

Ilya repins painting ivan the terrible and his son essay

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Introduction:

Ilya Repin's painting 'Ivan the Terrible and his Son' is seen as one of the greatest examples of filicide, which is when a father kills his child. Repin pours a lot of emotional turmoil into the piece demonstrating an affinity with the situation and also showing that the filicide was absolutely unnecessary to quell the bloodthirsty tyrant who had already done enough damage to society as a whole. The expression of Ivan's face is rather instructive as it shows

Repin's themes usually dealt with the existing social order of the pre Revolution and focused on the trials and tribulations of the Russian people under the yoke of Tsarism. His paintings usually included large canvases with lots of characters and personages in them thus emphasising the collective efforts of the military and of the peasants.

The painting:

The painting emphasises several different aspects. First of all the dark colours suggest that Ivan the Terrible was going through terrible psychological torments which were affecting his train of thought. The expression on his horrified and grief stricken face is instructive and very revealing since it demonstrates that the Tsar is conscious of his grave error in striking out and killing his only son. On the contrary, the son is serene and at peace with the blood slowly trickling out of his head from the savage blow which was meted out by Ivan the Terrible. Another vivid characteristic of the Tsar is his pose where he is embracing his son with power and strength while his bloodshot eyes almost stare fanatically into the distance; it is actually an

expression of sheer terror in every way.

Other facets of the painting are the way that objects are strewn around suggesting a struggle which ended up in the fatal blow and the death of the son. The long staff which probably perpetrated the deed is lying in the foreground while the carpet is creased and crumpled adding further fuel to the theory of a struggle which went on. The dark background indicates an almost Caravaggio like chiaroscuro appearance with the furniture almost blurred.

Historical importance:

The historical impetus of this painting is immense as it was a hugely important period in Russian history. Significantly, Ivan the Terrible meted out death to his successor and heir and since everything depended on the male heir in Russian tradition, the incident has specific significance. It demonstrates that in one fell swoop, Ivan the Terrible destroyed his future lineage and put his family's succession in jeopardy. The troubles which then followed spelt the end of the Tsarevich dynasty which was consigned to oblivion after Ivan's death.

The painting is thus doubly significant as it shows the terror on Ivan's face and also demonstrates that there was no future for the Tsar's dynasty. The dark and almost brooding colours of the painting especially the emphasis on blood shows a violent side to proceedings, which is expertly fashioned by Repin. The artist's social justice is emphasised in the way he portrays Ivan as a bloodthirsty tyrant who is cowering away in the darkness with cowardice the first thing that comes to mind.

Comparisons to the Conversion of St Paul by Caravaggio

This is perhaps one of the most famous of Caravaggio's paintings in the sense that it applies the methods that we are consistently familiar with especially the chiaroscuro which is one of the hallmarks of this artist. In this great painting we observe several of the facets which have made this artist famous and although the subject is biblical we can observe some striking similarities with Repin's painting.

The painting gives a picture of the events in Chapter 9 of Acts of the Apostles. In this painting, lighting, and low horizon lines are utilized by Caravaggio to create images that seem closer to the viewers. Use of foreshortening is emphasized and his main focal point is on action. In addition, he also makes use of chiaroscuro and atmosphere point of view. A bright light strikes Saul on his journey to Damascus to conquer the Christian population. God utters to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Following these events, Paul alleged to have seen Christ during the vision, and it's on this foundation that he justifies his claim to be accepted as an Apostle (Paul). The brilliant light that was visualized by Saint Paul signifies a heavenly illumination (a new exposure of who Jesus is). His conversion from being a Jewish or a Pharisee occurred at this point. A sense of crisis is and displacement in which Christ interrupts the daily world is generated by the light with its uneven shapes and incredible rays; which licks out features for their spectacular influence. The application of chiaroscuro highlights the sudden enlightenment of a heathen. In the painting, one can spot Saul dressed in Roman costumes. One can also spot where Saul has tumbled down off a horse as he is hit by the lightning. He reacts as though God has

touched him. (Lewis and Susan, 1995)

Personally I feel that Caravaggio's painting is one which definitely strikes to the heart and which has an incredible portrayal of the events which are going on in the work. His aesthetic treatment of the subject in question is quite brilliant as is everything else which is going on making the painting a rather busy one in this respect. The same could be said for Repin's landmark painting.

References:

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