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Winds of War Project Part I

The Analysis of Guilt Presented in the War Novels

The core of all trauma in wars and conflicts is the guilt of the peoples actions or witnessing of these unforgiving events. No matter the side, the goal, the rationale or the cause of these acts, guilt is present throughout all those who have taken part, or experienced these episodes of hell. Every survivor has some story to tell of what they saw. These testimonies of guilt have no better been presented than in these three war novels, all written by former veterans of war. *All Quiet on The Western Front*, *The Things They Carried* and *A Long Way Gone* all showcase this feeling of guilt. All of these authors have drawn upon their views of serving in wars and in the process portray the everlasting guilt that is has brought forth upon the people of society.

The first book to portray the significance of guilt is *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque. Erich Maria Remarque had been a veteran of World War One, being wounded five times. While this book is not presented in his view, he presents upon his experiences in the eyes of the protagonist, Paul Baumer. In the novel, Baumer describes how he and thousands of other men have been raised to fight for their country, how they have taught that the enemy is guilty of many horrendous acts. Baumer, while visibly shaken by his behavior, believes that his actions were of good for his country. Two events change his perceptions of the enemy that he has fought against. Baumer is assigned to guard a Russian prison camp. Baumer examines the prisoners and notes how “distressing it is watch their movements, to see them begging for something

to eat”(p. 190) alluding to his shockness of watching the prisoners. Baumer states how feelings of hostility that they have been taught to treat the enemy, who is depicted as being merciless and evil, displays “how little we understand one another.”(p. 192) As Baumer’s thoughts becomes preoccupied with these parallel understandings, he quickly retracts out of his thoughts declaring that “he dare not think this way anymore. This way lies the abyss.”(p. 194) Paul recants his thoughts and has restrained himself from feeling guilty with his actions in the war, saying how he will “he will keep them, shut them away until the war is ended.” Another event in which has made Paul guilty is the stabbing of a Frenchman. Earlier before, Paul hides in a shell-hole and draws out his dagger in the event he believes someone will come to attack him. In the ensuing moment, a frenchman tumbles into the shell-hole. Paul stabs him in the throat on the demand of his survival instincts. As Paul immediately recovers his senses, he sees the Frenchman helpless, gurgling on his own blood. Paul watches in sorrow the man die drowning on his own blood, and dying hours later. As Paul looks upon the dead man, he sees that the Frenchman and him are no different from each other. Both having similar equipment, training, and thoughts going into a war. Paul sees that he and him are in a way, symbolically, like brothers. Paul says “Forgive me comrade. We always see it too late.”(p. 223) As Paul examines the man’s belongings on him, he finds a wallet with a picture of the man’s wife. Paul tells the dead man how he “will write to his wife”(p. 224), believing that this will annul any guilt inside of him for killing the Frenchman.

The next book to portray the topic of guilt is *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. This book delves with more so the personal guilt of a Vietnam veteran telling us his stories. While Baumer tells us of his struggles through war, O'Brien takes his struggles to mean something personal on a whole new level. O'Brien faces guilt with killing a man and observing him up close. O'Brien would repeat certain details of the man's gruesome injuries, such as "his jaw was in his throat, his upper lip and teeth were gone" (p. 118) in order to come to terms with what he had done to the man, along with a made-up story he describes about the man in order to make him more "alive" and make the man's life have some meaning to it so he would feel less guilty about killing him. O'Brien also tell war stories in the shoes of other soldiers in a way to let loose of his guilt. In *Speaking of Courage*, O'Brien tells the reader how Norman Bowker had almost won the Silver Star, and could have saved his friend Kiowa from dying, had he not have a quick impulse slip from his mind. O'Brien later reveals that Norman's actions were of his, and the only way to let out his story was to place the guilt on another man's shoulders. While most of O'Brien stories detail his regret of his actions, he is not the only person to feel this way. His platoon leader, Jimmy Cross always kept a picture of Martha in his helmet to remind himself that she was waiting for him (or at least that is what he thought of it as). Often times, he would think more about Martha than he would of his squad. When one of his squad members, Ted Lavender dies from being shot, Jimmy falls into a burden of guilt, believing it to be his fault for Ted's death. Jimmy decides to simply forget about Martha and establishes a stricter attitude toward his squad. Jimmy reveals how his weak-mindedness and apathetic character toward his group, regarding

Martha more than his squad, makes him become more serious in order to make up for Ted's death and to rid his mind of guilt by being more watchful of his platoon.

The last book to deal with the guilt of war is *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. Ishmael's account of war is very unique compared to that of the two war novels. Instead of growing up in a first world country and fighting simply because he is drafted or for the sake of expressing patriotism for your country, Ishmael's purpose is that of personal vengeance. Ishmael comes to terms with what he has done in a UNICEF hospital. Ishmael describes how he at first had been ridden with guilt with murdering and stealing from at first rebels and soon people as well, believing that this had been done to justify the murder of his family and friends. People often are subjected into acts of violence with the belief that this is used to support your actions. Ishmael had also used drugs which also helped desensitize his rational decision making. Ishmael later is sent to a UNICEF rehabilitation center. At first Ishmael hates it, wanting to be a soldier and doing his drugs. He is constantly aggravated by the phrase "it's not your fault", believing it to be a sign of disrespect to him, as he believes he should be treated like a soldier. The nurse Esther, decides to take care of him. She at first has difficulty communicating with him, but eventually is able to get Ishmael to open up to her about the war. Ishmael realizes that his flashbacks and nightmares going with his guilt in the war, can be treated by talking about experiences to trusted people. Ishmael takes this view of his further by accepting an invitation from the United Nations for being able to provide his experiences on children who have witnessed acts of war and terror.

All of these people have shown how their guilt not only affects them but others in society. The use of graphic images by all three characters showcases what war is putting on their mind. Baumer's statement of "how little we understand each other" serves as a precedent for how our own ignorance can be seen as a source of guilt. O'Briens use storytelling his experiences of guilt by using his friends in place of his actions showcases how we must express our stories at a different angle in order to let people be aware of the events that happened in war, without letting our emotions take us over. Ishmael's delusional perception of how he killed for the vengeance of his family points out how when one person feels guilty, that person will attempt to "place" that guilt on others as well.

Winds of War Final Research Project Part II

Reflection on the Guilt of War

The profound effect of guilt in the aftermath of any war is immense. Guilt is perhaps the most popular discussion-based topic to address when asking any veteran or witness about a conflict. I always thought of guilt being responsible for the drawing of all dark paths many people take into society. The guilt of war is something we should all learn about as it not only affects the people who experienced the war but to society as well.

I know that taking the blame for guilt will make us better people. If you just deny anything you see in a war, you only repress yourself from forgiveness and feel much worse. To be taught how the guilt of war affects us also opens up how people may feel

for the guilt of any action considered to be negative. Seeing how war affects those involved, the same emotions can be applied to our experiences in life as well.

One reason that guilt in a war should be learned about is to not repeat the mistakes of history. I had been in shock when learning about the Holocaust, thinking that this had been a chapter in human history where the world had felt guilty for not doing anything. I had been appalled just recently when learning about the near-recent genocides in Africa. I couldn't believe that such acts of brutality had still been alive and well in this world. I believe that had the topic of guilt had been more emphasized when talking about wars, then people may come to their senses and start to help prevent vicious atrocities like these from ever happening again.

The better understanding of guilt will help us to understand the individual's feelings if we simply listen to their experiences of war. Many times people who have seen the horrors of war often feel guilty just because they were simply there thinking they could have perhaps prevented it. These people wish to warn others to be wary of such signs of an impending as to prevent that nation from suffering the same terrible consequences their own country has been through. I believe people should really get into understanding the guilt of other individuals who have seen war so that we can help others understand the true emotions of how everyone feels guilty in a war, regardless whether those that saw it took part in it or not.

Winds of War Final Research Project Part III

Veterans Presentation through War

World War One Artwork



This is a painting by Otto Dix, who served in World War One as an artillery officer. Otto had volunteered to fight with excitement. As he had experienced combat, his view upon war had begun to change. He had at first loved war and had started to gradually hate it after serving. The name of the painting is *Stormtroopers Advancing Under Gas* and it was painted in 1924. The way this artwork relates to guilt is to show how war has removed the individual human's personality and replaced it with that of a faceless creature that shows no mercy to the other being. The "guilt" being that we are responsible for something as miserable and awful as war as we should be "guilty" for dragging our men and turning them into what Otto Dix has presented above. The artist has generally used a lot of dark colors for the painting as to express the depressing nature of war. The viewer will draw upon the painting and be shocked as to wonder how depressing and immoral war has transformed the common man to be. The viewer

analyzing the painting can find that the dark colors of the background and the soldiers make the guilt stand out in this painting.

SOURCE: http://donmadden.blogspot.com/2011_05_01_archive.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Dix

Vietnam Artwork



This piece of art is by Larry Dunst, who created this painting in 1971 in order to protest against the Vietnam War. The man in the portrait is the famous military recruit icon Uncle Sam, who appears to be covered in bandages from his wounds. The name of the painting is I Want Out. The words "I Want Out" are foreplay on the words "I Want You." The use of Uncle Sam in this anti-war poster showcases the dire situation of our

military at that time in Vietnam. There are generally no special colors as the artist seems to have focused more on presenting the message through current events at the time, rather than by the use of shadows, focal points and colors. When an American looks at this poster, they are to be sad by what our troops had gone through in the Vietnam War. A way this artwork presents upon as “guilt” is to showcase how the American populace has been generally apathetic and ignorant towards the Vietnam war and as a result has messed up our young male adults of America. The artist is looking to dive deep inside the emotions of an American citizen and make them feel “guilty” for doing nothing to stop this war and for being blind to have failed from preventing the situation from getting larger.

SOURCE:

http://www.vinmag.com/online/prodshow/AP407H_I_Want_Out_Uncle_Sam_Anti_War_Poster_30x40cm_Art_Print_/i-want-out-uncle-sam-poster.html

Modern Day Artwork



This modern artwork was created by Dominic Fredianelli in 2010. Dominic had previously served as a gunner for the Michigan National Guard in 2009. This artwork is one of the pieces being part of a collection called "War Made A New Me." The artist has drawn upon certain elements of expressionism in the painting including a protesting hippie, along with missiles next to him. The American flag being black and white generally represents the dividing sides in war with white being of the anti-war activists and black being that of the pro-war activists. The yellow in the hippie must be symbolic of the anti-war feelings some US citizens hold for our War on Terror. A person can get a feeling out of how our country has been divided up on the issue of war even though the war is a foreign issue; it is treated as a domestic one. The guilt in this artwork is to present how wars can divide people. I believe that the artist is trying to convey that we as Americans are foolish for getting into conflicts as they damaging to our people just as it is damaging to those experiencing it in the warzone.

SOURCE: <http://www.nvam.org/collection-online/index.php?artist=Fredianelli%2C+Dominic>

Winds of War Final Research Project Part IV

Veteran Interview with Captain Ned Ricks

My interview was conducted with Captain Ned Ricks, who served with the Air Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam, from 1970 to 1971. Captain Ned Ricks was only 23 when he was drafted, just fresh out of college; Ned had decided that he would volunteer to serve for the US Army. Ned had served for 365 days in Vietnam. He was

first stationed in Germany and Panama having an Army career spanning twenty years. He also experienced a lot of anti-war prejudice when he came back home.

Ned had a lot of experiences for him to tell us, both physically and mentally. I was surprised when he told us that he had volunteered for serving in the war, as I had previously thought before that all recruits were forced to serve for the war as there had still been a draft at the time. I was shocked that when Ned had been promoted to captain, his company had three members responsible for the death of the previous company captain. I couldn't believe that Ned took upon a position, not knowing what happened until he became the captain, and being ready to lead his company into action. Looks like Ned was ready to fix up the company clear of its mischief. I also was amazed at what Ned had to go through. Multiple instances of guarding a highway for hours on end every day, with the enemy popping out whenever you least expected them, and not even being able to see who was shooting at you or your fellow teammates beside you. What a gut wrenching feeling to be shooting at an enemy you considered to be invisible for most of the time.

I would also compare to Ned's personal activities he and his friends had gone through to *The Things They Carried*. I found Ned's personal experience of carrying a picture of his dream car he had torn out of a magazine in his combat helmet to be similar to when Jimmy Cross had always carried a picture of Martha in his helmet as well. I had also contrasted Ned's returning back home to when Tim O'Brien had returned back to his home. While both returned home to disappointment, considering that the

American populace had no idea what they went through, both of them went through it in different ways. Ned was spit on when he came out of a plane by an anti-war woman, while O'Brien expressed frustration about how his town "did not know shit about shit".