of compassion and acceptance, a character pattern that aligns with the Caregiver under Jung's Mother archetype.

The caregiver archetype is characterized by caring, compassion, and generosity (Berezhna, 2022). Carl Jung did not detail the caregiver concept as a distinct archetype but rather identified it under the "Mother archetype" in his book *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959). According to Jung, the Mother archetype is a universal symbol within the psyche that can manifest in a variety of aspects such as the biological mother, grandmother, stepmother, mother-in-law, or any female figure with a caregiving relationship, outlining their positive qualities as nurturance, wisdom, and protection (Jung, 1969, p. 157). This archetype, however, is not exclusive to female figures as it is a universal psychic pattern representing nurturance and protection that can be embodied by any caregiver figure (Jung, 1959, p. 157; Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 38).

Nay Tiling and Padre Tino resonate with the Mother character archetype with their nurturing, caring, and protecting qualities for Donato.

4. Donato's Kidney

Donato's kidney carries a symbolic weight distinct in the narrative that maintains consistency with the symbolism in ancient texts.

In Hebrew and Talmud tradition, kidneys were considered as the seat of one's morality and innermost motives (Maio, 1999; Kopple, 1994; Haviv, 1999). Passages in the Bible such as Jeremiah 17:10 (KJV), Psalm 26:2, and Prov. 23:16 highlight the symbolic weight of kidneys (reins) in Hebrew tradition as organs linked to one's morality, allowing God to weigh one's innermost motives and thoughts.

Eknovan (2013) and Maio (1999) note the loss of the kidneys' symbolic interpretation following the development of scientific rationality. Donato's kidney in the narrative was used as a symbolic element with a modern perspective—an organ that saved Jed's life and a personal symbol for Donato, who defined himself not by how he appears, but by what he chooses.

5. Donato and Jed

The twins' symbolic representation of tension between appearance and essence echoes the dualistic motif of twins acting in tension across cultures and mythologies.

J.E. Cirlot (2001), Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996), Jack Tresidder (2002), Ad de Vries (1974), and Didier Colin (2000) underscore the two twin archetypes: perfectly balanced and opposites.

Contrasting twins acting as opposites embody opposition and division (Colin, 2000). This quality is evident across mythologies, represented by twin gods in Iroquois, Zoroastrian, Slavic, Native American, and Roman mythology.

Tresidder (2002) also highlights how twins represent other dualities such as spirit and body, with Cirlot (2001) noting that one twin typically symbolizes man's soul in contrast to the mortal and earthly nature of the other.

Donato and Jed, as twin archetypes, resonate with the motif of twins acting in tension, primarily reflecting the dualistic aspect of spirit and body. They do not necessarily illustrate the good and evil archetype, as other mythological traditions have commonly portrayed twins, but they were presented as opposites in body and character.

SI PADRE OLAN KAG ANG DIOS

1. El Niño

In the story, El Niño symbolizes calamity and God's test of faith, a symbolism related to how drought is associated with punishment.

According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996), drought is associated with divine punishment, transformation, and divine judgment. As explained by J.E. Cirlot's Dictionary of Symbols (2001), the explanation of dryness is explained as a "psychic climate" of spiritual intensity and the opposite of "wetness," and a sign of purification. People who seem dry may actually be filled with deep passion and purpose. Likewise, de Vries (1974) Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery describes dryness as opposed to fertility and comfort but connected to spirituality, immortality, fire, and virility. The "dry man" is passionate beneath the surface. In the story, the dryness does not destroy the people but awakens their deep, collective faith and leads them toward spiritual transformation.

2. Padre Olan

Padre Olan represents the struggle of faith and priestly responsibility, a character pattern similar to the Everyman archetype, characterized by his uncertainties.

The Everyman archetype, which portrays a common person—humble, vulnerable, kind, and truly human (Callaghan, 2023; Dhivya et al., 2024). Padre Olan experiences uncertainty and fear, especially when people ask him to pray for the rain: “Paano kung indi mag ulan?... Paano kon mapaslawen ko?” His vulnerability is comparable to that of a normal believer who faces uncertainty in trying circumstances.

3. The Rain

The rain is a symbol of physical and spiritual renewal, a symbolism that aligns with the symbol’s common association with purification.

Morris Joseph explains that rain is a symbol of blessing and well-being. In Arabic literature, rain represents purity and separation, while in Western literature, it represents renewal and the longing for healing. Vries highlights rain as the spiritual influence from heaven and fertility. Peter Solid uses the rain as a spiritual renewal for the people who remold themselves.

In Nadia Julien’s *Mammoth Dictionary of Symbols* (1996), early rain helps plants germinate and prepares a man for intellectual life, teaching the virtue of faith. Rain sparks hope in the community and renews their faith, making it stronger. Both in the story and in universal literary meaning, rain represents transformation, redemption, and the rekindling of spiritual connection.

4. The Church

The church symbolizes collective faith, a symbolism that resonates with how the church is regarded as a sacred entity (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996).

In its role as a vine, the church sustains its congregation. The church serves as a conduit for deepening faith, a space for spiritual connection where individuals unite to seek hope, resilience, and encouragement on their shared path of faith. Ad de Vries also reinforces this idea by depicting the church as a “mother-symbol” featuring a womb-font that fosters and spiritually births its congregation.

5. Three o'clock in the afternoon

Three o'clock in the afternoon appears as God's sacred hour, a symbol of the divine duality of God across cultures.

Although the symbolism of the number three in literature is complex and often contradictory, it is traditionally associated with divine unity and perfection (Ruszkowski, 2022). Jack Tresidder (2002) notes that three is usually seen as a lucky number that symbolizes the resolution of a conflict. In the story, the rain pouring at three in the afternoon concludes the answer to the drought. Three also appears in many literary works to create harmony and rhythm.

Nadia Julien (1996) also holds that three is an active number symbolizing heaven and spirit, a perfect number, and the sensitive image of divinity. According to the book of rituals, man as the intermediary between heaven and earth corresponds to the number three. The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity likewise shows how three becomes a symbol of a powerful unity.

In conclusion, the number three, in many symbolic forms such as three o'clock, embodies mystical connection and divine intervention. Peter Solis Nery mirrors this pattern in the story: the community experiences drought, they unite in prayer, and finally receive the rain at three in the afternoon.

6. Don Beato Yngala

Don Beato Yngala exemplifies the ruler archetype, demonstrating how power and control affect the unfolding of events.

The ruler archetype is a character pattern of figures with power or position, commonly linked to establishing order and structure throughout history (Mark & Pearson, 2001). This archetype dreads disorder. It is a commanding presence that embodies control and order, occasionally appearing authoritarian to achieve its objectives. Carol Pearson notes that the ruler archetype wields their power to ensure functionality, often intervening when they feel compelled to reinstate equilibrium.

These qualities are shown by Don Beato Yngala. He used his social status to convince the church, people, and certain groups in the community to hold a collective mass, all for the benefit of the community. This deed illustrates the archetype of a leader who directs and employs his authority and sway for the benefit. The power and influence of Don Beato became the bridge for unified prayer and faith in their community, initiating action to respond to the calamity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eighteen symbols uncovered reflect themes of personal struggle, emotional resilience, and spiritual awakening. These symbols function beyond their literal meaning and act as symbolic vessels through which the characters' struggles, experiences, and faith are illustrated. Symbolic objects, places, and animals such as the garden, the butterflies, the necklace, the church, the kidney, and rain are not mere decorative imageries in the story but stand as visual representations of the ideas implicitly stated in the narratives. Moreover, characters such as Lirio, Itik Lugay, Nay Tiling and Padre Tino, Donato and Jed, Padre Olan, and Don Beato Yngala are figures who tell about the often unspoken truths within Filipino society such as abuse, social rejection, the struggle of faith, and the high admiration on the superficial aspects of a person, establishing Nery's use of symbolism as tools for social commentary.

In terms of archetypal resonance, the fifteen symbols that align with universal archetypes show that Nery's symbolic choices are embedded with archetypal patterns. This highlights the universality in Hiligaynon culture by showing how universal experiences such as love, personal struggles, burden, redemption, and faith are also present in regional literature, illustrating how literature bridges culture and reinforces the primordial notions that are sedimented in the mind of every human being. Meanwhile, the symbols Lirio (Lily flower), Donato's hump, and Donato's kidney, which holds distinct meanings in the narratives, show the contextual nature of symbolism.

Significant insights have been drawn from the study, and the researchers recommend future pursuits of literary research to pursue more comparative studies on the symbolic aspects in regional literature and universal archetypes. Doing more extensive research between the two will add more insights into how local literature has both reinforced and redefined human mental constructs for centuries. Aside from examining their alignment, it is also recommended that the reason behind the non-alignment be investigated.

Furthermore, future literary studies with an interest in exploring the symbolic elements in the works of Peter Solis Nery as well as in other regional Filipino authors should explore not only the meanings of the symbols in the narrative but also how their symbolic functions contribute to the thematic development of the story. By combining Formalist and Thematic Frameworks, discussions on the functions of symbols in a story will be richer and more profound. Lastly, by examining the themes through the symbols, it will shed light on the values and beliefs of the Hiligaynon community or the region from which the story originates.

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

1. No Funding

- The authors did not receive support from any organization for the submitted work.
- No funding was received to assist with the preparation of this manuscript.
- No funding was received for conducting this study.
- No funds, grants, or other support were received.

2. Disclosure Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest, financial or non-financial, that might have influenced the conduct of this study. The contents of this manuscript have been concurred by all co-authors, and we guarantee its originality. Furthermore, the submission is not currently under appraisal at any other publication.

3. Use of AI-Assisted Technologies

For efficient search and citation of related literature, the authors used AI-Assisted Technologies such as Elicit, Perplexity, and Anara. A considerable amount of time was saved with Elicit AI saved a considerable amount of time in finding recent studies to support the paper. The authors were also able to effectively organize the ideas for each section of the paper through the AI-Assistance of Perplexity and Anara. Overall, these AI tools significantly contributed to the study process.

4. Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to extend their gratitude to Philippine Normal University Visayas for its sincere commitment to providing quality education. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to our research professor, research adviser, and research panel, whose assistance greatly contributed to the success of this study.

5. Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was not sought for this research because it purely centers on literature, and it utilizes textual analysis as the primary method in conducting the entirety of the study. No participants, surveys, interviews, or personal data are involved. However, all supporting sources and stories used in the paper were properly cited to avoid plagiarism and ensure proper credit is due.

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<https://doi.org/10.4467/23538724gs.23.005.18151>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Atasha Rose Salva is a fourth-year student at Philippine Normal University Visayas (PNUV) pursuing a bachelor's degree in English education. She completed her elementary education at Villacin Elementary School and her junior and senior high school education at Holy Infant Academy Diocese of San Carlos Inc. and CEDAR College Inc., respectively. She served as a practice teacher in English at the PNUV-Center for Teaching and Learning and is a member of the Torch Publications Visayas.

Pearl Joy B. Materbonia is a fourth-year student at the Philippine Normal University Visayas (PNUV) pursuing a bachelor's degree in English education. She completed her primary education at Cadiz Viejo Elementary School and her junior and senior high school at Cadiz Viejo National High School and CEDAR College Inc., respectively. She served as a practice teacher in English at the PNUV-Center for Teaching and Learning as and currently serves as Feature Editor at Torch Publications Visayas.

Ma. Rebecca Canono is a fourth-year student at the Philippine Normal University Visayas (PNUV) pursuing a bachelor's degree in English education. She completed her primary and secondary education at Bayabas Elementary School and Dr. Vicente F. Gustilo Memorial National High School, respectively. She gained teaching experience as a practice teacher in English at Tiglawigan National High School, Cadiz City during on-campus training.

Alyka Marie Guanzon is a fourth-year student at the Philippine Normal University Visayas pursuing a bachelor's degree in English education. She completed her primary and junior high school in the same institution and finished her senior high school education at Dr. Vicente F. Gustilo Memorial National High School. She gained teaching experience as a practice teacher at Villacin National High School, Cadiz City, and is a member of the PNUV Election Committee.

John Jonathan Normandia is an Associate Professor and Head of the Research and Publication Unit at the Philippine Normal University Visayas, where he also serves as Bachelor of English Education Program Coordinator and Adviser of Torch Publications Visayas. He earned his Doctor of Arts in Literature and Communication from Cebu Normal University. His research spans literature, communication, teacher education, and genre analysis, with funded work under CHED and the Teacher Education Council.