



Poverty as a Motif of Alberto Florentino's Selected Plays

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ABSTRACT

This study had to focus on poverty as a motif of Alberto Florentino's four selected plays namely; "The Cadaver", "The Dancers", "Oli Impan" and "The World is an Apple." The four selected plays were read carefully. Analyzed and implicated using formalism approach. Based on the findings fixed on analyses and implications of Alberto Florentino's selected plays, the researchers have arrived at these conclusions: The selected plays of Alberto Florentino as a resource material of this literary study show a unifying theme which is poverty. Poverty is depicted through the different situations of the characters in the play: stealing an apple that caused him to lose his job, financial incapability to hospitalize family members, robbing valuable things from the tomb, dancing in the night clubs and becoming prostitutes. The common causes of poverty in the play are lack of education, low-employment opportunity, low income and social injustice. The author's purpose for having poverty as a motif as portrayed in the four selected plays is to give awareness to the readers on how to deal with challenges in life and how to overcome hardships and struggles in a dignified manner. Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the researchers have drawn some implications. The four selected plays of Alberto Florentino in which poverty used as a unifying theme awakens us to the reality of life. It raises awareness to the readers for the kind of future brings in their lives when they choose to make wrong decisions in life. The plays present four causes of poverty: lack of education, low income, lack of job, and social injustice. Among of the causes mentioned, it's only lack of education that makes a person poor. Education is very important to people for it gives freedom the bondage of ignorance and poverty. It also brings success to our lives that can we use to have a brighter future. Hence, the absence of education is the root of poverty.

Keywords : poverty, motif, play

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature fosters an understanding and appreciation of culture and ideologies. Learning through literature is a vital role in the progress and development of any nation. However, there are lots of challenges in human's life which deter the progression of an individual. One of the very common themes of literature is poverty. Poverty is said to be the obvious problem which people face nowadays. Poverty itself is seldom used as a main theme in written works. It is commonly used as a subtheme which arises from the fact that the main character or group in the literary work is indigent.

Recently, the world's main problem is poverty. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines poverty as "the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. "It is the inability to adequately meet the basic human necessities of food, clothing and shelter. It is a broad, multidimensional, partly subjective phenomenon often viewed as both the cause and symptom of achieving under development. It brings not just physical hunger but mind hunger and suffering especially to human who had little or no shelter, proper food and education.

A society can be defined as a group of people who are directly or indirectly dependent on each other for their needs. A large number of people are accumulated in a society but not all people do the same thing

or perform the same job for their livelihood. There are different classes of people in the society depending on their economic status, educational status, racial status etc. which comprise the existing **social class hierarchy**. According to the model of social classification, the society is divided into three classes such as upper class, middle class and the lower class. Each class is characterized by lifestyle factors, interests and behaviors.

The focus of this study is on the people belonging to the lower class who are economically insecure and are employed in the low paying jobs for their livelihood. The lower class can further be divided into two types such as the people who are employed but lack financial security and the people who are homeless and unemployed for long term and receive the necessary welfare from the government. These two types of the lower class represent the main characters in the selected plays. The plays evidently show how indigent people struggle and remain poor because they choose the wrong paths in order to survive in their everyday lives.

Since poverty is used as the main motif or theme in preferred written works in the country, this study was conceived to unveil the common causes of poverty in the selected plays of Alberto S. Florentino. It may be true that life is unequal when the basis is on financial capacity

but the playwright is trying to argue through his plays that whether an individual is born from a rich family or in an indigent family, it does not matter. People cannot do anything about it but to stay rich or remain poor is the decision of an individual that he shall resolve for himself. Thus, this study reveals that being poor or indigent is not the problem but it is the indolence, irresponsibility, and lack of education that make them poor and keep the bondage of poverty with them.

It is the contention of this study to help the readers to explore issues regarding poverty. Humans may find that being poor is a thorn to their achievement and setting their mind that they cannot escape from it until they grow up considering being poor as a cultural norm. It is the belief of the researchers that through studying Alberto S. Florentino's, it will give focal awareness to those who are suffering from poverty on the causes of poverty and its positive means to overcome it.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theories which are helpful to this study are Formalism Approach and Mimesis Theory.

Mimesis is a critical and philosophical term that carries a wide range of meanings, which include imitation, representation, mimicry, receptivity and no sensuous similarity, the act of resembling, the act of expression and the presentation of the self. Plato contrasted mimesis or imitation with digenesis or narrative. After Plato, the meaning of mimesis eventually shifted toward a specifically literary function in ancient Greek society and its use has changed and been reinterpreted many times since then. Similar to Plato's writing about mimesis, Aristotle also defined mimesis as the perfection and imitation of nature. This theory evaluates a literary work of art in terms of imitation which is the most ancient way of judging or analyzing any work of art in relation to reality for this purpose, all theories relating to mimesis treat a work of art as photographic reproduction –i.e., Arts truthful representation of life, truth, etc.

This study was analyzed based on the Mimesis theory which governs the idea that art imitates reality, the idea that literature is an imitation of the real event in the actual world. In the four selected plays, it represents the mimesis of reality as how the commoner's life or an ordinary Filipino citizen struggled the hardship of life. In the analysis of the characters of the play, it is mimeses which led to the unifying idea of the play.

Moreover, the analysis of each of the play was also based on the use of Formalism Approach. Using formalism, a critic can show how the various parts of a work are welded together to make an organic whole. This approach examines a text as a self-contained object; it does not, therefore, concern itself with biographical information about the author, historical events outside of the story, or literary allusions, mythological patterns, or psychoanalytical traits of the characters. It examines the form of the work as a whole, the characters, the settings, the tone, the point of view and all other elements of text which join to make it a single text. After analyzing each part, the critic then describes how they work together to give meaning to the text.

Farooq (2013) discussed the two theories of poverty; the classical and the neoclassical theory. Classical traditions view individuals as largely responsible for their own destiny, choosing in effect to become poor (e.g. by forming lone-parent families). The concept of 'sub-cultures of poverty' implies that deficiencies may continue over time, owing for example to lack of appropriate role models, and that state aid should be limited to changing individual capabilities and attitudes (i.e. the *laissez-faire* tradition).

The study of Basoy (2000), titled "The Effects of Poverty as portrayed in the three selected short stories in English", revealed that the

main characters of the three selected short stories were portrayed by the author poor. Poverty was described through the scarcity of basic needs such as clothing, foods, shelter and medicine which are experienced by the main characters in the story that poverty really affects them. They encountered unhappiness, loss of self-confidence, low standard of living and misery, the loss of sense of right and wrong, death, and misery of the family, immorality, discontentment and psychological and emotional depression.

The study Babylon and Sionillio (2010), titled "A study of Family Social Struggle as Reflected in the Philippine Contemporary short stories", revealed that the characters of the selected stories suffered among social struggles of the families. Poverty was described the situation of the characters. They encountered social struggles because they are poor and not educated as they engaged early marriages. As the effect of their situation they suffered miserable life and unhappiness.

The study of Deleverio and Sebaros (2011), entitled "Social Problems in the Eight Selected short stories", revealed that the characters especially protagonist had suffered poverty as the causes of crime, violence, social injustice, early marriage, discrimination and lack of education. Poverty was described to the condition of not having the means to afford the basic human needs and its effect to the characters and the protagonist who experience unhappiness, misery of the family, loss of self-esteem and psychological problem.

The study of Alovencia, Costaños and Fuentes (2016) titled "Analyzing Social Issues in Some Selected Philippine Short Stories", revealed that the characters of Philippine selected short stories had suffer social issues such as maltreatment, poverty, inequality, early marriage, corruption, alcoholism, stealing, harassment, bribery and gambling. Poverty was described to the situation of the characters that lead them in unhappiness lives.

The study of Edris and Opresina (2017) titled "Internal and External Conflicts Confronting the Characters on the Selected Philippine Short Story", unveiled that the characters of Philippine selected short stories were seen suffered internal and external conflicts due to the reason of poverty. In the study, poverty describes how the external and internal problems affect the lives of the characters in the story. External problem have revolved mostly around poverty outside force fitted against the characters and also on the demise of loved ones. Internal problems are psychological problems revolved around emotional tensions of anger, pain, loneliness, wrong decisions, hunger, immoral acts, demise, jealousy and complaint, death of life, decisiveness and rumors. These causes were the effect of poverty that experienced by the characters in the story.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main objective of the study is to know how poverty is used as a motif of Alberto S. Florentino's selected plays. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following:

1. How is poverty depicted in the four selected plays?
2. What are the common causes of poverty presented in the study?
3. What is the writer's purpose of using poverty as a motif in his plays as portrayed?

2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents how the researchers gathered the necessary information that was used in the entire study. It discusses research methods available for the study and what is applicable for it to use in response to the statement of the problem which is directed towards the poverty as a motif in the study.

Likewise, this chapter presented the various procedures and

strategies in analyzing the theme of the selected plays of Alberto Florentino. Thus, this chapter specifies the method of research design, description of the study as well as the analysis of the gathered data.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In the sense that this study is qualitative in nature and focused on poverty as a theme and to describe the causes of poverty, it employed the descriptive method of research. Specifically, it used the content analysis in view of the fact that its objective was to determine through critical analysis on how poverty is used as a motif of Alberto Florentino's selected plays.

The Plays under Study

The study reviewed and analyzed the four selected play of Alberto Florentino.

1. "The Cadaver"
2. "The Dancers"
3. "Oli Impan"
4. "The World is an Apple"

2.2 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The researchers selected a specific title of the study, entitled "Poverty as a Motif of Alberto Florentino's Selected Plays". The researchers gathered and collected ideas related to the title and looked for selected plays of Alberto Florentino that focused on poverty. The researcher made a careful study in writing the background of the study, statement of the problem, scope and limitation, operational terms as well as the theory and approach they used. The researchers scanned for the related literature and related studies base on their research study. Four selected plays were analyzed carefully. The study was qualitative research and formalism approach was used to analyze each play by focusing on thematic analysis.

A careful study of the literary work is conducted to present clear description of this study and to attain its objective. Four short selected plays of Alberto Florentino were read carefully and analyzed critically focusing on poverty as a theme and the causes of poverty. Other books and references were read to gather facts and pieces of information which are relevant to the study.

This study had to focus on poverty as a motif of Alberto Florentino's four selected plays namely; "The Cadaver", "The Dancers", "Oli Impan" and "The World is an Apple." The four selected plays were read carefully. Analyzed and implicated using formalism approach.

3. FINDINGS

Through careful analyses of the researchers of the selected plays, the summarized findings are arrived at:

In the play "The Cadaver", it focuses on the character of Torio who pitied himself with too much disappointment and grieve for his miserable life. Torio's extreme poverty is felt in his jealous heart when he was once sheltered himself in the rich's tomb. His great distress was apparently emphasized in the play. He has more to complain. He is thinking of the things that are lacking in his dwellings. These are the reality of man's nature – the dissatisfaction of the situation which lead him to do anything – though it would mean immoral. The setting of the play is also a description of real poverty experienced by the characters where their home is dark, dank place with thin walls and a cardboard roof that leaks even during a light rainfall. The setting and character of the play is an explicit portrayal of estrangement and frustration which speaks the bad reality of life.

Lack of education is unveiled through the work of the main character, Torio, who stole things from the cadaver since he doesn't have any opportunity to find a proper job to make his life better. Immorality is also presented in play "The Cadaver". The main character in the play

chose to do illegal acts in order to meet their basic needs. Inequality of health care is visible in the play when the doctor refused to go with Maria to cure Torio since he knew that they cannot compensate him in return. The play gives a clear understanding that doing wrong things to satisfy your needs and wants does not give us a brighter future. It will only pass swiftly. It teaches us to learn to earn a living from our own hardships instead of being tempted to do wrong deeds.

In the play "The Dancer", it shows a poor family who is struggling each day for survival. The main problem comes from the father who neglected his responsibility. He is a father who is jobless and lazy to do his task. He is also a self-centered person who did nothing but keeps on complaining things. Poverty is depicted in the play through showing how the members of the family try to stand against all odds. Father (Mang Tomas) forced some of the member of the family to hunt a job for a living while he kept using alibis to do his role as a father. His wife work as a market vendor, his eldest daughter was forced to work in the bar and his eldest son is a jeepney driver. In the later part of the play, Nenita also began to go in the bar with Rita. This only means that Nenita will soon became like Rita, as what their father says that if dancing is good for Rita then its good enough for Nenita.

In the play, the family struggles in the harshness of poverty due to lack of education. The father doesn't have plans in life to earn a living. The entire job of the family only earns small amount of money. It is only a proof that they are all uneducated. If they are educated, surely, they will never end up with those types of job mentioned in the play. Poverty is used as a motif in the play to inform the readers on how to value the opinion and feelings of other people. It tells that we should learn to listen from others especially from family members and give them the freedom to talk and to do things which they want. Most of all, it reminds us to be aware of our responsibilities.

In the play "Oli Impan", poverty is depicted through the appearance of the toy car—made up of thin can which signifies the hardship of life in such a way that they cannot buy a real toy car for a little boy. Poverty is also described through the palm reading as a means of living of the little boy's mother. The mother's job is not exactly palm reading but prostitution since it was mentioned that she reads men's hands only and would only do it in the dark and would not allow her children to watch. This presents worst reality where a person jumps into a nasty decision in order to survive in a poor life.

Poverty is revealed though the ways of the government which became one of the causes of poverty. Instead of helping the indigent people, they are pulling them down. The lack of education which is a direct effect of this poverty was also made visible through the boy's incorrect pronunciation of the song. Social injustice is also very visible in this play, as the poor families in the squatter's area are thrown away by the government four days before Christmas day without providing relocation to those families whose houses whose houses are demolished. The play tells much what kind of life it reflects. The writer knocks the reader's mind to dream big in life rather than depending on things that doesn't give any assurance. It informs people to learn to be independent and have a determination to strive hard for his family.

In the play "The World is an Apple", it revolves on the characters that are facing poverty in their marriage life. Poverty is portrayed in the play through their financial incapability. It was shown when Gloria asked money but Mario has nothing to give. He lost his job because of a single apple which he stole for his daughter because he cannot afford to buy it from his own pocket. The prevailing problem of poverty in the play is due to the lack of better opportunities to heighten one's standard of living. The obvious reason why Mario entangled in a wrong decision is because they don't have enough financial sources to fulfill the necessity of their living.

The play is a portrayal of the real- life situation of poor fami-

lies who struggled a lot in order to survive even if it would mean immorality in the law of man. Economic inequality is also manifested through the job of Mario. It is portrayed that his co-workers were just waiting for him to make a little mistake for them to take him out of the job. The lack of time to hear the side of Mario and to explain the truth is an abuse of human rights. Stealing a single apple is too small reason to kick out a poor man from his job.

Poverty is also used as a theme in the play "The World is an Apple" by the playwright to teach the readers to open their minds to be responsible enough in facing their lives in the future. The inequality of financial capacity is created by man. This is also a challenge to the readers that the possession of an "expensive apple" depends upon how we plant it. If we plant pure hard work fueled by firmness and perseverance, then surely, we will be able to have a better life.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings fixed on analyses and implications of Alberto Florentino's selected plays, the researchers have arrived at these conclusions:

1. The selected plays of Alberto Florentino as a resource material of this literary study show a unifying theme which is poverty. Poverty is depicted through the different situations of the characters in the play: stealing an apple that caused him to lose his job, financial incapability to hospitalize family members, robbing valuable things from the tomb, dancing in the night clubs and becoming prostitutes.
2. The common causes of poverty in the play are lack of education, low-employment opportunity, low income and social injustice.
3. The author's purpose for having poverty as a motif as portrayed in the four selected plays is to give awareness to the readers on how to deal with challenges in life and how to overcome hardships and struggles in a dignified manner.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the researchers have drawn some implications. The four selected plays of Alberto Florentino in which poverty used as a unifying theme awakens us to the reality of life. It raises awareness to the readers for the kind of future brings in their lives when they choose to make wrong decisions in life. The plays present four causes of poverty: lack of education, low income, lack of job, and social injustice. Among of the causes mentioned, it's only lack of education that makes a person poor. Education is very important to people for it gives freedom the bondage of ignorance and poverty. It also brings success to our lives that can we use to have a brighter future. Hence, the absence of education is the root of poverty.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Literature teachers should encourage the students to develop the inherent features of literary work especially the devices such as; characters, settings, plot, theme and symbolisms of any genres.
2. Let the students to analyze literary works by analyzing the piece including the poetic view of the author. Thus, they will give any comments, reaction and even reflection from the piece they had analyzed.
3. Students should read literature's work for it mirrors life specifically the family life and the relationship of its members.
4. Parents should be responsible in strengthening their relationship toward their children.

5. Literature teachers must teach a real value of life since literature itself is considered as a mirror of life.

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