

The masquerades of war



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William Westmoreland proclaims, " War is fear cloaked in courage. " Tim O'brien, Lily Lee Adams, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. composed literary works that disclose the different degrees of fear and absurdity aroused by war. " Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy? ", " TheFriendshipOnly Lasted A Few Seconds", and " The Declaration of Independence From the War in Vietnam" each express characters who encounter war in varying yet mutual ways. The characters from each composition endure the troubles of war either inside or outside of the battle field.

The writings intertwine into a stream of consciousness as fear, false facade, and hope for humanity blend the three pieces of literature together. " Falsehood is easy; truth so difficult," George Eliot announces. This remains true for both the cases of Paul Berlin and the nurse from Lily Lee Adams' poem. Private First Class Paul Berlin " was pretending he was not in the war, pretending he had not watched Billy Boy Watkins die of a heart attack that afternoon. He pretended he was not a soldier" (622). The soldier bears a severe weight of fear inside him when he witnesses the death of a cohort in the war who dies of a heart attack. Although Berlin remains uneasy and faces a constant attack of cowardice, he curtains this and replaces his fear with a guise of bravery.

In the poem by Lily Lee Adams, the nurse also withstands fear while she ponders, " How can the world understand any of this? " She doubts that she " can keep the world from forgetting" the lives that slowly fade as she holds them during their last seconds of living (629). Unlike Paul Berlin, the nurse does not pretend, but she becomes whoever she needs to be for the dying soldiers. She becomes a mother, she represents Mary, she turns into a friend

even though " the friendship only lasted a few seconds. " " I never lied," expresses the nurse; however, Berlin continues to pretend that " In the morning, when they reached the sea, it would be better" (622). The nurse of Lily Lee Adam's poem narrates in first person point of view, while the story remains in third person limited. In the story, Paul Berlin laughs at the thought of Billy Boy Watkins " succumbing to a heart attack suffered while under enormous stress" (626). He finds this as an escape from his own stress and fear of his position.

As the writer Kurt Vonnegutt mentions, " humor is an almost psychological response to fear;" therefore, Berlin hides his fear by laughing at the idea of death. Though honestly, he yearns for relief and wishes to forget, and " he tried not to think" of Billy Boy Watkin's death (623). However, the nurse desires for people to remember what the soldiers are dying for as she asks the question, " How can I keep the world from forgetting? " (629). Despite their discrepancies, both characters acquire courage during the times they need it most, which helps them endure the misery heaped upon them by the war. Dr. Martin Luther King and Tim O'Brien wrote about different acts of falsehood. Dr.

King exclaims that Americans are facing the " cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools" (641). Also, the presence of irony occurs in Tim O'Brien's short story when Paul Berlin reacts strangely to Billy Boy Watkin's death. He covers his fear by pretending that Billy's death remains " a good joke," but inside, he knows that " even when he smelled salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid" (627).

Both writings reach out to their audience about the importance of accepting the truth. Dr. King elaborates on how America should not send her young black and white men to Southeast Asia to help them gain liberty when liberty in America between these races remain untrue in places like " southwest Georgia and East Harlem" (640). The story differs from the speech in that the story represents a work of fiction, while Dr.

King's speech resembles a non-fiction essay. The speech displays a first person point of view, while the story exhibits a third person limited point of view. Paul Berlin of the short story undergoes hypocrisy when he acts that fear of death and all the stress of the war remains unreal. He becomes fraudulent when he imagines that " he would never let on how frightened he had been. 'Not so bad,' he would say instead, making his father feel proud (623). Dr. King's speech speaks against this kind of hypocrisy in which soldiers pretend and " kill and die together" and unite in " brutal solidarity" during war when they treat each other with disrespect and prejudiced ways back at home.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Tim O'brien both show in their compositions war attains the ability to stir conflict within the people involved. War creates inexplicable emotions which remain baffling to people outside of the war front, but these emotions, whether they be false, forced, true, or kept hidden, allow soldiers to bear extreme hardships in times of extreme tribulations. Hiram Johnson reminds people, " Truth is the first casualty of war. " Both Lily Lee Adams and Dr. King express that adhering to the truth may only make war worse; therefore, soldiers pretend to be allies during war and nurses become the loved ones of the dying soldiers.

Both characters become what they need to be at the time. Even though they bear false facades, the growth of friendship remains inevitable during battle. The American soldiers become united despite their differences and disagreements at home. The nurse becomes a true friend despite the brevity of the friendship. Both the poem and the speech reaches out to their audience and to America and asks them to realize the effects of the war and for it to change. However, a dying soldier says, " I don't believe this, I'm dying for nothing" in the poem (629). This soldier feels that he failed his mission to serve justice in Vietnam.

He desires for the world to understand and truly feel the pain and suffering he faced. Dr. King proclaims that " we must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world- a world that borders on our doors" (641). The poem notes that soldiers are dying to protect the poor people of Vietnam, but Dr. King's speech discloses on the fact that the manipulation of the poor continues in Vietnam while American soldiers unite " burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit" (640). Although war remains mostly miserable, it unites the people involved. These parts of war help soldiers, nurses, and enemies to help each other out and let aside their differences.

They unite in times of war and form a true bond. The nurse did the best she could for the soldiers, her friends. Dr. King wishes America to do the best she can as well. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. , Tim O'Brien, and Lily Lee Adams composed laudable works that deal with characters who endure the worst aspects of war.

" The Declaration of Independence From the War in Vietnam," " Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy? , and " The Friendship Only Lasted A Few Seconds" prove that truth and fear weave a balance of feelings that help people endure during times of serious distress. Without people's different ways of handling emotions towards fear and their acceptance of the truth during war, every soldier, fighter, nurse, and observer would rupture into madness and dissipate deep into the abyss of hopelessness and oppression. People need to remember what war instigates and comprehend that as Isaac Asimov remarked, " It is not only the living who are killed in war. "