

Tracing Anglo-American Influences in Alberto Florentino's *'Cadaver'*: A Textual Analysis 94

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Abstract

This study investigates the Anglo-American influences in Alberto S. Florentino's one-act play *Cadaver* through a textual analysis of its themes, characterization, and plot. Grounded in the literary theory of mimesis and the movements of existentialism and realism, the paper examines how Florentino's portrayal of poverty, social stratification, and human resilience reflects remnants of Anglo-American literary traditions while simultaneously articulating Filipino socio-cultural realities. Employing qualitative textual analysis, the study dissects the play's discourse into meaningful units to identify traces of Anglo-Americanism embedded in the narrative and character portrayals. Findings reveal that *Cadaver* mirrors the struggles of the marginalized urban poor through realistic settings, existential dilemmas, and cultural superstitions, underscoring the interplay of deprivation, inequality, and dignity. These literary elements demonstrate Anglo-American psychological and humanistic influences, particularly in the representation of social injustice, superstition, and survival. The study also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), by highlighting literature's role in raising awareness of social disparities and fostering inclusive education. By situating Philippine literature within intercultural frameworks, the paper offers valuable insights for educators and learners in promoting critical thinking, cultural awareness, and Filipino identity in the 21st-century classroom.

Keywords: Anglo-American influences; Philippine literature; Alberto Florentino; Textual analysis; 21st-century education

1. Introduction

The teaching of literature plays a crucial role among learners in the 21st century. An important part of this role is to ensure that both reasons and processes of teaching are included in the learning process (Surkamp, 2012). In its own merit, literature encompasses not just the cultural heritage of a nation, but also its psychological, philosophical, and economic aspects (Maharsi, 2012). Apart from the fact that literature may be utilized to develop the fundamental literacy skills of students (Hişmanoğlu, 2005), it must be taken into account that it should also focus on the sociocultural context of the stories which will help readers develop their critical thinking skills (Agustin, 2022).

Among the several issues in Philippine literary education, the subscription of teachers to Anglo-American texts (Martin, 2009; Martin, 2002) and prioritizing them in many literature classrooms speaks of the remnants of colonization. It is true that the level of difficulty of the task-based activities (Parcon, 2022), the use of appropriate technological tools (Nicdao, 2013), and the contextualization of learning materials (Palanqui & Tayag, 2023) are important, but literature teachers should not ignore the socio-historical knowledge through an in-depth analysis of literary texts and archival records (Agustin, 2022).

In the structure of literary selections, learning does not enrich the cultural and psychological, social, and even political perspectives of the learners because only the literal understanding of the text read is focused in the teaching and learning of literary texts. Beyond this, there is a need to introduce thinking and study skills in comprehending a text touching on cause-effect relations, author-reader relations, and reader response or reactions. Hence, there is a need to investigate the Anglo-Americanisms in Philippine literature for the Filipino readers to understand themselves.

In line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a global framework that addresses pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, education, and sustainable communities. This study connects with several of these goals, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4

(Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), as it highlights how literature can mirror social realities and contribute to critical awareness. By examining the Anglo-American influences in Alberto Florentino's *Cadaver*, the research not only underscores the socio-economic struggles of marginalized Filipinos but also emphasizes the role of literature in shaping inclusive and socially responsive education. In this way, the study supports the SDGs by fostering cultural awareness, critical thinking, and the appreciation of Filipino identity within the context of 21st-century learning.

2. Theoretical Background

This investigation argues that Anglo-American influences are reflected in the one-act play titled "*Cadaver*" by Alberto S. Florentino in terms of theme, characterization, and plot.

This research argument is supported by the theory of mimesis and the literary movements of existentialism and realism.

Further, the play is centered on mimesis since it depicts the realistic situations confronted by the urban poor. Existentialism as a literary movement is one of the main ingredients in the play because it depicts that it is part of an individual's life to struggle in order to survive even if it takes stealing other people's possessions. It also contains realism because the story was linked to some picturesque details such as the real customs and characteristics of Filipinos, especially the poor people. Thus, within the matrix of these theoretical and literary trends, this paper is conceived.

3. Problem Statement

This paper investigates the Anglo-American literary influences of mimesis as a literary theory and existentialism and realism as literary movements in Alberto Florentino's "*Cadaver*".

Specifically, it analyzes the following structural elements revealing the influences:

1. theoretical summary of Alberto Florentino's "*Cadaver*";
2. Anglo-American influences in the story; and
3. Anglo-Americanisms in the works of Alberto Florentino

4. Significance of the Study

This study becomes a model critical paper in intertextuality of literary influences for literature scholars investigating on theme, characterization, and plot. Literature teachers grasp the connection of Filipino culture to Anglo-American influences based on the one-act play of Florentino. This investigation is not only a reflection on the existence of socio-economic struggles of the poor, but it also helps them develop their critical thinking skills.

5. Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study is focused on the selection "*Cadaver*" by Alberto S. Florentino. The limitations of the study are focused on the following dimensions:

1. theoretical summary of Alberto Florentino's "*Cadaver*";
2. Anglo-American influences in the story; and
3. Anglo-Americanisms in the works of Alberto Florentino

6. Definition of Terms

Mimesis is a literary theory which focuses on the idea that nature is copied by the work, imitating life and reflecting reality.

Existentialism is a literary theory which expresses the loneliness, insecurity, irrevocability of man's experience and the dangerous situations in which these qualities are prominent, focusing on the serious and conscious attempts of serious people to face these situations and the evasive and desperate and ultimately useless attempts of weak people to escape them; the future is undetermined, man is free but has neither fixed potentials nor fixed values to aid him; the free choice of actions asserts the actions wild; man makes himself, must from his own character.

Realism is a literary theory which sees life as a detailed presentation of appearances of the everyday world, closely linked to the Local Color school concerning on picturesque details such as scenery, customs, and language – characteristics of a certain region.

Textual summary refers to the condensed text in relation to the elements of the story.

Anglo-Americanisms are the specific influences on Filipinos' behavioral and social patterns which are manifested on their speech and actions.

7. Methodology

This section discusses the qualitative procedure of literary criticism involving the following: literary research method, sources of data, and data gathering process.

7.1. Literary Research Method

The research method used in this study is discourse or textual analysis. In this method, verbal discourse throughout the selection is chopped into units of thought for analytical processing of meaning which is retrieved from the language of the text.

7.2. Sources of Data

The verbal data in the textual processing of meaningful units are all sourced out from the textuality of the selection "Cadaver" by Alberto S. Florentino from "Philippine Literature: Through the Years" by Kahayon and Zulueta (2000).

The criteria or analysis based on the theories are sourced out from Literary Historicism and Literary Critical Theories.

7.3. Data Gathering Procedures

The flow of the literary study undergoes three phases of discussion: the theoretical summary of Alberto Florentino's "Cadaver"; Anglo-American influences in the story; and Anglo-Americanisms in the works of Alberto Florentino.

Phase 1 involves the textual summary of the one-act play "Cadaver" by Florentino. After a thorough reading of the literary work, the story is encapsulated by presenting the characters and events in the story.

Phase 2 involves the Anglo-American influences in one-act play "Cadaver". Its themes, characters, and plot structure are carefully analyzed to determine the literary movements reflected in the story guided by the theories of mimesis, existentialism, and realism.

Phase 3 involves the Anglo-Americanisms in the works of Florentino. Critiques from some writers regarding the literary influences of the English and Americans in the contexts of the text in Florentino's works are analyzed.

Following the three phases, acquiring the accurate sources of data, and employing the qualitative method of research, this literary study is made possible.

8. Results and Discussions

This section presents three critiques in order to respond to the sub-problems raised in this study. Each critique is processed as an academic paper ready for publication, complete with thesis statement, critical analysis from the body, and conclusion as generalization after proving the argument.

The results are hereby organized in this outline:

- I. Textual summary of the one-act play "Cadaver"
 - a. Setting
 - b. Description of the main characters
 - c. Negative emotion or conflict
 - d. Death of the main character
- II. Anglo-American influences in "Cadaver"
 - a. Mimesis in the themes
 - b. Existentialism in the characters
 - c. Realism in the setting
- III. Anglo-Americanisms in the works of Alberto S. Florentino
 - a. Critics
 - b. Critical assertions
 - c. Anglo-American implicatures

8.1. Textual summary of the one-act play "Cadaver"

This literary paper presents the textual summary of "Cadaver" by Alberto S. Florentino which depicts the societal ills and social drama, particularly on the marginalized sector of the Philippine society.

"Cadaver" is a play written by Florentino which is set on the edge of a cemetery in an impoverished area of Manila. It depicts the life of the urban poor, specifically the lives of Torio, Carding, and Marina. They are underprivileged and deprived of life's basic necessities and resources. Torio, the husband of Marina, was very sick that kept Marina and Carding extremely worried. Although Torio did not want to undergo medication, his wife and his friend insisted that a public doctor will come so that he may be cured. Unfortunately, Torio responded negatively to it because he knows that they do not have any penny to pay to the doctor and he might just beg money from him. He got upset with Marina and Carding and said that they might even be happy about his condition because they could finally be together as a couple. Consequently, they just ignored what Carding said because they were aware that he was sick. He even also shared to Marina their business of stealing money, pieces of jewelry, and other resources from the dead bodies inside the tomb. Carding and Marina believed in the old superstitious belief that once a man gets wounded in the tomb of the body, it means that he will also die. At the end of the play, Torio lost his breath, leading Marina and Carding to say the prayers.

8.2. Anglo-American influences in “Cadaver”

Mimetic theory focuses on the idea that nature is copied by the work, imitating life and reflecting reality. This theory is present in the play considering that it is a mirror of realistic scenarios in the society. One of the themes in the play is the willingness to survive despite poverty. Torio and Marina belong to the marginalized sector which compelled Torio, being the breadwinner of the family, to do illegal things. The inclination to survive pushed him to steal jewelry from the tomb of dead bodies coming from affluent families. Clearly, stealing might be an unethical act, but some people will be willing to do it in order to survive.

A significant and realistic perspective in the play is the misfortune of the marginalized sector. Torio and Marina belong to this category. In a society where stereotyping is visibly seen, it was a miserable situation that the doctor whom Marina approached to check on her husband's condition did not show any concern and sympathy towards them, especially because they do not have money to pay for the check-up. At the other side of the coin, if it were a patient who is a working professional, the doctor might have helped that person. This scenario shows the widening gap between the rich and the poor. In addition, the anxiety that Marina, as a wife, felt is also realistic. Her effort of going to the dispensary and asking the doctor's help is a sincere act of a housewife. That kind of concern expressed by Carding to Torio as part of their friendship is also realistic. Notably, one of the central ideas of the play is to believe in superstition or fear of the unknown. It was manifested when Carding and Marina pointed out that Torio was in a difficult situation because he got wounded in the cemetery. They believe that if one gets wounded or even only scratched by the bones of the dead, he will die. In reality, some people still believe in superstitious beliefs as part of their cultural identity, norms, and beliefs.

Existentialism is a literary movement which expresses the loneliness, insecurity, and irrevocability of man's experience and the dangerous situations in which these qualities are most prominent, focusing on the serious and conscious attempts of serious people to face these situations and the evasive and desperate and ultimately useless attempts of weak people to escape them; the future is undetermined; man is free but neither fixed potentials nor fixed values to aid him; the free choice of actions as valid; man makes himself, must form his own character. This school of thought was manifested among the characters in the story. Apparently, Torio was living in a solitary world. He was complaining about life and the poor condition he had which led him to steal the possessions of dead bodies in the cemetery. Being insecure was an emotion he felt towards the rich people. He expressed his disgust about how society treated the poor people in almost all aspects of life. One of which is on getting a medical treatment wherein he emphasized that once a patient does not have money, he cannot be treated well in the hospital. There was irrevocability in his decisions. He was firm in his cognition that he will never go to the hospital and he would rather stay at home.

He was showing too much strength that he will survive in spite of the disease he had which bothered his wife and his friend a lot. This inner dimension of Torio shows how decisive he was and that he never felt guilty about what he did. He was thinking that it was part of his fate to do unethical things because of the discrimination that the marginalized sector in the society suffer.

Realism is a literary movement which sees life as a detailed presentation of appearances of the everyday world, closely linked to the Local Color school concentrating on picturesque details such as scenery, customs, and language – characteristics of a certain region. The Philippines, undoubtedly, faces poverty which affects the lives of several Filipinos. In the story, the miserable situation was mirrored through the socio-economic status of Torio, Marina, and Carding. These characters do not have a decent place to live in and they certainly experience scarcity in money, food, and other basic necessities. Local color was depicted in the story, specifically in the setting of the play. The first part of the story shows the interior of a squalid, one-room dwelling located on the edge of a cemetery in Manila.

“The walls and roof – made of empty boxes, tarpaulin, bamboo, and cardboard patched together – threaten to collapse any minute. Torio lays on a cot, a manta blanket covering him to the waist. He is around 27 years old, with a square jaw and a well-developed body. He is sick, his eyes close. Carding enters: a frail-bodied slow-moving man in dirty pants and T-shirt crosses to Torio and taps him on the shoulder.”

This scenario shows the miserable situation of the impoverished sector, not only on the place where they live, but also on the socio-economic situation they have. The story depicts that in the Philippine society, there are several Pinoys who experience the same situation. These people cannot live in a comfortable place which will make them dignified as human beings. Some of them will also be compelled to just do illegal acts in order to live, especially for their family's sake. Lastly, the story also shows the custom of Filipinos in believing in superstitious beliefs.

Indeed, there are Anglo-American influences that are depicted in Alberto Florentino's one act-play “Cadaver”.

8.3. Anglo-Americanism in the Literary Work of Alberto S. Florentino

This paper assumes that Anglo-Americanisms in Alberto S. Florentino's works are reflected in the analyses of Macatangay (2023), Bucjan (2016), and Yu (1973).

This matrix condenses the critiques of three researchers indicating Anglo-Americanism in the literary work/s of Alberto S. Florentino.

Table 1. Summary of Critical Analyses on Anglo-American Influences in Alberto Florentino's Works

Critics	Critical Assertions	Anglo-American Implicatures
An Analysis of Social Issues in Alberto Florentino's Selected Plays: Input to a Proposed Literature Teaching Model Based on See-Judge-Act Hermeneutic Cycle by Macatangay (2023)	Incorporating societal issues embedded in Philippine literature plays creates not just a meaningful teaching approach, but also a socially responsive one.	psychological; humanism; social stratification; human rights
Poetic Visions in Alberto Florentino's Selected Plays	Social relevance is not only emphasized in Florentino's plays, but an entrenched truth of Filipino's challenges and morality which is unified by a creative and philosophical mindset.	psychological; humanism; social stratification; human rights
An Evaluative Analysis of Eight Plays of Alberto S. Florentino by Yu (1973)	“Cadaver” reveals the realistic scenarios of poor Filipino families, especially in Metro Manila.	psychological; humanism; social stratification; human rights

It was emphasized by the critics that Alberto S. Florentino is best known for his English plays depicting the life of the ordinary and of the urban poor of the Philippines. Most, if not all, of his plays are centered on poverty and its effects on the impoverished sector of the society.

It can also be pointed out that the dominant Anglo-American influences are the psychological and humanistic realities, specifically social stratification and human rights.

9. Conclusions

Based on the findings, Anglo-American influences are reflected in the one-act play “Cadaver” by Alberto S. Florentino. Societal issues which may affect the students’ perspectives towards life should be at the heart of literature education. It is imperative to have critical awareness in reading literary texts by analyzing significant themes in the story – highlighting the Anglo-Americanisms in these works – not because we are advocating the literary texts of the West, but because we are interested to see its interconnectedness.

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