

Realities of war



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Loved and Lost English Literature 108 July 27 2014 War is a patriotic act where one seeks the determination to lead their country. It can be viewed as noble, cruel, inhumane, and can make an individual a hero or a criminal. It affects everyone in a society, hoping loved ones are safe, whether they are the ones fighting in the battlefield or waiting at home. "Anthem for Doomed Youth" by Wilfred Owen presents a speaker who criticizes war and illustrates a vivid picture in the readers mind regarding the harsh realities surrounding warfare, including the fallen soldiers and the ones left behind to grieve their losses. Whereas W. B. Yeats in "Easter 1916" portrays a speaker who conveys an ambiguous attitude in relation to war, they initially seem undecided in their feelings regarding the rebellious revolutionaries who led the uprising, but soon turn to appreciate and appreciate the fallen individuals.

Imagery is used to explore and portray complex subject matters; Owen and Yeats illustrate the harsh realities of war using imagery that incorporates objects seen and used in every day life. Although the speaker's perspectives differ and they explore warfare from different angles, their use of imagery serves as a powerful tool in emphasizing the positive and negative aspects of war and the side effects on a society.

Owen and Yeats both question the necessity of war in "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and "Easter 1916" but Owen uses imagery that evokes negative responses to war, whereas Yeats presents an ambiguous perspective through his use of imagery. Owen creates contrary feelings towards the subject of war through his imagery. Contrasting "Anthem" with "Doomed Youth" initiates the tone for the rest of the poem, "Anthem" is typically seen as young children who should be protected and not thrown in

harms way, all though in this poem, the use of 'Doomed' in title creates a completely different meaning.

His use of language emphasizes his perspective against the necessity of war by contrasting words such as "demented choirs" with "wailing shells" (7) and "monstrous anger" with "guns," (2) all portraying negative images that emphasize on the destructive nature of war, therefore contributing to the speaker's stance against war. In addition, William Kevin Penny states, This quote re-emphasizes that Owens use of detailed imagery was used deliberately so that an audience could effectively grasp the meaningful message he was trying to convey about aspects of war.

His contrasting language such as "anthem" with "doomed," and "monstrous anger" with "guns" is what makes this message conveyable to an audience. In contrast to Owens poem, Yeats uses imagery to present the speaker's ambiguous perspective, the comparisons made in the lines: Yeats uses the comparisons of death to sleep to reflect the speaker's ambiguous perspective. Normally sleep is equated with neither, negative or positive emotions, here as death is normally seen in a negative way; yet comparing the two together, reflects the speaker's ambivalent attitude effectively in this poem.

Yeats' Contrasting the image of nightfall with death signifies the relationship between the end of day (that happens insignificantly) with the end of a person's life, which normally would be considered significant, yet this reference is suggesting the death resulting from war is unnecessary. The question, "Was it needless death after all?" reflects the speakers opinion

even further, the question mark is inserted to enhance the ambiguity of the beaker, as it implies the speaker's uncertain nature.

Therefore reflecting the speaker feels the revolutionaries' rebellion is questionable in its nature. Lima Haney agrees with this notion by claiming, "Easter 1916, Yeats conveys his dismay with the civil unrest and the needless loss of life in his country," (341) therefore reaffirming that the speaker in this poem questions the necessity of war as it produces fatalities that are unwarranted according to Haney. Yeats is able to represent this stance, using specific language such as 'needless death,' which also adds to the images that emphasize this notion.

Owen and Yeats both use imagery in "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and "Easter 1916" to reflect the speaker's perspective on individual's involvement in the war. Owens use of imagery portrays a cynical perspective from a speaker who condemns the actions and stresses the consequences of warfare. Owens speaker stresses soldiers in "Anthem for Doomed Youth" who have fought in the war and the loved ones who have dealt with losses resulting from war.

His use of language creates vivid imagery by comparing the deaths of soldiers to the deaths of cattle. Owen states, "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle? (Owen 1). This quote reflects the speaker's opinion that soldiers involved in warfare are treated like a herd of animals, and their deaths are no more important than cattle, which are rounded together and killed simultaneously in a slaughterhouse.

The line also sets the tone for the rest of the poem through imagery, as soldiers are portrayed in dehumanizing terms, and reflects the negative perspective of the speaker. In contrast to the poetic devices used by Owen, Yeats' use of imagery in "Easter 1916" describes a speaker who is initially uncertain about the necessity of war, yet recognizes the revolutionaries involved on a heroic level by immortalizing them.

The speaker, even though ambiguous in their attitude towards war, still feels that the revolutionaries partaking in the rebellion are important enough to "write it out in a verse," (Yeats 74) therefore the imagery of a tangible poem recognizes the revolutionaries' actions as heroic enough to commemorate them in a poem that shall be read for eternity, even though the speaker doesn't necessarily agree with the rebellion itself.

This notion is further proven when Austin Ride states, "Yeats initially disapproved of the Easter rebels, but their executions won him over to a grudging and ambivalent respect for their accomplishment" (401) similar to my initial statement that through imagery, Yeats uses imagery such as commemorating revolutionaries in a tangible poem to present his speaker's ambiguous perspective on the war, although he was uncertain in his attitude towards the rebellion, the gesture of the revolutionaries fighting for what they believed in granted them the significance to be viewed as noble and patriotic.

Owen and Yeats both use imagery to describe the bloodshed during battles to emphasize the harsh realities of war in "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and "Easter 1916". Owen presents imagery that illustrates horrendous warfare

conditions that exemplify the conditions soldiers had to endure. The lines stating, " Only the monstrous anger of the guns. Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle" (Owen, 2-3) refers to the soldier's day-to-day living conditions, which consisted of living in fear with constant chaos from the sounds of gunshots constantly surrounding them, and knowing that at any moment their lives could be over.

In comparison to Owen, Yeats also uses imagery to convey the bloodshed during battles to emphasize the harsh reality by stating, " We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead," (Yeats, 70-71) with the use of images of death, and comparing the dreams of the individuals involved in the rebellion to their deaths, illuminates the harsh realities of war; even though they had good intentions, and felt as if they were fighting for a noble cause, their " dreams" are what finalized their lives; therefore, showcasing the inevitability of warfare.

Owen and Yeats' language throughout the poem creates imagery that reflects the effects of warfare and how it not only hurts the individuals involved but the ones who mourn from their losses as well. Owen's speaker discusses individuals in " Anthem for Doomed Youth" who have to deal with the loss of loved ones resulting from war. Stating, " The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall; / Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds, / And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. " (Owen, 12-14) refers to all the family and friends who have to deal with the horrible losses resulting from war.

The " pallor of girls" signifies the paleness of women from shock and sadness, and 'tenderness of silent minds" is referring to the silent mourning of family embers and/or friends. The phrase, " drawing-down of blinds" is also referring to the grieving of loved ones. The use of this everyday object is typically used to represent the end of day, or to be left alone. People use blinds to keep things out, such as sun, or to represent nobody is home or they do not want to be bothered.