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Barbaric Image of America in Selected Literary Texts

A B S T R A C T

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Though the Nazi concentration camps became a huge machine for killing all those suspected of resistance within Germany or in the countries it had occupied or that were its vassals in the II World War, the American barbaric acts which end that War is still the ugliest. This paper is intended to shed light on the barbaric image that literary texts such as John Hersey' "Hiroshima" and Antony Shadid's "Night Draws Near" portray. The paper hypothesizes that no matter who is writing the text about the American wars, the result will be a barbaric image for America. The paper validates the hypothesis as it follows the comparative approach to analyze the selected texts. It ends with a conclusion that shows the finding of the discussion.

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الصورة الوحشية لأمريكا في نصوص أدبية مختارة

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الخلاصة

بالرغم من كون معسكرات القوى النازية أصبحت مكائن لقتل أولئك الذين يشكون بمقاومتهم داخل ألمانيا وغيرها من البلدان التي دخلها الجيش في الحرب العالمية الثانية إلا أن الأعمال الوحشية لأمريكا

والتي انتهت تلك الحرب كانت وما تزال هي الابلشع. هذا البحث يسلط الضوء على الصورة الوحشية التي يرسمها مجموعة من الكتاب من خلال نصوصهم الادبية التي تتعرض لموضوع الحرب الامريكية على بلدان العالم كنص جون هيرسي "هيروشيما" ونص انتوني شديد "اقتراب الظلمة". و يقدم البحث فرضية هو انه لا يوجد فرق بين الكتاب اذا ما تناولوا موضوع الحرب الامريكية على بلدان العالم فإن أياً منهم سيصور بشاعة صورة أمريكا في الحرب. يهدف الباحث لأثبات الفرضية باتباع منهجية المقارنة بين النصوص في تحليلها. يبدأ البحث بمقدمة ثم يأتي تحليل النصوص المختارة ومن ثم تتختم بالخاتمة التي تعرض نتائج المناقشة.

Introduction

The outcomes of war are likely to produce atrocities depending on the brutal forces applied by the warring parties. United States' involvement in wars with Iraq and Japan elicited reactions that portrayed America as a barbaric nation as far as its military invasion in these two nations was concerned. Various literary texts have been used in depicting America's brutality when it comes to the wars it waged against Iraq and Japan. Anthony Shadid's *"Night Draws Near"* and John Hersey's *"Hiroshima"* is among these literary texts that have explored elements of barbarism that America did through its attacks on Iraq and Japan respectively. This paper takes as a task focusing on drawing comparison between the works of these two scholars when it comes to tackling the theme of barbaric war involving America.

Methodology and the Questions of the Paper

This paper follows the comparative approach to handling the selected texts. It is the most suitable approach since it revolves around mentioning the features of these texts respectively. The paper tries throughout the discussion to answer two questions; the first is whether America is barbaric in its war against other nations or otherwise. The second question is whether the selected texts are successful in indicating that America is barbaric in its war against other nations or not. The selected texts are of great importance; John Hersey's "Hiroshima" which is "One of the great classics of the war" (Bliven, 1946, pp. 300- 301) as it is described by Bruce Bliven, a journalist in The New Republic journal, and Anthony Shadid's "Night Draws Near" is an "Incisive and eloquent . . . A harrowing portrait of life in postwar Iraq and the fallout that the American war has had on ordinary Iraqi civilians . . . A riveting narrative . . . Provides a damning account of the Bush administration's failure to prepare adequately for the postwar occupation . . . Sobering and revealing".(Kakutani, The New York Times, quoted in <https://www.amazon.com/Night-Draws-Near-People-Americas/dp/0312426038>)

Comparison between Anthony Shadid's "*Night Draws Near*" and John Hersey's "*Hiroshima*".

***"Hiroshima"* by John Hersey**

John Hersey is an American Journalist. He was born in 1914 and died in 1993. He is known for his use of the technique of New Journalism. Hence, he has adapted the storytelling techniques of fiction to non-fiction reportage. (Goldstein, 1989, p.15) His writing about the war on Hiroshima, Japan, was regarded by a 36 member panel associated with the journalism department in New York University as being the 20th-century supreme passage of American journalism. (Barringer, 1999).

Hersey's *"Hiroshima"* is one of the texts addressing America's acts of barbarism through its war on Japan. The whole text is built upon the tells of six survivors. From the tales of these six atomic bomb survivors, the novel highlights elements of brutality and extreme cruelty applied by America when attacking Japan in 1945. America dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, leading to a critical humanitarian crisis in there from its outcomes the Japanese nation still has suffered. The use of the atomic bomb to revenge on Japan led to the wiping out of the entire Hiroshima city (Rathman, 2015, 2). The cruelty of the Hiroshima's atomic bombings resulted in the long-term effects of the socio-economic and political settings of the country. America's invasion immediately plunged Japan into a humanitarian crisis where the citizens were left in horror after the deaths of

many Japanese and destruction of the whole city of Hiroshima. The whole infrastructure was destroyed as well.

The killings of the innocent civilians epitomize America's act of barbarism in Japan's attacks. According to John Hersey's *"Hiroshima"*, parents had to watch helplessly as their children and neighbors succumbed to the impact of bombings. For example, the text depicts the moment when the bomb goes off, Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura watches her neighbor's house as it is reduced to debris, with the children inside.(Hersey, 2015, 76)

In another incident, it is revealed that Miss Toshiko Sasaki, who was an office clerk ends up trapped in the building after the bomb detonates while she was speaking to her colleague, "There, in the tin factory, in the first moment of the atomic age, a human being was crushed by books." (Hersey, 2015, 63). It is a very influential citation. It refers to the victim's harm, Miss Sasaki's because of the explosion of the atomic bomb. The writer uses his statement very craftily to close chapter one of this text. The writer tries to portray a vivid picture that juxtaposes very unrelated components. Books and in factories are representative of the advanced technology which means nothing and out of date the age of the atomic bomb. Whereas books are dull and not menacing, the power of the explosion is approximately afar from the individual's understanding. Nevertheless, both are just suggestions of how the date and information that human being has may turn on to

tear down a human being and all that they achieve. The writer succeeds in conveying the idea that the misuse of scientific information has crushed Miss Sasaki. This idea is symbolized throughout the text when the books factually fall on to crush her.

The writer clarifies that what America has caused in Japan is more than the materialistic destruction. It is, before all, humanitarian. It is apparent that Hiroshima bombings resulted in mass killings of innocent civilians and destruction of property. The survivors were left with long-term sufferings and injuries that hampered the process of reconstruction. This is well clarified in the following quotation:

"He was the only person making his way into the city; he met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. ... Almost all had their heads bowed, looked straight ahead, were silent, and showed no expression whatsoever." (Hersey,2015,83)

This scene is described in chapter two of the text. It is being seen by Mr. Tanimoto who has encountered these horrible images when he wondering throughout the wounded city, in his trial to find his wife and his child. The nameless victims were encountered in this scene so that it is one of the most

important extracts that consists of large groups of people who are harshly offended by the pomp. Hersey is a photographer in this scene rather than a writer. However, he does not dramatize this cinematic, dramatic moment. The tragic images and situations permit the horrifying details to expose themselves vividly. In what concerns the Japanese pain, this scene shows the uniqueness of the Japanese stoicism as well as the theme of helping each other even if the helper himself is injured too.

This way of the use of the mass destruction weapons on Japan demonstrated the brutality and the bloody deeds of America and the American Army on all humanity not on Japanese population only. In another extract from chapter three of the book the writer describes the devastating sense of desperation with which many saved people filled as they see others with their wounds and deadly pain:

"Why have you not come to Asano Park? You are badly needed there." ... "The first duty," the doctor said, "is to take care of the slightly wounded." ... "In an emergency like this," ... "the first task is to help as many as possible—to save as many lives as possible. There is no hope for the heavily wounded. They will die. We can't bother with them." ..."
(Hersey, 2015, 50)

Mr. Tanimoto could not understand the carelessness of the doctor and blamed him but when the doctor explained the matter he turned to blame himself. This scene depicts that there was an inadequate number of doctors that may help this great number of injured people. The simplicity with which seriously injured people left to die could not be understood by the simple people. This scene comes in accordance with what Hersey has mentioned in chapter two of the book that sixty-five doctors out of one hundred fifty were still alive, others were killed or injured. In addition to the tragedy of Hiroshima, there was that lack of medical staff and care. The writer has brought the readers to confront the catastrophic outcomes of the atomic bomb in this very vividly painful scene. He is successful in helping the readers comprehend the atrocities of war that America did against this nation and its future.

***"Night Draws Near"* by Anthony Shadid**

Ben Macintyre, an American writer, said about *"Night Draws Near"* that it is a "tormented human collage, a portrait of the grinding, quotidian conflict endured by ordinary Iraqis, struggling to make sense of the senseless. Here is the mother trying to find work and feed her children in a crumbling slum, the sculptor watching his once beautiful city fall apart, the terrorist, the street sweeper, the schoolgirl scribbling her fears nightly in a tatty diary".(Macintyre, 2005) It is a text written by Anthony Shadid who is an Arab-American journalist, his origin is from

Lebanon, works in the Boston Globe and the Washington Post. Through the *"Night Draws Near"*, Shadid demonstrates the bleak future that is awaiting people of Iraq after America's war that aimed at ending Saddam Hussein's regime. In this account, the author is not interested in the cause of the war but the ruined and miserable state of the nation in the aftermath of America's attacks. The writer knows Arabic so that he can use this knowledge in communicating with Iraqi people. The whole text is built on some instance, Shadid's description of how soldiers are patrolling in the street which garbage-strewn. At some point, children are depicted to be engulfed in fear of bombings perpetrated by U.S. soldiers (Graff, 2006, 2). The presence of military tanks and other weapons create concern among the locals in Iraq. The author points out that incidences of bombings, confrontations and the presence of corpses and coffins are a common phenomenon in Iraq after America War. Such practices depict America as a murderer and brutal regime which does not value the lives of Iraq people.

Through *"Night Draws Near"*, though it is only an account of the first fifteen months of the American invasion to Iraq, however, Shadid succeeds to paint a picture of tormented people, who are enduring hardships elicited by America's invasion of Iraq. In the aftermath of the war, it is demonstrated that individuals are struggling to find a sense of living in a war-ravaged nation that has been left in tatters after America's attacks. In one of the extracts of the text, Shadid describes

throughout a conversation with one of the Iraqi men how the Iraqi people are unwelcoming to the American army and the invasion unlike what is exchanged among the American soldiers. In that extract, Mohamed Ibrahim, the Iraqi man said, "We're against the occupation, we refuse the occupation – not 100 percent, but 1,000 percent," he told me. "They're walking over my heart. I feel like they're crushing my heart."(Shadid, 2006)

Iraq citizens had been negatively affected by the war to oust Saddam Hussein (Macintyre, 2005, 3). According to Shadid's description of the events that are happening in Iraq after dethroning Saddam Hussein, it is revealed that America did not value the significance of family and integration of the community.

After the jail release, the newly released inmates are welcomed by disintegrated families. One of the elderly women says "...I don't know whether he is alive, I don't know whether he is dead" (Shadid, 2006, 54). Under this context, the barbaric image of America is depicted through the damage it perpetuated towards the families. The emergence of war led to integration and displacement of family members, which has brought significant anguish to individuals. Iraq people are compelled to reconstruct their ruined nation. Parents are struggling to feed their children. This is an indication that America's actions led to deaths and crumbling of Iraq's economy, which was extremely cruel to the locals.

Comparison

"Hiroshima" by John Hersey and *"Night Draws Near"* by Anthony Shadid expose the atrocities that the Iraqi, as well as Japanese populations, suffer from during and after the American wars. Both texts are built on the talks of those who have witnessed the war in order to show real images of the people in both countries. Thus, the two texts are built on actual conversations with the survivors from the wars. On the other hand, while *"Hiroshima"* is written by an American writer who has no relation with Japanese, *"Night Draws Near"* is written by an Arab who has the American nationality. This point out to the fact that whoever the one that writes about the American wars all over the world, he/she must mention the horrible things that combine them whether he/she is American or otherwise.

Conclusion

Everything about war can be termed barbaric. Inhuman acts are committed in warfare leading to deprivation of peace and unity to a nation. Most wars are typically characterized by the maiming and killing of innocent citizens, resulting in humanitarian crises that can have a lasting adverse impact on the development of a country. Anthony Shadid's *"Night Draws Near"* and John Hersey's *"Hiroshima"* contend that America's war on Iraq and Japan resulted in the deaths of many people of the two nations and destruction of property of both countries. In both

cases, America's attacks on these nations worsened the situation as depicted by humanitarian crises experienced in Iraq and Japan in the aftermath of America's invasion. This is an indication that different literary texts have been utilized to highlight America's barbarism during the war. No matter who is writing the texts, the result in any such case is a clear image of barbarism that America succeeds to portray.

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