

ANALYZING *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT* AND *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*: LITERATURE PROPAGATING PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ayesha Qayyum*

Assistant Professor NUML/Research Fellow University of Washington
ayesha.gcu@gmail.com

Meenam Mehmood

M.Phil Scholar Department of Linguistics the University of Haripur
meenamiqbal@hotmail.com

Azka Iqbal

M.Phil Scholar Department of Linguistics the University of Haripur
azkaiqbal578@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The discipline of literature is a productive way of bringing transformation in the society for building peace and achieving human rights. Cockrill, Hall (2018) in Understanding Human Rights through Literature, argues that literature can cultivate a better understanding of Human Rights through critical evaluation of characters, analysis of scenarios, and examination of diverse historical voices. The present study analyzes two novels; Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front and Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird. The former novel reveals characters' physical and mental trauma during the war as well as the detachment from civilian life whereas the latter propagates human dignity. Through both novels, the study manifests that the aim of literature is turning blood into ink, as says T.S Eliot, for building peace among people and dissenting to war and anti-human practices. This qualitative study implies Fry's (2007) Beyond War as theoretical framework which argues that human being has no inherited inclination for war and this is a politico-cultural creation. The study demonstrates the role of literature in promoting human rights and peace against war and racism.

Keywords: Literature, Human Rights, Peace, Transformation, War, Racism.

INTRODUCTION

Literature functions as one of the most powerful ways for changing and transforming socio-cultural conditions in society. Primarily, it deals with aesthetic and artistic interpretation of life and related notions. In present times, literature has become highly politicized and hence has started working as a powerful cannon for exhibiting life conditions through characters. Among different genres of literature, fiction/novel has become the most popular writings for the depiction of human conditions. Cockrill, Hall (2018) in *Understanding Human Rights through Literature*, argues that literature can cultivate a better understanding of Human Rights through critical evaluation of characters, analysis of scenarios, and examination of diverse historical voices. The present study analyzes two novels; Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The former novel reveals characters' physical and mental trauma during the war as well as the detachment from civilian life whereas the latter propagates human dignity. Through both novels, the study manifests that the aim of literature is turning blood into ink, as says T.S Eliot, for building peace among people and dissenting to war and anti-human practices.

Objectives of Study

1. To explore psychological trauma in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*
2. To analyze human dignity propagated by Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

* Corresponding Author

Research Questions

1. Why do characters in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* suffer from psychological trauma?
2. How does Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* inculcate human dignity?

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, it reveals the impact of war; particularly its psychological damages. Secondly, the study significantly demonstrates the most important function of literature i.e. preaching peace against anti-humanist activities such as war and violence. Last but not least, the study inculcates human dignity and thus it speaks for human rights and their acknowledgment. In concise, the present study exhibits the core function of literature i.e. turning blood into ink. It invites for dialogue and peace to eradicate war and antihuman practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term "human rights" encompasses fundamental rights and liberties, including but not limited to the entitlement to life and personal freedom, the ability to freely express thoughts and opinions, and the principle of equitable treatment under legal systems. According to Wikipedia, human rights can be defined as moral principles or norms that delineate certain standards of human conduct, and are consistently safeguarded as legal rights within both domestic and international legal frameworks. These rights are widely recognized as inherent and inviolable fundamental entitlements that every individual possesses by virtue of their humanity, irrespective of their nationality, geographical location, linguistic background, religious affiliation, ethnic heritage, or any other social classification. The influential nature of literature is widely recognized as a catalyst for personal and societal transformation. The ability of literature to effect transformative transformation in individuals' lives is indeed evident. The realm of literature possesses a distinctive capacity to evoke emotional and intellectual responses, fostering a profound connection with readers that sets it apart from other forms of written communication. The ability to induce transformation and inspire individuals to engage in proactive measures is evident. The study of literature has the potential to foster a more comprehensive comprehension of Human Rights by means of the critical assessment of characters, the analysis of various scenarios, and the consideration of a wide range of historical perspectives. Students will acquire not only practical abilities in the area of critical reading, but they will also develop an awareness of their role in effecting change and recognize the importance of taking responsibility for their actions.

According to Cockrill (Thematic Unit), literature serves as a means for individuals to ascertain their position within society, experience a sense of belonging, and cultivate a heightened awareness of their obligations. The contemporary comprehension of human rights has been shaped by a multitude of circumstances, and it is undeniable that particular genres of literature have played a significant role in the development of this conceptualization of human rights. Literature has the inherent capacity to advance the cause of human rights inside underdeveloped nations and foster consciousness among the youth. All literary genres encompass themes related to human rights, thereby actively or indirectly advocating for the principles and ideals associated with human rights. The objective of this course, which focuses on human rights via the lens of literature, is to integrate the compelling power of literary works with the aim of inspiring students towards proactive engagement. The course is grounded in the conviction that literature possesses significant potential to effectuate change and foster consciousness among individuals regarding their own rights as well as the rights of others. One of the primary aims of this course is to examine the portrayal of human rights breaches as a social issue and emphasize the pressing and indispensable need for societal reform.

Among the various genres of literature, fiction exhibits a particularly strong correlation with social and political actuality, rendering it a highly valuable medium for promoting and championing human rights. According to Rockwell, there is a clear and consistent relationship between society and fiction, which is evident enough to warrant the inclusion of literature as a standard tool for social study (Rockwell, p. 3). According to Bradbury, the novel can be regarded as a means of exploration into the realm of knowledge, comparable in its practical approaches and methodologies to other types of textual investigation (Bradbury, p. 11). According to Balzac, the novel might be characterized as the "private history of nations." This

concept elucidates the correlation between the novel as a literary genre and its influence on the formation and representation of national identity. Without a doubt, the novel's scope, subject matter, and structure render it particularly susceptible to the realities, discernible connections, epistemological approaches, and ideological interpretations of a given era (Bradbury 13). Edward Said emphasizes the significance of the correlation between the novelist and the era in which they exist. Said argues that regardless of the extent to which a novelist's imagination transcends their contemporary context, they are inevitably influenced by the prevailing zeitgeist (Said, "Arabic Prose" 42-3).

In essence, it may be argued that novelists are inherently bound to the political, social, and intellectual circumstances that permeate their culture. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's preface to *Writers in Politics*, it is asserted that a writer is compelled to represent, whether consciously or not, various dimensions of the profound economic, political, cultural, and ideological conflicts prevalent throughout society. The author is faced with the imperative of addressing the contemporary issues and endeavoring to provide an accurate portrayal of the prevailing circumstances, while also capturing the essence and ethos of the era that influenced their artistic perception. The individual is required to express the collective awareness of his era, which he shares with a certain group influenced by historical conditions, social class, time period, and perspective (Said, "Arabic Prose" 42-3). This course posits that a comprehensive comprehension of human rights necessitates contemplation of the narratives that engender and perpetuate their concept, achieved via the examination of several genres of human rights storytelling that encompass a broad spectrum of circumstances.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study implies Fry's (2007) *Beyond War* as theoretical framework which argues that human being has no inherited inclination for war and this is a politico-cultural creation. The selected theoretical work rebukes the practices of war, violence and all other types of anti-human practices. Fry's argument that for the good of us all, we must replace the war system with viable institutions for creating peace, delivering justice, and guaranteeing security serves as a core of this research study. The selected novels in this study have been analyzed in the light of Fry's *Beyond War*. Moreover, Content Analysis technique has been used for the interpretation of the content of the novels

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

This study examines the literary works of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The preceding literary work explores the physical and psychological distress experienced by characters in the context of war, as well as their disconnection from civilian existence. In contrast, the subsequent novel advocates for the preservation of human dignity. Both works demonstrate the notion that literature serves the purpose of transforming human experiences into written form, as articulated by T.S. Eliot, with the intention of fostering harmony among individuals and opposing acts of warfare and inhumane conduct. The central focus of Erich Maria Remarque's novel, "All Quiet on the Western Front," predominantly centers on the profound and distressing consequences of warfare. The story portrays the massive loss of life that occurred during World conflict I, with millions of individuals falling victim to cruel acts of violence. Those who managed to survive the conflict were burdened with severe psychological damage. One of the characters in the story expresses the impact of war calamity through the following dialogue: "We find ourselves in a state of desolation akin to that of children, yet burdened with the wisdom of the elderly. Our demeanor is unrefined and filled with grief, lacking depth and substance. It is my belief that we have become utterly directionless and lost." The provided phrases effectively illustrate the profound anguish experienced by individuals affected by war, who perceive themselves as being torn asunder and utterly depleted. In a similar vein, the author asserts, "The conflict has caused irreparable damage to our existence in every aspect." Paul Bäumer's narrative provides the reader with an enhanced comprehension of the detrimental effects of war on the childhood of the soldiers, the erosion of their recollections of home, and the enduring transformation of their familial bonds. "We are little flames poorly sheltered by frail walls against the storm of dissolution and madness, in which we flicker and sometimes almost go out. Then the muffled roar of the battle becomes a ring that encircles us, we creep

in upon ourselves, and with big eyes stare into the night. Our only comfort is the steady breathing of our comrades asleep, and thus we wait for the morning” (p. 275).

Remarque's exploration of the psychological impacts of war resulted in the creation of a narrative that had enduring and universal qualities. In the contemporary era, a veteran of the 21st century presents a challenge to fellow veterans, urging them to engage with the literary work "All Quiet" in its entirety. The objective of this challenge is to identify a singular passage within the text that cannot be related to or at least conceptually understood on some level. This proposition is made by the veteran in recognition of the enduring nature of the psychological repercussions of war, as depicted by Remarque, despite the stark contrasts in the external manifestations of warfare in the present day. Moreover, the publication of *All Quiet on the Western Front* marked a significant literary breakthrough as it allowed international readers to gain insight into the shared experiences of German soldiers throughout the war, highlighting the fundamental similarities with soldiers from other countries (Eksteins 361). While it may be convenient to categorize *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a work of war literature, its fundamental essence lies in its exploration of the human condition. War elicits worst aspects of human behavior, however it also serves as a catalyst for showcasing individuals' positive attributes, as dire circumstances foster a sense of unity that is unparalleled during times of prosperity. In Remarque's examination of the psychological ramifications of World War I, the narrative reveals the profound disruption inflicted upon Paul and his comrades, resulting in the abrupt termination of their youthful experiences. Moreover, the text illustrates the men's inability to get solace from their recollections, as they fear the potential deterioration of their mental faculties. Additionally, the novel underscores the loss of familiarity and solace that pervades civilian life, particularly in the context of one's home. The presence of distressing truths is mitigated by a single factor: camaraderie. Paradoxically, this sense of fellowship is more prevalent among the soldiers of opposing forces than among the civilian population residing in their respective homelands.

The genre of fiction possesses the capacity to facilitate comprehension of the essence and significance of human rights, as well as the imperative nature of their preservation. Through its capacity to engage our cognitive and affective faculties, fiction possesses the potential to expand our intellectual and emotional boundaries, fostering the cultivation of empathy and the capacity to envision alternative perspectives and experiences. The skill of empathy is of utmost importance when it comes to confronting and challenging intolerance, prejudice, and conflict. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* has emerged as a symbol for the promotion of human rights values among the books of the 20th century. Presently, numerous individuals regard it as the most influential literary work during their adolescent phase, the novel that profoundly shaped their perspectives and engagements with the surrounding environment. This exemplifies how works of fiction have the potential to foster a deep comprehension of the fundamental principles that form the basis of our human rights. The concept of human dignity is exemplified by the characters Scout, Calpurnia, and Atticus in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The novel provides evidence to support the notion that individuals possess inherent value, irrespective of their racial background, socioeconomic standing, and familial lineage. In Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the character of Atticus assumes a significant role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of his children, Jem and Scout. This impact stems from Atticus' consistent demonstration of respect and dignity towards his offspring. Atticus, in his conversations with his children, fosters an environment that encourages their ease of expression and facilitates their ability to anticipate adversities in life. By employing this approach, Atticus enables individuals to discern and assimilate the information he presents, hence facilitating their connection to real-world experiences more effectively. Furthermore, he encourages people to adopt a mindset devoid of concerns or anxieties. According to the source on page 134, it can be observed that... This excerpt from Atticus exemplifies his demonstration of respect for his children during a challenging period, as he offers them solace and reassurance. Through providing solace to his children, Atticus imparts a valuable lesson that they can apply in subsequent situations. The major theme conveyed by Atticus is the need of discerning the appropriate moment to express concern. Atticus effectively conveyed his lesson to Scout and Jem, as evidenced by their improved ability to cope with challenging situations later in the novel. A notable instance illustrating this is their response to the assault perpetrated by Bob Ewell.

The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* exemplifies the notion of natural law, which posits that individuals are nurtured and enhanced by the presence of just and beneficial legislation. The foundation of

civilization is predicated upon the adherence to legal principles, since the establishment of just civil laws fosters the cultivation of moral values that align with the inherent principles of natural law. Human beings possess the capacity for both virtuous and malevolent actions, and the primary means of mitigating the unpredictable tendencies of human behavior is the establishment and enforcement of legal principles. In order to achieve efficacy, it is imperative for civil law to align with the overarching moral law. Numerous literary works have demonstrated that the occurrence of tragedy and chaos is an inevitable consequence when inconsistencies arise between two entities. Atticus Finch, a character in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, embodies the concept of moral law, which is characterized by rational thought and is evident in our fundamental principles of equality, justice, fairness, freedom, and adherence to the rule of law. The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* delves into the origins and manifestations of racism, as well as potential strategies for its mitigation. This particular line of dialogue, which is presented at an early stage within the novel, effectively encapsulates Atticus's viewpoint on racism: it denotes an incapacity or reluctance to make an effort in comprehending the standpoint of an individual who differs from oneself. Throughout the course of the literary work, the reader observes Scout internalize this moral instruction, as she endeavors to cultivate an understanding and appreciation for the varied viewpoints held by others within her local community.

"The older you grow the more of it you'll see. The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box. As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it—whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash." (p. 207) This is one of the more interesting *To Kill a Mockingbird* racism quotes because it's one in which Atticus's thoughts on race are most clearly presented. Whereas many of the townspeople believe that white people are superior to black people, Atticus believes all people should have equal representation in a court of law. In other words, Atticus takes a bold stance against racism.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The selected novels in this study discourage war, violence and antihuman practices and invite for peace, harmony and respect for human dignity. The present study has analyzed two novels; Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The former novel reveals characters' physical and mental trauma during the war as well as the detachment from civilian life whereas the latter propagates human dignity. Through both novels, the study manifests that the aim of literature is turning blood into ink, as says T.S Eliot, for building peace among people and dissenting to war and anti-human practices. The authors in the selected novels have revealed the traumatic impact of war and invite readers for promoting peace, harmony and respecting human rights and dignity. The present study also recommend new perspectives for researchers and they include to study these novels from Marxist perspective, feminist aspect and explore the ideological reasons of spreading war and violence.

REFERENCES

- Cancel, R. (1985). Literary Criticism as Social Philippic and Personal Exorcism: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Critical Writings. *World Literature Today*, 59(1), 26-30.
- El-Enany, R. (2000). The Quest for Justice in the Theatre of Alfred Farag: Different Moulds, One Theme. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31(2), 171-202.
- Fry, D. P. (2007). *Beyond war: The human potential for peace*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, H. (2010). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Random House.
- Abdullahi, N. U. (2023). Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's writing career: the rise and the development of a dynamic african literary star. *Linguistics*, 3(6), 1-16.
- Remarque, E. M. (2004). *All quiet on the western front* (Vol. 68). Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Sen, A. (2005). Human rights and the limits of law. *Cardozo L. Rev.*, 27, 2913.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1981). *Writers in politics: Essays*. East African Publishers.