



Decoding the Selected Classic Short Stories Using the Theories of Literature

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ABSTRACT

This literary study mainly analyzes the context of the selected classic short stories. The verbal data supporting the said claim are descriptively investigated based on feministic theory, psychoanalytical theory, and historical-biographical theory. The study is buttressed with related literature and study, and is done with discourse analysis. The study gathers the following findings: (1) Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog," reveals feministic and gender issues that shape the story's plot; (2) Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" discloses psychoanalytical outlooks which show the genuine personality and role of the characters; and (3) Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" echoes the author's personal life. This study further uncloaks that Chekhov's short fiction portrays three feministic insights: the feminine, feminist, and female; Poe's masterpiece discloses psychoanalytic concepts on id, superego, and Freud's concept of projection; and Twain's work shows the author's presence in the text which compasses journey, downfall, moral failing, and dream. The utilized theories of literature for analysis provides a better understanding of the aforesaid tales. The studied short fictions hedge to gain more appreciation and comments of the people in the field of literary study.

Keywords: *Context, feministic, psychoanalytical, historical-biographical, classic, short story, literary theory.*

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INTRODUCTION

The short story is one of the genres in literature. It deals with the character's depiction to generate related events. The commonly mentioned literary concepts which help literary enthusiasts in comprehending a short fiction are characterization, structure, setting, point of view, and theme [1]. Brainard goes on elaborating that a short fiction may include the following elements: voice, style, and tone [2]. Numerous individuals have already cherished and used short stories as a form of entertainment prior to civilization. In fact, the tales during the pre-civilized epoch is told orally, and thus the recounting perhaps differs slightly from one storyteller to another. Nevertheless, reciters of tales strive to keep up the general idea of the piece. With the rise of inscription, people endeavor to reserve a printed record of those stories which are shared by their ancestors. Consequently, the style of writing evolves from time to time.

The superfluities of short stories give literary individuals an idea of investigating them; as a result, the term "critic" is coined. Judilla insists that critics are the people who evaluate and analyze a certain masterpiece [3]. Literary critics commence in criticizing the structural prototype of those printed stories. From decoding the form and other related elements of the text, they further make a serious attempt at investigating the text in connection with the women's portrayal, with the psychoanalytic standpoints, and with the personal life of the author.

The deaths of the authors do not mean the cessation of the value of their masterpieces. Those short stories become classic due to wide readership and textual purport. Classics are fiction or short stories which are anchored in time and artistry. In more practical sense, they are masterpieces that are written prior to the World War. Calvino emphasizes that classic authors share ground-breaking technique in writing, and offer a feeling of satisfaction to the readers [4]. Three of the classic short story writers which leave a legacy of literary enthusiasm are Anton Chekhov, Edgar Allan Poe, and Mark Twain. These writers have their own style of writing their magnum opus. Anton Chekhov is prominent with his short story "The Lady with the Dog" while Mark Twain is eminent with his tale "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras

County.” Edgar Allan Poe, in addition, is notable with his masterpiece “The Cask of Amontillado.” Numerous literary researchers and enthusiasts make a serious effort into investigating those short stories. However, their evaluation and critique typically center on the descriptive analysis about the structural facets of the text and not on the contextual standpoint such as the narration of self, gender arguments, and behavioral conceptions.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the context of the selected classic short stories. Specifically, the study aims to identify the feministic insights in Anton Chekhov’s “The Lady with the Dog,” psychoanalytical viewpoints in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado,” and historical-biographical conceptions in Mark Twain’s “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” Context is anything that is not contained within the literary text itself. It can be feministic context, authorial context, psychological context, or critical context. Under the critical contexts are the criticisms to literature. These criticisms are lenses to decode a text according to structure and context. Critical context, on a related note, is the scrutiny of published literary works. In other words, there is a detailed investigation of a certain masterpiece using literary criticism to literature to extract hidden significations, motifs, and influences in the text [5]. These criticisms typically encompass the author, the text, the world, and the reader. This study utilizes feministic theory, psychoanalytic theory, and historical-biographical theory to support the said claim. Obeso et al. [6] view feministic theory as a set of ideas regarding women who are unappreciated and neglected in the sociological context. Feminist critics affirm that women should be valued similarly to men and should be given equal opportunity when it comes to socio-political and rational affairs [7]. The progression of this general concept is, in fact, due to patriarchal dominance in society. More so, historical-biographical theory refers to a framework concerning author-to-text connectivity. Fard infers that this approach endows an emphasis on the portrayal of the writer’s political, sociological, and economical background [8]. The historical-biographical theory is somehow associated with the psychoanalytical theory. Psychoanalytic theory refers to the behavioral conceptions of the characters in the story. It may also deal with the psychology of the writer in crafting the piece. Hossain claims that this theory encompasses the investigation of the text and the audience [9]. This study uses discourse analysis to arrive at the essential result.

This exhaustive investigation aims to bear up literature major students to search for classic short stories for investigation. More so, this targets to inspire literary critics, researchers, enthusiasts, and educators to decode classic stories in order to analyze the gaps or matters which are not yet discerned. The prominence of the authors’ masterpieces is, in fact, the reason why this study is regarded. To give a notable contribution to literature is another reason why this study is conceived.

The result of this investigation is hoped to help literary instructors from the distinct educational fields for this will serve as a reference in their literary discussion. Further, this study hedges to be a piece of supplemental information for literature major students. Specifically, they will gain core ideas concerning the ways in how each short story can be interpreted using the theories of literature. This study will further help literary researchers in comprehending matters regarding contextual and structural arguments of the text. In addition to the people who will benefit from this comprehensive study are the literary critics. This will be a good venue for them to apply, comprehend, and check the selected classic short stories.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This literary research uses a qualitative method of discourse analysis. The emphasis on this method is not on the analysis of numerical data but on the interpretation of the text. For Lync, the text becomes the carrier of the general signification [10]. This study uses feministic theory, psychoanalytical theory, and historical-biographical theory to reveal the answers to the sub-problems of the study. The primary sources of data are the short stories written by renowned

authors in PDF (Portable Document Format). Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" is published around 1860 -1904 and is translated by Ivy Litvinov. Moreover, Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" is published in 2008 by Enotes.com Inc. Lastly, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" is published in 1846 and is created in PDF e-book by José Menéndez.

Theses, dissertations, journals, books, and web reviews related to the topics in the study are the secondary sources. The procedure of analysis follows three fundamental phases: Phase one is on the investigation of the feministic insights in Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog;" Phase two is on the scrutiny of the psychoanalytical viewpoints in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado;" and phase three is on the interpretation of the historical-biographical conceptions in Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Feministic insights in Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog"

This story is about a married forty-year-old man named Dmitri Gurov who makes a deep amorous attachment to a married woman named Anna Sergeyevna. The two carry on their relationship even though Dmitri is conscious that Anna is married to a man named Von Diderits. The story concludes with Dmitri's realization of tempting a woman at his latter age during Anna's visit to Moscow. The analysis adheres to the characters, particularly on how women are portrayed in the patriarchal society.

The feministic theory is used in decoding the characters and the essential arguments in this fictional narrative. Most of the in-depth analytic investigation using the said theory utilizes Elaine Showalter's concept of feminine, feminist, and female. In the feminine stage, women have identified themselves as people who comply and accept men's functions and influences. On contrary, the feminist stage mainly focuses on women's rebellious demeanor against men in societal affairs. Finally, on the female stage, women define their own identity and are no longer fascinated in men's circumscription [8].

Martin confirms that characters are the people in the story; whereas characterization is the act of portraying or describing a character's special features, such as bearing, physical appearance, and action [11]. The characters of this masterpiece are as follows: Dmitri Gurov, Dmitri's wife, Dmitri's children, Anna Sergeyevna, and Von Diderits. The presence of the two male characters influences the women as the storyline progresses. The two genders are portrayed connectedly. The story delineates Dmitri as someone who is passionate and seductive; whereas Anna is portrayed as someone who is easily tempted.

In the earlier part of the tale, Dmitri concedes that he does not like his wife for her clever ill-nature demeanor; this upshot into numerous romantic attachments to other women. His wife cuddled the notion of how to be a robust unfettered woman. She chooses to be firm in order not to be oppressed by her husband. She, therefore, values the feministic insight; Chekhov writes: "She was a tall, black-browed woman, erect, dignified, imposing, and, as she said of herself, a "thinker" [12]. Affected by the happenings, Dmitri, on the other hand, addresses women as the lower prestige in society [12]. This shows how men look at or trait women in society during that time. In "The Lady with the Dog Part 1. Summary & Analysis," even though he calls them whatever he likes, he cannot get through without having them [13]. On contrary, Melnyk affirms that Dmitri is well-mannered in dealing with ideal ladies [14]. This manifests in every casual interaction with Anna.

Furthermore, women he used to have love affairs value the female identity. They are not petrified of expressing their

own worth and opinion, as described in this line: “then there had been two or three beautiful, cold women, over whose features flitted a predatory expression, betraying a determination to wring from life more than it could give, women no longer in their first youth, capricious...” [12]. Anna, however, is conceived with feminine identity who still values the opinion of men, and is sometimes wanted to be dictated by them. This manifests when she shows worried comportment about their love affair. She agonizes to be caught by her husband. As depicted in the tale, Anna is an easily-tempted character. In an online article “What is a feminist criticism of the story?” Dmitri deems Anna as someone who has less merit in sociological discourse [15]. For Dabek, on a related note, Anna is portrayed as someone of little value [16]. Dmitri already assumes that she comes from the elite, and is in connubial relations [12]; however, he still persists in engaging in a secret love affair.

This masterpiece is influenced by the writer’s gender. Chekhov might be impartial in delineating the strength and weaknesses of both female and male characters but the dominating is still the men. He also portrays women and men who somehow mirror the societal representation and classification of sexuality. Dmitri is portrayed in this story as someone who is the product of societal expectation. He conforms to the notion that a man is tasked or must be the one to find a companion. As cited in the tale, Dmitri is the one who indulges first into communication so that he can get the woman’s heart and arouse her afterward. It is clearly evident as shown in the story: he abruptly smooches and stares Anna constantly [12]. Anna, on the other hand, falls in love triumphantly with Dmitri, and results in a conflicting relationship. Anna shows a subservient characteristic towards Dmitri. This is evident when Anna utters about her suffering of not seeing Dmitri, and agrees to follow him in Moscow [12]. Besides, there is a sociological expectation of both male and female characters imposed in the story, and that is men should be the ones to find a woman to marry while women should wait for a suitable suitor who can meet their standard. In societal norms, it is also shameful for both genders to engage in a sexual affair with a married person. Social expectancy affects gender insight. This adds pressure to both genders and upshot to hiding their relationship. As narrated, they conceal like robbers trying to abscond from individuals [12]. There will be a distinction if the male characters are female and vice versa. The story, perhaps, will end in another way. Their marital status becomes the obstruction of their romantic attachment. It is stated in the story that they are both wedded, and this becomes their predicament.

The character’s gender is indeed one of the significant facets to arrive at the general elucidation of the story. The work challenges traditional views of women in the male-controlled society. The thorough analysis shows that women somehow allow themselves to be dictated by men [16]. Men, however, exploit the feeble characteristic of women to outsmart them.

Psychoanalytical viewpoints in Edgar Allan Poe's “The Cask of Amontillado”

Edgar Allan Poe is the father of detective fiction. However, critics declare that his short fiction “The Cask of Amontillado” is crafted with less detective stance because there is no investigation happened and is clearly stated by the narrator how the crime is made. His narrative is about two men walking through a graveyard. It is a story that stresses out a murderous plot about a man taking revenge by burying his comrade alive. The story has numerous behavioral aspects that shape the character’s motivations and desires, and thus this investigation assumes that Poe’s masterpiece, through the character’s trait, portrays psychoanalytical viewpoints. The literary examination concentrates on the characters to disclose some psychoanalytical factors that affect the overall thematic purport of the text.

The psychoanalytical theory is a set of ideas that adhere and relates to the human mind and behavior. It revolves around the conceptions of the levels of mind, psychosexual stages, human psyche (i.e. id, ego, and superego), and behavioral complexes (i.e. Electra and Oedipus complex). The theoretical ideas are associated with one another. One of

the levels of mind according to Sigmund Freud, the initiator of this criticism, is the unconscious mind [17]. Freud asserts that the unconscious is the source of someone's behavior. Bondi [18] declares that the application of the Freud's theoretical predisposition of the unconscious mind is the principal concept of psychoanalysis. The study, however, is less on the aspect of psychosexual stage wherein the adherence is on the Electra complex (the daughter's sensual desire towards her father) and Oedipus complex (the son's sexual desire towards his mother) which are attributed under the concept of phallic stage [19]. The story is more on the standpoints of human psyche and the concept of projection. Projection is under the classification of Freud's concept of defense mechanism. Ackerman points out that an individual who possesses this particular trait makes a serious attempt of solving personal problems by imputing other person's unpleasing impulse, emotion, and conception [20]. In personality structure outlook, Id is the animalistic part of the human psyche. It intends to get the satisfaction of bodily desire. Ahmed [21] insists that Id is the root of someone's aggressive destructive disposition. On contrary, the superego is a personality structure that connects to someone's behavior about what is morally right or wrong. In addition to the more structured levels of mind is the ego. This structure serves as the mediator of the Id and superego. It supervises the reality perspective; however, it never desists someone's Id.

Protagonist is a character who is central in the narrative composition. The protagonist can be either good or bad. In Poe's short story, Montresor is a major character and is regarded as the protagonist of the story. Critics call him a villain protagonist because he has a ruthless bearing. Montresor is conceived as dynamic and round character under the personality classification. A dynamic character is someone who develops or changes as the plot progresses [22].

This manifests when Montresor alters from being a serious easily envied into a murderous unpitied character who is thirsty of revenge, as Poe puts it: "I continued, as was my wont, to smile on his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation" [23]. Somehow analogous to dynamic character is round. Round characters are personages who have inconsistency of personality. They are often regarded as someone with so many opinions and speculations. According to critics, he is a round character because of the fraudulence he makes to his comrade [24]. In fact, all his cynical thoughts are buried in the unconscious mind. With the process of repression, those pessimistic thoughts activate his Id, and this is evident in the story. A discernible instance is when he vowed to avenge his comrade upon deeming those numerous injures in the past [23]. Elhefnawy, however, asserts that the reason remains vague because it is not specified in the story what type of grievance does his friend makes to him [25]. Furthermore, his wishes and desires triumph at the end of the story when he successfully buries his friend alive. As narrated, he maneuvers hastily to finish everything. He gets the last stone and lets it coats his friend [23]. Consequently, Ming infers that Montresor's projection becomes the root of the conflict in the story [26]. He attributes his own unscrupulous attitude to his companion. His externalization of blame, responsibility, or guilt is his defense against anxiety.

Lalwani claims that an antagonist is someone who opposes the goals of the protagonist [27]. Fortunato is another major character and is reckoned as the antagonist of the story. He is regarded as an easily fooled character. This is evident when he allows himself to be deceived by Montresor. This is palpable in his deeds when he takes his friend's arm as they carry on their way to the vault [23].

Under the personality classification of characters, critics deem that he is flat. He does not undergo character alteration in the story, unlike Montresor. He indeed remains a character whose passion is on concocting wine; he even flatters and declares himself as cognoscente [23]. On a related note, the symbolic character is someone who signifies something integral in the story. Fortunato is regarded as the symbolic character in the story. He embodies freedom. He is in distress and there is a minute entreaty of escaping from the catacomb (an underground area or passageway where people are buried). Moreover, Poe's short story exhibits sexual imagery. In "The Cask of Amontillado" is about revenge

essay,” the catacomb in the story is viewed as the feminine symbol while the puncheon is deemed as the phallic symbol [28]. The catacomb is an image recalling the female reproductive organ; whereas, the puncheon is an illustration evoking the male reproductive organ.

Fortunato’s superego triumphs over his Id. It is observed in the story that he is entombed alive by his friend. In that inescapable situation, he attempts not to scorn his companion. He ends up their conversation by uttering a pious line referring to God’s affection [23].

Unlike the two characters, Luchresi does not appear in the story. He is a minor character who is introduced by Montresor. He is a wine connoisseur who somehow influences the story’s progression. In “How does Montresor use reverse psychology on Fortunato?” Montresor uses reverse psychology to persuade Fortunato [29]. He lures him by making a bogus concern and by mentioning Luchresi. This is evident when they are on their way to catacomb. He repeatedly mentions Luchresi to entice Fortunato as stated in one of the scenarios in the story prior to burying his friend alive: “‘Proceed,’ I said; ‘herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi---’” [23]. He even perceives his comrade’s cough and prods him not to carry on. However, his insincere bothering demeanor is his tactic to deceive his friend to persist on his way.

The storyline has characters who are governed by their innermost psyche. Fortunato is a character who manages to control his Id; he is, hence, guided by his superego. Luchresi, on the other hand, remains unspecified regarding psychoanalytical factor due to occurrence circumstances. However, Montresor allows himself to be manipulated by his Id. The behavioral concern further molds the story which is vital in comprehending the text.

Historical-biographical conceptions in Mark Twain’s “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”

The story is about Jim Smiley’s experience concerning trickery. Jim’s story is, in fact, recounted by Simon Wheeler to the unnamed narrator. As narrated, Jim is a gambler who owns a frog named Daniel Webster. One day, a stranger visited his camp. He offered to gamble him forty dollars. Adenstedt emphasizes that the visitation of the stranger somehow mirrors the author’s fascination of traveling from one place to another [30]. Their betting was about the frog. The frog who could out-jump another frog in Calaveras County will be the winner, and the owner of it will get the stake. In the latter part of the story, Jim failed because he was tricked by the stranger [31]. The investigation focuses on the selected elements of the plot and the essential happenings of the story vis-à-vis biographical status of the author.

This thorough investigation uses historical-biographical theory. The said theory adheres to the author-to-text connectivity. Kuiper writes that this short fiction is crafted according to some fascinating moments of the author during his juvenile years [32]. Critics theorize that the narrator is Twain himself who experiences visiting an inn of a comrade: “In the story, Twain recounts his visit, made at the request of a friend back east, to an old man named Simon Wheeler in California mining camp” [33]. In fact, there are story instances that mirror the author’s personal encounters. A biographer writes that this author is eminent in America as an aspiring and self-centered correspondent and excursionist [34]. The main character of the story is a man who is too interested in himself and is overmuch eager to triumph in any gambling activity. This redirects to the personality of the author who is quite determined of becoming a prominent rich man [34]. He even endeavors to aid his mother. In the concluding part of the story, the main character is distressed after knowing that he is deceived by the stranger [31]. That moment reflects the author’s realistic story. The author also feels bitterness and upset in his life. There is no close combat between the stranger and Jim; however, the instance still mirrors the author’s own experiences on bitterness and agitation. In fact, in one point of his life, his relationship with his daughter is full of dispute that lasts for a long time [34].

Jim's emotional failure after the fraud somehow mirrors the feeling of loss of the author. In life, he is saddened after the death of his son and daughter and this adds to his anguish [34]. In the story, gambling becomes the vice of the main character. This is evident when he offers to gamble forty dollars to a stranger. There is no straightforward attestation that the author is a gambler; however, in the darkest part of his life, he engages into vices that incorporate cigarette smoking, romping cards, and playing billiards due to depression [34]. On a related note, Godin goes on expounding that Twain's masterpiece portrays standpoints regarding societal condition, specifically, on the wherewithal outlook [35]. The materialistic condition is shown in Jim's demeanor. This is evident when he proposes to bet the stranger forty dollars. Consequently, the characters including the narrator have some aspects on their bearings and experiences that resemble the genuine life of the author concerning the loss of happiness, vice, goal, and travel.

CONCLUSION

The results confirm the ways in how each short story can be interpreted using the selected theories of literature. Using the feministic theory as an approach, Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" culminates with how women are disregarded in the societal precept. The women characters in this short story depict feministic insights. The women are, in fact, given emphasis with the interaction of surrounding men. Dmitri's wife is the foremost proponent of feministic identity while Anna is the chief follower of feminine individuality. Dmitri's women prior to marriage and meeting Anna, on the other hand, ensure the female distinctiveness. More so, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" unearths behavioral pertinence of the characters using the psychoanalytical theory as a literary tactic. Motresor is governed by the concept of repression, wish-fulfillment, desire, and projection; whereas, Fortunato is affected and manipulated by the more structure levels of mind: Id, ego, and superego. Luchresi, however, remains undetermined concerning behavioral assertions. More so, Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" offers and unmask the author's personal life exploiting historical-biographical theory as a lens. Jim Smiley, the main character of the story, mirrors the numerous experiences of the author about relocating from one place to another, about encountering melancholic dilemmas and indulging in vices.

The analyses of the classic short stories of the authors unveil feministic context, authorial context, and psychological context. This literary analysis further reveals critical context. That is, the utilization of the selected theories helps reveal the general signification of the text. As such, the in-depth investigation directs to a better understanding of the masterpieces.

Furthermore, this study recommends that the details of the feministic insights be used as a reference in introducing Chekhov's work in literary discussion. This will aid critics and researchers in comprehending the role of women in the sociological canon. Moreover, the psychoanalytical viewpoints are used in elucidating Poe's masterpiece as an introduction to literature classes. This will help students and educators in understanding the behavioral conflicts in the story. In addition to recommendation, the historical-biographical conceptions in Twain's short story be used for collaborative discourses which lead to an intellectual discussion. This will further help enthusiasts in reviving their love into the analysis of the author's presence in the text.

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