

POVERTY AS SEEN IN EDWARD ALBEE'S *THE AMERICAN DREAM*

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ABSTRACT: *This research is aimed at revealing poverty in Albee's The American Dream. This research is classified as qualitative research since the data are in the form of words, rather than numbers. Data are taken from primary source, that is the drama itself, and secondary sources which taken from other books and relevant references to support the analysis. In analysing the data, the writer applies objective approach. The result shows that poverty is dominant in this drama. The poverty is lack of food, lack of money, lack of settlement. Lack of food, poverty in The American Dream reflected the low social man described "unemployment", he has no family and he has bad family background. He has not settlement and he came to Mommy and Daddy apartment for looking status character of Grandma, Mommy, and Young Man. Because when Mommy is young, she lived with Grandma in poor. Everyday Mommy go to school, Grandma wrap a lunch box for Mommy dinner. Lack of money, the Young Man is a man live alone because his mother has died when he was born, and he never known his father. He lived in poor situation or no rank of social life since Young Man, Grandma and Mommy lacks of the economical point which serve to be requirement for the social position. Lack of settlement, the Young Man is a job and settlement. Grandma is old and she has no settlement, she lives with her daughter and her daughter wants to keep Grandpa, in nursing house. The impact of poverty for Grandma, Mommy and Young Man is Young Man want do crime just for money, Mommy marry with daddy (her husband) just for money, and Grandma daughter (Mommy) does not respect her.*

Keywords: *Dream, American Dream.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Edward Albee was the leading American playwright of the 1960s, who introduced to the European state a new order of moral analysis that was placed against a several realistic middle-class background and developed with economy of action penetrating dialogue and rigorous thought. He also generally acknowledged as the founder of modern drama. He moved away from the romantic style, and brought the

problem and ideas of the day on to the stage of his time.

The American Dream is Edward Albee's famous drama. This play is debut at the York Playhouse, New York City on January 24, 1961. The American Dream is set in middle-class American living room with five characters, they are Mommy, Daddy, Grandma, Mrs Baker and Young Man. Albee in his preface of the American dream, He writes that :

The play is an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity... (Albee, 54).

It means that The American dream is scene of American life and society that is full of discrimination and moral degradation or some problem like poverty in their environment amidst the idea of dream that is flourished in American life. One of the problem as emerged in the reading the drama, is poverty. Poverty is the state of having or no money and few or no material possessions (Princeton, 1995) or poverty is accepted by all countries. Poverty is generally categorized as material deprivation. Generally, poverty is defined as the state of being poor or deficient in money or means of subsistence (Baker, 1995).

Poverty in The American Dream reflected in Grandma, Mommy and Young Man life. How Grandma was young and Mommy was little they were very poor because Grandpa was in heaven, and Grandma must work for Mommy school, for their food everyday and their settlement. Young Man is a poor man and he have not family, his mother died when he born and he never knew his father, and he described as a man(unemployment)/

The relationship between Poverty and The American Dream is all the American people have dream or says 'The American Dream'. The American Dream is the widespread aspiration of American to love better

than their parents do (wikipedia, 2008) or American dream is a good job, luxury, money, successful, and liberty. In this play Grandma, Mommy and Young Man do not get their dream or American dream and they struggle to get better life or to get their dream (American Dream). Therefore the writer thinks that poverty is very important to be analyzed.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Literature

There are many aspects of life that can be learnt in literary works since they reflect the author's life experience such as love, sympathy, disappointment and anger to others, and etc. In the works of literature the authors implies state their condition found in society.

William Henry Hudson in An Introduction to the Study of Literature (1913) points out that, "Literature is a vital record of what man have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us, it is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language."

It can be concluded that through literature people can experience aspects of human life such as social, religious, culture, experience and so forth that could be different from theirs.

Although literature reveals phenomena existing in the reality of human condition, Griffiths (1986) points out that "One of the nature of literature is fictional in the sense that the reader sets them apart from the fact of real life.

The statement above asserts that in order to make the writer easier to understand, appreciate even analyze literary works objectively; the writer should be able to set the works itself a part from the reality of life although the work itself might be aroused from the fact of real life.

2.2 The Element of Drama

Drama is also related to the truths of human life. The author of drama uses his or her imagination to create all of the elements such as plot, character and characterization, setting, theme, point of view.

2.2.1 Character and Characterization

According to Willian Hudson (1965:10), character is the people in narrative, and characterization is the author presentation and development of character.

According to M.G. Maru (9) “The characters performed by the characters are regarded to be useful hints to dealo with the image steretype”. Character is very important because the character can be interpretation of the aim of the story. Character is duality that makes somebody different from other.

There are two types of characters; main character and minor character. There are five characters in this drama, The American Dream. They are Mommy, Daddy, Grandma, Mrs. Baker, and The Young Man.

In The American Dream, the main character is Grandma, appearing on stated more of the time and having more speeches than any other character. And the minor characters are Mommy, Daddy, Mr. Baker, and The Young Man.

2.2.2 Setting

Setting is one important aspect in play. It makes a story life. The American Dream is created in 1961 by Edward Albee in New York. President of America in 1961 was John F, Kennedy. The drama was happened in an apartment with a scene: a living room, two armcahirs, one toward either side of the stae, facing each other diagonally our tpward the audiene ainst the rear wall, a sofa, a door, leading out from the apartment, in the rear wall, far stage right. An archy way, leading to other rooms, in the side wall, stage-left.

2.2.3 Theme

According to Griffith (1986:43), “Theme is perhaps the most obvious statement of truth of work. Theme is central idea in the work weather fiction, poetry, or drama”. It is comment the work makes on the human condition. In The Americqan Dream, the theme is dream. One of the theme in the olay is poverty because this tellls about grandma and young man struggle their life, they hope betterment for their life.

2.2.4 Point of View

Point of view is the author’s relationship top his or her fiction, especially to the mind of the characters. Another way of putting this is to define point of view as the position from which the story is told (Griffirth 1986:56). There are some ways which story is told, an author can tell the story in the first person as though the narrator was a major or minor charcter in it. Or the author may use the third person (he or she) method, in which the narrator stand part from the charcetrs and describes the actions. And for The American Dream, Albee uses third person style.

2.3. America in 1960s

Struggle for equality during the 1950s and 1960s by African American, known as the civil rights movement, raised public awareness of discriminations in the United States. This movement inspired activism by other groups, including women and people with disabilities that traditionally had been treated unfairly. However, the first legitimation that resulted from the civil rights movement, the federal civil rights act of 1964, applied only to people who were discriminated on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. At the time, discrimination against people with disabilities remained legally acceptable.

There was, as least 4,000,000 American was jobless in January 1963. Many had lost their jobs due automation (replacement of man power by machinery) with drastically reduced the need for unskilled and semiskilled workers. To study this situation, in 1961 an office of manpower and automation was established and in 1962 congress appropriated funds to train unemployed workers for new jobs.

Based on these situations, the new administration sought legislative remedies for these conditions. An area development act gave the federal government power to help depressed communities start new industries and build needed public facilities. Another law provided retraining, with pay, for workers either unemployed or in low paying jobs through lack of needed skills. In addition, states were given emergency authority to extend unemployment insurance payments

for 13 weeks beyond the standard 26-week period.

<http://www.essay/c2/wuj94.shtml>.

2.4 Biography of Edward Albee

Edward Albee was born Edward Harvey in Washington, D.C. on March 12, 1928. At the age of two weeks, he was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Reed Albee of Larchmont, New York, and renamed Edward Franklin Albee III. From an early age, Edward Albee knew that he was adopted. But he was never attempted to locate his birth parents.

Although Albee knew he was adopted by the age of six, and therein lay the beginning of his alienation, he only learned the few details of the circumstances of his birth and adoption after his adoptive mother's death in 1989: his biological father abandoned his mother Louise Harvey and she gave up her son Edward Harvey to an adoption agency two weeks after his birth. Reed and Frances Albee became his foster parents, bringing him to their home in Larchmont, New York when he was only 18 days old; they officially adopted him on February 1, 1929, and changed his name to Edward Franklin Albee III.

The Albee's enjoyed wealth and social position from the family's interest in a national chain of theaters. The Keith-Albee organization has played a dominant role in the American theater since the 19th century, from the days of vaudeville and the great touring companies and into the era of motion pictures, when the chain merged with two other companies to become radio-Keith-Orpheum, the parent company of the RKO motion picture studio.

Through his family's business, Edward Albee was exposed to the theater at an early age and developed a passionate love for the arts, but his adopted parents expected him to pursue a more conventional business or professional career. From the beginning, he found himself at odds with his adoptive family over their expectations for him and his own artistic ambitions.

He was expelled from two private schools before graduating from Chaote, and dropped out of Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut midway through his sophomore year. At 20, he broke with his family and moved to Greenwich Village. He never saw his father and would not see his mother for 17 years.

For the next decade, Albee lived off of a small inheritance from his grandmother, supplemented by a succession of odd jobs, such as one delivering telegrams for Western Union. Enthralled with the artistic ferment of Manhattan in the 1950s, he absorbed every innovation in art, music, literature and theater. After unsuccessful experiments with poetry and it is here he finally found his calling in writing for the theater.

In only a few years, Albee emerged as the leading light of the burgeoning off-Broadway movement. By 1962, he was ready to storm Broadway, the bastion of commercial theater in America. His first Broadway production, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? was a runaway success and critical sensation. The play received a Tony Award and Albee was enshrined in the pantheon of American dramatists alongside

Eugene O'Neil, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This research is classified as qualitative research which is descriptive. It means that the data are in the form of words rather than numbers. Bogdan and Biklen point out that qualitative research has five general characteristics as follows: 1). The data are collected in forms of words and pictures rather than numbers; 2). The researchers are concerned with the process as well as products; 3). Qualitative researchers tend to analyze the data inductively; 4). The people make sense of their lives is a major concern with qualitative research; 5). The natural instrument is the direct source of data and the researcher is the key of instrument (1992:30).

The quotations above indicate that the instrument of the research is the researcher herself.

3.2. Data Collection

In conducting this research, the writer collects the data from the primary source, the drama itself. The secondary sources such as books, documents and internet are used to support the analysis.

Primary sources are essential for analytical research, but secondary sources are used selectively when necessary, both primary and secondary sources are subject to techniques of criticism (McMillan and Schumascher, 1984:288).

It is clear that in this research, the primary source is the drama itself and secondary sources are books and internet.

3.3. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer uses objective approach since the study is only focused on the work itself.

Objective approach regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analysis is as self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and set out to judge it solely by criteria to its own mode of being (Abrams, 26).

The above quotation means that it just focuses on the work itself. It is regarding a sufficient entity constituted by only the internal elements. The writer focuses in analysing poverty in the drama The American Dream.

Objective approach focuses on the relationship among the elements of drama (Mogea T., 66).

IV. ANALYSIS

Poverty is the state of having little or no money and few or no material possessions (Princeton, 1995). It means that poverty is state where people in lack situation, as lack of food, lack of money and lack of clothing and lack of settlement. This study is an attempt to reveal poverty in the play The American Dream.

4.1 Poverty in The American Dream

4.1.1 Lack of Food

Poverty in The American Dream reflected the low social status character of Grandma, Mommy and Young Man. Because when Mommy is young, she lived with Grandma in

poor and Grandpa was died. Everyday, when she went to school, she took out the box of lunch. The box was wrapped nicely by Grandma. When it was lunch time all of her friends took their boxes and ate their foods. But she did not do it because her box contains Grandma's food for lunch that she cooked the evening before. Mommy's friends thought that her lunch box was empty and her friends gave her their foods. This indicates Grandma and Mommy poor life. She is in need of food compares to her fellow middle class friends. This motivates her to find a change life. One of the ways, in her mind is by marrying a rich man. She assumes that she will marry with someone who rich and arise her family and her social status in society (Albee's, 69). The will to have better life is strengthened by observing the life of her friends. Poverty governs her life. All of her families are in poor situation. She has nothing to be proud of.

4.1.2 Lack of Money

The young man is a man live alone because his mother died when he has born, and he never known his father. He lives in poor situation or no rank of social life since Young Man, Mommy and Grandma lacks of the economical point which serve to be requirement for the social position.

4.1.3 Lack of Settlement

The Young Man is a man described "unemployment", he lives alone, he has no family. Or have bad family background. He never know his father and separate with his brother when they were little. He had no settlement and same to Mommy and Daddu apartment for looking job and settlement. The Young Man has

dream or American dream for good life but he has no talent for doing anything.

Grandma:.....are you! Well, what kind of work?

Young Man : oh, almost anything...almost anything pays. I'll do almost anything for money.....

Young Man :be careful; be very careful. What I have told you may not be true. In my profession....I'll be happy to tell you. It's that I have no talents at all....(Albee, 109-113).

The statement shows that Young Man wants do crime just to get some money, because he wants a better life like home.

4.2 The Impact of Poverty

4.2.1 The Young Man wants to do Crime

Young Man is a poor man. He is from broken family, or he has a bad historical bakground or family background because his mother died the night he was born and he never knew his father. When he was still young, his brother and his twin is separate one being.

Young man :.....'my mother died the night that I was born, and I never knew my father,.....when we were still very young, my brother, my twin and I.....in asmuch as you can separate one being. (Albee, 114-115).

It shows that Young Man alone in his life, when he was child he lived in reformatory, because he have no family but he wants betterment life like money, good job or good life.

Grandma: 'well. Let's see. If you're not the van man, what are you doing here?

Young man:.....I'm looking for work (Albee, 109).

It shows the Young man wants making hislife change. He wants his dream or American Dream come true. The American Dream is the widespread aspirations of Americans to live better than their parents do.

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The statement shows that the Young Man wants do anything just for some money, because he did not school and he has no talents for doing anything. Young Man doing crime for money like steal, kill, drugs or liar, because Young Man wants life in luxury. He doing crime because he wants change his life. Young Man life background is no happy amd he never know the effect from the crime for his life.

4.2.2 Mommy marries with her husband just for money

She never cares about Daddy. She just needs Daddy's money. She makes her husband like a servant or doll that is obedient to its owner.

4.2.3 Mommy does not respect Grandma

Grandma is Mommy's mother. She is a woman who keeps a moral code and they are very contradicts each other. Mommy doesn't care about Grandma's opinion. Mommy never gives Grandma a chance ro suggest her opinion. Mommy assumes that old

people have nothing to say; and no body would listen to them.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

Poverty is dominant in this drama, The American Dream. The poverty is lack of food, lack of money, lack of settlement. Poverty in The American Dream reflected the low social status character of Grandma, Mommy, and Young Man. When Mommy is young, she lived with Grandma in poor. Everyday Mommy go to school, Grandma wrap a lunch box for Mommy dinner. Lack of money, the Young Man is a man live alone because his mother has died when he was born, and he never known his father. He lived in poor situation or no rank of social life since Young Man, Grandma and Mommy lacks of the economical point which serve to be requirement for the social position.

Lack of settlement, the Young Man is a man described “unemployment”, he has no family and he has bad family background. He has not settlement and he came to Mommy and Daddy apartment for looking job and settlement. Grandma is old and she has no settlement, she lives with her daughter and her daughter wants to keep Grandma, in nursing house. The impact of poverty for Grandma, Mommy and Young Man is Young Man want do crime just for money, Mommy marry with dady (her husband) just for monery, and Grandma daughter (Mommy) does not respect her.

5.2 Suggestion

After analyzing the data concerning poverty in The American Dream, the writer provides some suggestion as follows:

1. As human being, we must keep help other human who has weakness and trouble. Children must appreciate or respect, and love their parents.
2. Do not do something crime just for some money.

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