



The Influence of Setting to the Characters of Selected Philippine Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the influence of setting to the characters of the Selected Philippine Short Stories which include : My Father Goes to Court by Carlos Bulosan, Rice and Bullets by Hernando Ocampo, Summer Solstice by Nick Joaquin, Wedding Dance by Amador Daguio, Footnote to Youth by Jose Garcia Villa, How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife by Manuel Arguilla, My Father's Tragedy by F. Sionil Jose, May Day Eve by Nick Joaquin, God Stealer by F. Sionil Jose, Midsummer by Manuel Arguilla, Visitation of the Gods by Gilda Cordero, The Riddle by F. Sionil Jose). From the findings of the study, the researchers have reached the conclusion that the twelve short stories have used two types of setting: geographical setting, chronological/time setting. In each story, the influences of the setting are being shown through their behavior, belief, way of dressing, actions, the description of their surroundings, and even their culture. The findings of the study have some significant implications to the readers, both teacher and students. Setting plays an important role in fiction, especially in short stories as they usually focus less on plots and more on the characters. Whether it is geographical, chronological setting, the readers need to have a deeper understanding and analysis of how setting influences the characters of the story and how a change in setting also changes the characters. This implies that readers need to dive deeper into the stories to find these influences so they can better understand and comprehend the story. Based on the findings and conclusions, the researchers are able to draw the following recommendations: The readers of literature should value the role played by the setting in developing the characters and even the story. Students should take into account the influences of the setting when reading the story, how it affects the characters and other elements of fiction. The teacher should create emphasis on how the setting contributes to the creation of the story.

Keywords: setting, characters, short stories

1. INTRODUCTION

Philippine literature in English has achieved a stature that is, in a way, phenomenal since the inception of English in our culture. Our writers strove to express their sentiments while struggling with a foreign medium. The great mass of literature in English that we have today is, indeed, a tribute to what our writers have achieved in short span of time. As a matter of fact, what they have written long time ago still live at present time and are comparable to great literary works written by renowned Western writers. Truly, there is permanence and universality in their works that gave significant contribution in the field of literature and history.

Literature and history are inescapably related to each other, they became facilitative to map up a system which will aid us in delineating certain time boundaries. These time boundaries are not exactly well-defined; very often, time frames blend into another in a seeming continuum. For a systematic discussion of the traditions, customs, and feelings of our people that can be traced in our literature, we shall adopt certain delimitations. History makes a great contribution to literature as the rich phenomena of the past inspire authors and give them ideas in

creating a plot for literature.

"Setting serves as much more than a mere vehicle to cement my readers in the time and place within my story. It is a psychological force upon my characters. In contemporary writing, setting stands as an influence that acts upon the character or it creates characters." C. Patrick Schulze.

Anderson (1989) believed that the setting of his story can greatly influence his characters especially their psychology. For instance, setting can influence how the characters behave, how they dress and how they interact with each other within the story. It is interesting to speculate about how many writers begin with the setting and how many begin with the characters. Either way, setting and character must go hand in hand in a way they will provide a conflict, a consistency, and a catalyst.

Setting refers to the time and place where a story occurs. It can establish a certain atmosphere of a story. Most importantly, it can help the readers to capture scenes and actions and actions and make them more believable. A setting can affect how characters live, what they do, as well as to influence their values and beliefs. It determines jobs and living conditions available to them. It can even create a conflict that they must endure by making the characters live through difficult time periods, events or situations such as poverty or war.

In the story, *the Kite Runner*, the difficulties that Baba has encountered in the new world humbled him. He was accustomed to being

at the top of the heap in Afghanistan. And now, he is an immigrant, at the bottom of the heap. This caused him to change in many ways, to work harder, to dirty his hands as he never would have dreamed of doing in Afghanistan, and he also seems to gain some empathy, allowing him to be a father to Amir. Had he remained in his original setting, he is unlikely to have grown as a character.

Some settings can be said to form the characters, just as in real life, our own characters are formed by our settings. In *The Giver*, with few exceptions, the characters of the community are formed by their setting, time and place removed from the rest of the world, insulated from all other influences except from the rulers of the community. Their setting has made them into a group of compliant, almost robotic beings.

Having seen such a beautiful perspective and the significant contribution that the result of this study may give to the readers, the researchers are delighted to explore the influence of setting on characters from selected Philippine short stories. Moreover, pursuing this study is believed to be a notable achievement as a humble contribution to literary criticism. This study essence of the setting in creating the story and how it influences the characters. This study was also conceived to help in expanding the avenues of the students and the future researchers, as well to explore the wide horizon of literary criticism. The essence of this study is focused on the setting as it creates the story and explains how it influences the characters. This milieu conceived to help in expanding the avenues of the students and the future researchers, as well to explore the wide horizon of literary criticism.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study had to utilize formalism approach with the aid of other literary theories to critically analyze the influence of setting to the characters as depicted on some selected Philippine short stories written by various Filipino writers.

Formalism is used to critique literary works that confine analysis and interpretation within the literary text. It is also known as close text analysis or *explication de texte* (Literary Criticism Module 2013). Moreover, it is considered as close analysis of the literary text using its structure as basis. With formalism, a critic can show how the various part of a work are welded together to make an organic whole, this approach examines a text as a self-contained object. In this study, the researchers chose to utilize formalism theory in analyzing the short stories to narrow down the scope of the study and exclude the influences of outside texts to avoid confusion due to the various opinions on different resources.

In data analysis, the researchers will utilize formalism to dissect the various influences of the present setting to the characters through analyzing how their environment affects or changes them. Especially their behavior, the course of their actions, the way they present themselves in a story, their disposition in life, and etc.

Acunin and Tahud (2011) conducted a study: The Use of Literary Techniques in Portraying the Characters and Settings to Develop the Theme in the Short Stories of N.V.M. Gonzalez, it was found out that the use of literary devices enriches the meaning and portrayal of various short stories presented in the study. The study's findings are greatly enlightening in terms of the way the literary device in the stories featured described the settings and how it can affect the story, although the focus of this study is more focused on setting and theme rather than setting and characters.

Morados and Sutacio (2016) conducted a study entitled: Presence of Local Color as Portrayed in Some Selected Philippine Short Stories in English. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are arrived at: It can be said that literature display various local color exemplified in the settings. Local colors are considered as tool in analyzing short stories in any other literary genre. The presence of local color beau-

ties the concept of the short stories in order for the readers to understand more the life on rural areas. Local colors are considered very important in the field of literature that leads us for a better understanding in reading any literary pieces. Local colors do not only tools for understanding the characters it can also help the reader determine the kind of setting a story has. A local color can also indicate a time setting which can be found in what the character wears in the story.

Ambato and Ligayan (2018) conducted a study entitled: Poverty as a Motif of Alberto Florentino's Plays. The findings of the study reveal that the plays reflect the reality of life as gleaned through the character's living condition. It also unveils the common causes of poverty in the selected plays such as lack of education, low-employment opportunity, low income, and social injustice. The plays evidently show how the indigent people confronted the different struggles that they are facing that turn them to steal a single apple which caused him to lose his job, rob valuable things from the tomb, dance in the night club and eventually became prostitutes. The setting of the story can also influence the character's status in life. Poor setting influences the characters to be poor which then results to them doing all things necessary for survival such as thievery and prostitution.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was conducted to unveil how setting can influence in the selected Philippine short stories.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the setting of the different stories under study?
2. How does setting influence the characters?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design with the aid of formalism approach to analyze and determine the influences of settings to the characters of a story. It is descriptive in nature since it aimed to describe the setting of the selected short stories. Moreover, the researchers chose formalism approach since it has a specific way of studying the influences of settings as portrayed on the selected Philippine short stories.

2.2 RESEARCH MATERIALS

The major materials of this study is the selected stories that will serve as the subject of such as; *My Father Goes to Court* by Carlos Bulosan, *Rice and Bullets* by Hernando Ocampo, *Summer Solstice* by Nick Joaquin, *Wedding Dance* by Amador Daguio, *Footnote to Youth* by Jose Garcia Villa, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife* by Manuel Arguilla, *My Father's Tragedy* by F. Sionil Jose, *May Day Eve* by Nick Joaquin, *God Stealer* by F. Sionil Jose, *Midsummer* by Manuel Arguilla, *Visitation of the Gods* by Gilda Cordero, *The Riddle* by F. Sionil Jose.

These stories are mostly taken from books and reliable internet sources while some are from modules of the previous courses of the researchers. Several analyses from the internet are also a great help for the researcher's dissection. There are 12 short stories in total. Each researcher is assigned to analyze four (4) short stories.

2.3 DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

In this literary research, the researcher collected and gathered the available data valuable for solving the research problems. Articles from books, magazines, encyclopedia, journals, credible internet sites, and other references which served as secondary references.

Twelve short stories were utilized as research materials and thoroughly analyzed in order to come up with the present findings with

the aid of formalism approach.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study is focused on analyzing the influence of setting to the characters of the selected Philippine short stories which include: *My Father Goes to Court* by Carlos Bulosan, *Rice and Bullets* by Hernando Ocampo, *Summer Solstice* by Nick Joaquin, *Wedding Dance* by Amador Daguio, *Footnote to Youth* by Jose Garcia Villa, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home A Wife* by Manuel Arguilla, *My Father's Tragedy* by F. Sionil Jose, *May Day Eve* by Nick Joaquin, *God Stealer* by F. Sionil Jose, *Midsummer* by Manuel Arguilla, *Visitation of the Gods* by Gilda Cordero, *The Riddle* by F. Sionil Jose)

In the story 'Rice and Bullets', the author uses geographical setting. The story happens in a poor community which influences the characters to be poor as well. This setting influences them through their behavior which is proved by their desperation for food in the story.

In the story 'My Father Goes to Court', the writer uses geographical type of setting. The story occurs in a small rural area in the island of Luzon. The setting had influenced the characters to be boisterous and joyful because of the environment they grew up to. There were plenty of available playing spaces for them. The richer family's setting, which is within their house, influenced them to be sickly and lack lustered people because they were confined in their house. This has made their immune system deteriorate.

In the story, 'Summer Solstice', the writer uses chronological setting to influence the characters through their beliefs. It is shown in the story that society has predetermined the role of men and women. Men were perceived to be the superior sex. They are expected to be authoritative and women were expected to follow their husband. The story also influences them through the role and behavior they are expected to portray in public. The women were expected to follow their husband's will not the other way around.

In the story, 'The Wedding Dance', the author uses geographical setting in which the story happens in a tribal village somewhere in the mountains. Away from the comforts of civilization, the story has influenced them to hardworking people who were used to climbing the difficult trails of the mountain and crossing perilous rivers. The setting has also influenced their actions and beliefs which led to the separation of Lumnay and Awiyao despite their love for each other.

In the story, 'Midsummer', the author uses a geographical type of setting. The story is set in a rural area where there were no house in sight. The setting has influenced the characters through the way they dress and their behavior. Manong to have well-built physique because the hard work he needs to do to make a living as most of the livelihoods available in a barrio involves the use of one's strength. The setting influenced Ading to be a traditional DalagangPilipina who is meek and is shy men's touch.

In the story, 'The God Stealer', the author uses geographical setting. The story is set in an Ifugao Village in Baguio. The setting influences the characters to be strong believers of gods as they live in a tribal village. It also influences them to be farmers and field workers as they live in the mountains with large amount of land that can be cultivated for planting.

In the story, 'Visitation of the Gods', the author uses a geographic setting. The story takes place in a rural place, specifically in a school called PugadLawin which is located at the top of a hill. The setting influences the characters through the resources available to them as they had to borrow materials from neighboring houses because their supplies were limited.

In the story, 'The Riddle', the writer uses geographic setting. The story is set in a small town by the sea. The setting is described as a

poor town which influences the characters to be poor also. This can be shown in the appearance of the Ella and Jimmy's house. It can also be seen in the sorry looking kalesa that Pepe rode to Ella's house.

In the story 'Footnote to Youth', the setting has influenced the characters through their appearances, their work, their way of living and the decisions they made. Being placed in a poor town, the setting has influenced the characters to be poor and deprived of education. Because of this, they have made decisions that they regret in the end. The author also used integral setting wherein the description of the characters' surroundings is vivid and specific.

In the story 'How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife', the writer uses geographic setting and uses integral setting to describe the surroundings of the characters. The setting is described as a beautiful place where stars are visibly shining at night despite the rocky and unpaved roads. The setting has influenced the characters through their way of living which is humble and simple. The characters learn to appreciate the little things.

In the story 'May Day Eve', the author uses chronological setting. The story was set during 1847 and 1890 as mentioned. Living in this era, the characters are influenced through their beliefs. The characters of the story believe in the the existence of witches, devil, and incantations that would make you see your future husband.

In the story 'My Father's Tragedy', the author uses geographical setting wherein the story happens in a rural town affected by famine. The characters were influenced by the setting through their actions. Actions that were desperate to gain money to buy food. And that desperation had caused them to be gamblers in a cockpit and neglected their duties at home.

4. CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, the researchers have reached the conclusion that the twelve short stories have used two types of setting: geographical setting, chronological/time setting. In each story, the influences of the setting is being shown through their behavior, belief, way of dressing, actions, the description of their surroundings, and even their culture.

5. IMPLICATION

The findings of the study have some significant implications to the readers, both teacher and students. Setting plays an important role in fiction, especially in short stories as they usually focus less on plots and more on the characters. Whether it is geographical, chronological setting, the readers need to have a deeper understanding and analysis of how setting influences the characters of the story and how a change in setting also changes the characters. This implies that readers need to dive deeper into the stories to find these influences so they can better understand and comprehend the story.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researchers are able to draw the following recommendations:

1. The readers of literature should value the role played by the setting in developing the characters and even the story.
2. Students should take into account the influences of the setting when reading the story, how it affects the characters and other elements of fiction.
3. The teacher should create emphasis on how the setting contributes to the creation of the story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher would like to express her heartfelt and sincerest

gratitude to the different individuals who had contributed to the success of this research.

To Dr. Rovy M. Banguis, the research adviser, for her expertise in editing and polishing the paper, her guidance and words of encouragement that made us finished writing the paper.

To Prof. Josephine S. Merquillo, Dr. Ivy F. Amante, and Prof. Arsub M. Varquez for sharing their comments and recommendations for the researchers to produce a better research study.

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