

A post-colonial  
perspective on "on  
the rainy river" by tim  
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While examining the short story " On the Rainy River" by Tim O'Brien from a post-colonial perspective, it becomes clear that during the time of 1968, patriarchal influence forced many men into war, and encouraged the chauvinist mindset that men should be afraid to show fear and emotion, or be ashamed of portraying themselves in a " softer" way.

Tim O'Brien, a 21-year-old man, is having his life defined by the war and by his social expectations as a man in a male-dominated civilization. This is evident when he says, " This is one story I've never told before. Not to anyone. Not to my parents, not to my brother or sister, not even to my wife."(O'Brien). This reveals his level of pride as a man, in that he feels the need to keep his story from his loved ones because it is " embarrassing" as a man to open up and show strong emotion towards something.

When he was drafted to fight in the American war in Vietnam, he becomes increasingly unsettled and afraid. The war to him seemed wrong and irrelevant. For him, not having an explanation of why he was drafted to war, made him go insane. He strongly believed that he was better than to fight in the war. However, it was a man's duty during this time, so he begins to contemplate on whether or not he should leave the country in order to escape the war.

" I felt paralyzed. All around me the options seemed to be narrowing as if I were hurtling down a huge black funnel, the whole world squeezing in tight. There was no happy way out." (O'Brien) This quote portrays the importance behind the huge funnel symbolizing war and the whole world trapping him in

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that one option, as society made men feel obligated to go to war and do the "right thing". All young men were trapped in the concept that they must put their life on the line for war, and if they didn't, it would make them look less masculine.

When he is brought across the river to the border, he begins having a moment of anxiety regarding how everybody in his hometown will view him if he avoids the war. He imagines his friends laughing at him and insulting him with words meant to degrade his masculinity. This shows how humiliated and embarrassed he felt of his natural human fear and doubts that were unacceptable back then. Eventually, his expectations as a man overpower his personal hopes, and his pride defeats him to submit to the war. In the end, O'Brien states the sense of loss he felt in going to war. "I survived, but it's not a happy ending. I was a coward. I went to war." (O'Brien) This reveals how his mentality changed near the end, from believing he was a "coward" for not going to war to believing he is a "coward" for not fleeing from war. Overall, it is obvious that O'Brien had a part of his life restricted by his social status as a "man" in the sexiest civilization he is surrounded by.

In conclusion, although the 1960s was a tragic time for the society, they took it out on men, making them think they must go to war, in order to show their courage and fearlessness. It was a very sexist society, and the governments made men feel ashamed of their decisions for their own advantage.

### Works Cited

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