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A MODERN OUTLOOK ON WAR AND ITS ROMANTICIZED IDEALS WITH REFERENCE TO THREE CLASSICS IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUST WAR THEORY

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ABSTRACT

One of the most popular sayings of literature is that it is centers on two topics: war and love. Scholars of all ages have agreed to the veracity in this statement. While great numbers of classics have successfully merged both these aspects, some have overindulged in fantasized notions of war. A soldier, or even better, a colonel had always inspired awe and inspiration amongst the people especially, the women of the 1800s. The satirical work of Shaw titled *Arms and the Man* dealt vastly on the romanticized ideas of war in the initial pages and broke the farce behind it at the climax. The notions that prevailed in the 1800s went through tremendous changes after a series of World Wars. A sense of dejection, hostility and skepticism are some of the pre-dominant tones seen in literature of that era. The two of the most well-cited war classics of the 1960s are Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* and Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. These two novels, when studied parallel to Shaw's masterpiece, render different insights to the brutality of war that the great writers of the previous century had no perception about. Every falsehood and deceiving factor of war falls down before the face of truth that has borne a great many scars. A great number of theories can be applied to aid further in the research. The most popular theory is the Just War theory. It elaborated on the necessity of war and put forth factors that are needed to determine the action required. Application of this controversial theory to the works chosen can help us conclude if it truly fits the maze of the modern era.

Keywords: War, romanticize, effect, nobility, Just War theory

INTRODUCTION

Glorified for the strength portrayed by valiant men and seen as the only logical way to fight against the nation's enemies, war had always been illustrated by beautiful images of bravery. The courage manifested is truly remarkable and warriors have shed blood and surrendered their lives to what seemed best. Their only mission was to protect their land at all costs, even if it meant losing their own lives. However, not every man on the battlefield went with such beliefs. Some valued life better and

for many on the ground, it was not choice that brought them there but the laws of the government.

PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) is often associated with war. Witnessing death right in front of one's eyes can ensure the disability of sanity. This issue has often been overlooked upon but not after 1950s. Unlike Shaw's employment of war in an anti-comedy, writers directly and without pretense attacked the ferociousness of war in their writings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peace is not guaranteed in war. Even after the end of the Korean War, Frank Money, the protagonist of Toni Morrison's *Home*, suffers from the aftermath of loss, bloodshed and psychological impairment. Its impact has become too serious that it is quite impossible to deal it lightly.

In her novel *The Siege*, Dunmore elaborates on the necessity of meeting everyday needs in the midst of war. Based in Leningrad, the novel revolves around the conquest of the city by Hitler during the most dangerous winter history has ever known. Many died in the face of hunger and barely a few survived the fight of endurance. With utmost seriousness, Dunmore brought out the state of the people who boiled shoe leather for soup and burned furniture and books to beat the cold.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The Just War theory has been often quoted to defend the nuances of war. However, the question that keeps sprouting up is whether lives matter more than the need to win by violence.

The theory was framed by Aristotle and Cicero in 4 BCE but developed under the research of Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. The latter came up with criteria that should be considered before proceeding on with war. The two sections in the criteria are *jus ad bellum*, when it is right to fight and *jus in bello*, how to conduct the war (Cox 1).

The literary works chosen will be analyzed in the light of the Just War theory to derive at a logical conclusion as to the effects of war.

Objectives of the Study

- i) To disapprove of the fixed romanticized ideas of war and substantiate with examples from the two war classics of the 1960s
- ii) To bring out the relevance of the Just War theory in the current era
- iii) To analyse the state of those involved in war in the post-modern period

DISCUSSION

Nobility: *Arms and the Man* is based on the historical background of the Battle of Slivnitsa which former's fiancé Sergius had led the Bulgarian army to victory. The ecstatic Raina wondered if Sergius would have time to pay attention to her "poor little worship after the acclamations of a whole army of heroes" (Shaw 13). In an army of "heroes", Sergius was the deity. Raina accredited his "soldiership" and beamed with pride because he proved to be as "noble" as his looked (Shaw 13).

Even though she was overjoyed, she wondered why people were cruel and found joy in killing fugitives. Catherine, her mother, exploded saying, "Cruel! Do you suppose they would hesitate to kill you- or worse?" (Shaw 14). Wars were seen as the resultant action of nobility and reason.

This idea is seen in the theory of Just War. *Jus ad bellum* states that war has to be waged based on the authority of the government or the religious leader. It also believes that war must be pursued if an attack is made and the attack must be for defense purposes only. As in most cases of war, "peaceful" wars end as the most tragic ones. The motive is forgotten and lives are lost. The idea of a war being fought in all nobility and truth is quite like an oxymoron. They do not fit perfectly.

Written in a crude language of a soldier, Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse 5*, has stood the test of time, appreciated by the old and young alike. The novel is clearly one of the best anti-war books ever written. However, the book has also been burned by many. The startling reason is that war has always been dignified and those who take part in it were considered to be noble in serving their land. On the other hand, Vonnegut was deemed as unpatriotic in portraying it otherwise.

Presence of nefarious intentions is prohibited in the Just War theory. Cox puts it thus: "It stated that a war should be entered into with no immoral intentions but in the pursuit of peace avoiding unnecessary destruction" (1). This idea is one of those statements that are easier said than practiced. Ironically, peace in war is determined by the numbers of those dead. Enemies are killed and

thereby "peace" is established. Violence equates to peace in war and there is no nobility in such an action. Yossarian, in *Catch 22*, ponders on this crisis and remarks that, "It doesn't make a damned bit of difference who wins the war to someone who's dead" (Heller 161). It is mockery to talk of dignity in war and such insights is brought to the world through literature.

Insanity: Raina's idea of nobility found in war is a mere farce that she came to know of later. It is not for noble causes that people fight against each other. War has no end. Even after peace treaties are signed, many live with internal conflict and suffer from insanity.

Just War theory believed in protecting the innocent through war. It states that war should ensure the guarantee of human rights. The alarming thing about war is that it not only destroys lives but the mental health of those living as well.

Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* brings out a pertinent point pertaining to war. People who are sane in the midst of war were seen as people who suffer from mental instability by Dr. Stubbs. When Dunbar and the others were talking about whether the protagonist, Yossarian, had gone insane, Dr. Stubbs replied ironically, "That crazy bastard may be the only sane one left" (Heller 144). The reason was that he saw the brutality of war, stood in the fight and did not escape reality as others did.

This issue of mental health is dealt seriously in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*. While a few scholars believe that Billy Pilgrim suffered from PTSD, many others conclude that Pilgrim's PTSD developed gradually into a serious state of insanity. He doesn't have the heroic qualities usually associated with the main soldier in a story about wartime. He becomes a joke as a soldier. His insanity, in a way, made him survive the Dresden firebombing.

Satire: A satire is the usage of comedy to bring out flaws of an individual, nation or a particular community. Wars have often been attacked on a satirical note in many places.

The false notions of war abound more than the truths of it. Some men in war take advantage of

the prestigious title they own but the conflict as to who they really are remain. Sergius boasted all around that he was the combination of six gentlemen. When confronted by Louka, the pretense broke. He wondered, "Which of the six is the real man? That's the question that torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard" (Shaw 42).

Shaw manifested the sham behind war by making the "genteel" Sergius fall in love with the servant, Louka and Raina fell for the anti-romantic Bluntschli. When they realized the fantasy world they were living in, reality was better appreciated and thereby they were able to realize their true desires. Once considered crude, Bluntschli spoke frankly of war and won the affection of Raina in the end.

Sergius is not the perfect soldier—he is a farce. And the real soldier, Bluntschli, runs away from battle and carries sweets instead of a gun. He also speaks honestly about the brutality and violence of war—which involves more drunkenness and abuse than it does heroics and gallantry ("Romanticism / Idealism vs. Realism Theme Analysis.")

One of the important concepts in Just War theory that is never taken into consideration is the need to prevent weapons from being used unnecessarily and maintain peace whenever possible. However, this farce has been attacked in war novels such as *Catch 22* and *Slaughterhouse 5*.

Catch 22 satirizes the concept of peace in war. The soldiers in the novel were affected by the death of their friends and innocent citizens. *Catch 22* begins with a description of Yossarian faking jaundice and the medical doctors exempting him from fighting in the war. Though the pain in his lungs had subsided, Yossarian put up the act as long as he could. The soldiers wanted to be away from the battleground as much as possible in order to prevent them from witnessing deaths in front of them and also to enjoy the comfort of having good food.

The features of the Just War seem very unwitty when applied to the texts of the cotemporary era. *Slaughterhouse 5* brings out satire in many portions of the book. It is very interesting to note the inclusion of satire through the bird which appears not more than a few times. Vonnegut ends the novel thus: "Birds were talking. One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, 'Poo-tee-weet?'" (Vonnegut 177). The bird symbolizes the emptiness in war and in retrospect, war makes no sense just as the bird's language. One may ask about the significance of war and the answer would resound similar to the bird's statement, 'Poo-tee-weet?'

CONCLUSION

The false ideas of war that were made glamorous were broken down inch by inch by the writers of the twentieth and the twenty-first century. Simultaneously, the popularity of the Just War theory slowly decreased but it is still believed to be applicable by many. It has been attacked as an ambiguous and impractical theory by the scholars of this period. The analysis of war in any light would only provide further proof as to the disproportionality in its disadvantages and advantages. Lives lost can never be brought back and the topic of solidarity in war is a mere farce.

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