



RESEARCH PAPER

Corollary Delineation of War: A Comparative Enumeration of “War is Kind” and “Dulce et Decorum Est”

¹Dr. Tayyaba Yasmin, ²Dr. Samina Ali Asghar and ³Khubaib ur Rehman

1. Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Education, Lahore, Punjab, , Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor English University of Education Faisalabad Campus, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Research Associate, Riphah Institute of Language and Literature, Riphah International University Gulberg Campus Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

***Corresponding Author:** khubaib.rehman@riphah.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study aims to comparatively examine Stephen Crane’s “War Is Kind” and Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” in order to challenge the idealized perception of war as noble and heroic. War literature, despite emerging from different historical moments, consistently redirects attention from political or nationalistic narratives to the lived realities of suffering, loss, and psychological trauma. Situating the poems within this broader literary tradition, the study adopts a qualitative close textual analysis, focusing on imagery, tone, irony, diction, structure, and thematic development to uncover how both poets expose war’s concealed violence. The findings reveal that Crane and Owen, though writing from distinct contexts, converge in their rejection of martial glory, portraying war as an ethically corrosive force that destroys innocence and humanity while leaving behind grief and moral disquiet. It is recommended that future studies expand this comparative framework to include postcolonial and contemporary war poetry to further understand the enduring human consequences of organized violence.

KEYWORDS Warfare Anguishes, Penalties of War, War is Kind, Dulce et Decorum Est, Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The consequences of war are infinite destruction of whatever had been erected in peace. Winning or losing a war on the political ground is a fallacy. For the projection of productivity of the result of any war, Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) justify the sufferings of soldiers with his poem “Dulce et Decorum est” (Owen 1921). The reality presented by Wilfred as a soldier and a poet of World War I. He dies one week before the end of the war but his writings show the sacrifices of a soldier and its pain which is for nothing in reality. Besides that, a soldier is not only the one who suffers but his family dies every day and breathes when they found their man alive. Stephen Crane (1871-1900) was American, a correspondent in the war of Cuba and a well-renowned author and journalist. Crane mocks on the glory of war by the title of his poem “War is Kind” (Crane, 1896). He exposes the real victims of war which are the families of soldiers and all the beloved relations associated with a person who goes on war to protect his family. The words of Bertrand Russell, “War doesn’t determine who is right but only who is left” (Russell, 1896) refer to those who survive in wars but as being alive, they are tangible sufferers of horrified after-effects of war. Stephen Crane visualizes the war as a lie which only adds the harshness and decay of life in survivors of the war and hopelessness in the families of dead juveniles. Hence the main paraphernalia of war is just the obliteration of civilization and loss of innocence through slaughtering our heritage deprived of thinking about their homes. Correspondingly, to analyze the nostalgic yearning of the soldiers of war, “War is kind” and “Dulce et Decorum est” are equate in the light of critics and quotations of intellectuals regarding the literature and aftermaths of war.

Literature Review

War is not only a fight between two nations on the ideological or political basis but it is an agenda which is only for the interest of few sharks, feed on the bloodshed of commoners. George Carlin concludes the securities of war with these words that, "War is a rich old man protecting their property by sending middle class and lower class man off to die" (Carlin, 2016). As Crane shows the realization of sending younger soldiers on the front line and after the death of how their families suffer in his poem "War is kind". Similarly, John Steinbeck argues that "All war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal" (Kruchina, 2013) which justifies the flaws of mankind presented through "Dulce et Decorum est". According to Wilfred Owen, the glory of death in war for a soldier is useless because his life is worthless in front of the tornado of war. Due to this reason, Dwight Eisenhower gives his point of view on war as a soldier that, "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its stupidity" (Herbert, 2009). Hence all the wars are meaningless and to fulfill the desires of few religious or political people, thousands of soldiers die each time. The importance of literature signifies the difference in productivity in wars. Correspondingly, every single writing of war literature reflects a similar theme along with the imperfections in humanity itself. For the reflection of this impact, F.L Lucas quoted that, "The two world wars came in part, like much modern literature and art, because men whose nature is to tire of everything, in turn, tired of common sense and civilization" (Lucas, 2020). Likewise, the selection of poems for the analysis is triggered because of the comment of Ernest Hemingway in his writing "Man at war" that, 'there was no really good true war book during the entire four years of the war. The only true writing that came through during the war is poetry.' (Hemingway, 1992) Through an authentic piece of true feelings, an inherent comparison is castoff between "War is kind" and "Dulce et Decorum est" which express the life of sufferers of the great wars.

Material and Methods

Point by point, the qualitative research method is adopted for the construction of comparative analysis of "Dulce et Decorum est" and "War is kind". Through the detailed discussion, a major theme of war, loss on innocence, a life of a front line soldier, and the views on his death are considered as the mainstream of descriptive exploration.

Results and Discussion

The psychological impacts of wars are the basic source of war literature where people think about reality instead of the fake glory of death. Dulce et Decorum est and War is Kind carries an ironic mocking within the title. Dulce et Decorum is a clichéd title of the Roman poet Horace's poem and Wilfred Owen projected his inspiration from Horace in his language. The phrase "Dulce et Decorum est pro-Patria Mori" is portrayed as "Sweetened and Fabulous is to die for the forefather terrestrial". Owen refers to the title as a great lie and a trap of death in his whole poem by the reflectivity of horrors, a soldier face in a war. Likewise, Stephen Crane criticized the war with the specific word "Kind" to exaggerate to the reality of the images portray as a grandeur after the deaths of their people. A view on the titles of both poems forces a reader to jiggle up his mind and to think about the productivity of wars. In the first stanza of "Dulce et Decorum Est", Owen initiate the theme of the purposelessness of war by saying that, "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks" which show that a war is much important in his consequences as the motionless beggar stays with his rough and murky old sack. From the vision of George Carlin, the old sack of bagger is justified as "War is a rich old man protecting their property" (Carlin, 2016). Similarly, Stephen Crane visualized the same thematic expression of vanity through the first stanza of "War is Kind" with the depth of precision that, "and the affrighted steed ran on alone" which clarifies that the gain from war is nothing more than running steed without a rider who doesn't know anything. The most important goal for a soldier and his reason for killing or giving his own life is for the glory of death in war but in reality, it is a suicide.

Wilfred Owen commented on the replica of glory in “Dulce et Decorum est” as a suicide for the soldier in the war that, “To children ardent for some desperate glory” which shows that the sons are slaughtered for a lie of grandeur and there is nothing real of fighting for protection rather than a situation made by so-called patriots of the nations. The same picture of grandeur by Stephen Crane in “War is Kind” is projected with the actual predicted view of the deadly war that, “The unexplained glory flies above them”. This lie of glory is used as a tool to send soldiers as a sheep for being butchered. Therefore war is a lie as Dwight Eisenhower specified his vision that, war is an act of stupidity (Herbert, 2009). Owen criticizes this perspective of a lie from warriors at the end of the poem that “The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est” from which the mindset of soldier will be prepared to risk his life. Whereas in the poem “War is Kind” Crane provides a comparable image of lie that, “And a field where a thousand corpses lie”. This is the mainstream which creates a gap of thinking that why we are preparing the people in nice manners or with a good tag of “soldier” for butchery. Dulce et decorum est shows the war as a slaughterhouse where a little mistake acts as cancer for the life of a soldier when Owen said, “Men marched asleep, many lost their boots But limped on blood-shod” which continues the condition of troops in the battlefield. He wraps the bloodshed with a mistake of a soldier as the blame of his death but the real mistake of sending the child’s in war is on the dictators and their makers who rise them with the lesson of death. Respectively, these butchers for the war are considered as a major part of any nation as “War is Kind” includes the line devoted to the life of a soldier that, “These men were born to drill and die, point for them the virtue of slaughter.” It tells that, these men are created for the specific purpose of killing, empty from humanity, and sympathy for their enemies.

All the dreadful possessions are not ended with the death of warriors but their families also suffer by only getting sympathy for the loss of innocent. The word innocent conveys evidence about “World War I” in which a large number of children were forcefully sent on the war by nations against each other. Wilfred Owen as a soldier of World War I yearns on the death of innocent soldiers by writing the “Incurable sores on innocent lunatics”. Consistently, Stephen Crane as a journalist displayed the death of young soldiers by using an extended metaphoric expression of the shroud for their death that, “On the bright splendid shroud of your son” through addressing the feelings of a mother who cares about his son’s “button” even. The utmost significant conjoint theme of both poems is the revulsions of war due to which the suffering begins. From anyway, war is inexcusable, through humanity, norms, religion, and values of any culture because it is the killing with a disguised title. Owen castoff the war as immorality like a “devil sick of sin” to describe the real worth of war as an evil act whose smolder and dusk haze the faces of warriors on the battlefield (Russell, 1896). Observing this factor from the eyes of Crane from “War is Kind”, he describes the condition of the child of dead soldier that his father is “rumbled in the yellow trenches”. By mentioning the color of decay of life on the funeral of the soldier gives the pain and hopelessness to his beloved child and nothing more. His wait for the return of father shifted to the depressive state of loss which tells that war is not “kind” or the death on the battlefield is not glamorous.

Dulce et Decorum is condensed by the use of “alliteration” by referring the plunges as guttering, choking, and drowning to enhance the intensity of the horror of death. In the same way, Crane inserts the identical effect in the last stanza of the poem “War is Kind” with the addition of “heart hung humble” to mention the importance of trivial things for the beloved like a mother for his son. Besides that, through the use of “imagery,” a complex rumored gossip is vindicated within both poems rather than using the toxic disputes. Wilfred Owen projected the reality by using imagery by the verse that, “Man marched asleep, many had lost their boots” which clinch the loosing of the boot with loosing of life as many people die in the World War I. With the equivalent tenor, Crane shows the flag of a regiment which was “swift” and “blazing” having an “Eagle with a crest of red and gold” to relate the hunting skills of soldiers implanted in their nature.

Conclusion

The whole descriptive analysis of “War is kind” and “Dulce et Decorum est” provides an ample space to think about the ground reality of war rather than considering the death in war as an honor. Millions of people suffer from the death of a few thousand soldiers because of the love relationship between them which only remains after their death. They don’t have enough time for their families after recruitment for the butchery but only the sweet memories of a few days make the whole life miserable, of their beloveds. Precisely it is difficult to apprehend how a person who dies in a war is worthless because he was already procurement like a slave in exchange for a uniform with the burden of saving his nation. This great old lie prepares a butcher to kill the opponent, the same psychology on both sides and in the result, only humanity and innocence suffer. Wilfred Owen not only discusses the despondent life of soldier but in the same pattern he describes the purpose of a soldier who lives a meaningless life in the chase of medal of exaltation. All the thoughts are concluded through sympathetic words of Stephen Crane that, “Don’t weep, war is kind” in a sarcastic way to tie up the thread of a soldier and his adored relations but the lives are just like penny’s in the world of greed and corruption aimed to destroy the peace by slaughtering each other.

Recommendations

Future research should broaden the scope of comparative war literature by including poets from diverse historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts, particularly postcolonial and contemporary voices, to examine how representations of war’s human cost evolve over time. Scholars may also integrate interdisciplinary approaches such as trauma studies, psychology, and ethics to deepen understanding of the psychological and moral consequences depicted in war poetry. Additionally, classroom pedagogy and literary curricula should incorporate critical readings of anti-war texts like those of Crane and Owen to counter romanticized narratives of conflict and foster ethical awareness among students. Further studies might also explore the relevance of such poetry in modern conflicts, highlighting how literary expressions of war continue to resonate with current global realities and humanitarian concerns.

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