



All Quiet on the Western Front: Impacts of World War on the Selected German Literature

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Abstract: War has the power to bring changes in human lives, the environment, the psychological state of the human mind, literature, the poetic world, and many more. It holds the dark power of destruction instead of enlightening the new life. Different People have different perspectives about war and it still holds a matter of discussion. A well-known German novelist named Erich Maria Remarque also gave his views about war from a soldier's perspective in his novel 'All Quiet on the Western Front'. Instead of showing the picture of heroes, he shows what it is like to be a war soldier. His ideas and writing style inspired many people and also had a great impact on German literature. My paper discusses the new themes that arise in German Literature after World War I.

Keywords: Themes, German Literature, Anti-Patriotism, Alienation, Lost Generation, and Anti-Nationalism

Introduction

One of the most well-known German novelists of the 20th century is Erich Maria Remarque (1898–1970). Remarque has had unpleasant encounters on the Western Front's trenches. The First World War German soldier's physical and psychological agony is the subject of the book "Im Westen nichts Neues," often known as All Quiet on the Western Front. The popularity of Remarque's book is widespread. They not only outline the German perspective but also paint a vivid picture of the suffering experienced by everyone who was either directly or indirectly involved in the conflict. Remarque was concerned about the cruel effects of war on impressionable children's brains. Some people had to abandon their whole lives to go to war. The young people had no prior military experience. They were entirely cut off from life as they knew it. They were separated from their loved ones, including their parents, siblings, spouses, and, most importantly, their children, who were the golden touch in their lives. They were unable to achieve their worldly objectives. Thus, the author indulges in the common language of pain.

Rising of new Themes during World War I

Anti-Patriotism

In some aspects, the start of World War I can be seen as an act of patriotism: the conviction that a country's identity is entwined with the personal identities of its citizens. On the bias based on, Paul Bäumer enlists in the army together with his comrades. However, when the battle becomes less and less about the country and more and more about individual survival, the horrors of war gradually undermine this sense of patriotism. Paul eventually comes to conclude the powerful governments who sacrifice individual soldiers in pursuit of power and glory are the actual adversaries, not the opposing soldiers. Remarque is against the idea of patriotism created by the government. The government inspired common people to fight for them in their country's name. He had shown the politics behind the idea of patriotism. He is suggesting people instead of devoting themselves to their country, they should rather devote themselves to humanism.

Lost Generation

American author Gertrude Stein referred to Ernest Hemingway and other people of his generation who came of age during World War I as a "lost generation" in the 1920s. Paul Bäumer frets frequently throughout the book that his generation is "lost" forever as a result of their involvement in the war. He and his companions joined the army right out of high school, and war has dominated their adult life ever since. When the conflict is finished, they won't have any families or careers to go back to, and their military service ensures that transitioning to civilian life will be at best challenging. The troops are also left to wonder what the trench experience was worth, especially given that they did not know what they were fighting for. Both their past and their future seems to be lost.

Anti-Nationalism

The ethic of nationalism, the notion that rival nation-states were an essential aspect of existence, that one owed their nation their first loyalty, and that their national identity was the major component of their total identity, was in many respects the catalyst for World War I. The nationalist ethic was not new, but in the nineteenth century, it had achieved unprecedented heights of zeal and continued into the outbreak of World War I. All Quiet on the Western Front delivers a blistering indictment of nationalism in its portrayal of the horrors of war, exposing it as a hollow, hypocritical ideology that is employed by people in positions of authority to manipulate a country's populace. Paul and his pals are persuaded by nationalist ideologies to enlist in the military, but their military training swiftly teaches them that nationalism is meaningless in the face of the horrors of war. The patriots Himmelstoss and Kantorek's relative insignificance on the battlefield emphasize that principles are inappropriate conflict. Remarque uses the example of troops fighting on the front lines who kill to avoid being killed rather than fighting for the honor of the country. During the war, Paul and his friends realize their true foes are the people in power who pretend to be committed themselves to the war rather than the opposing forces. The reality of war has turned the ideology of nationalism into anti-nationalism.

Alienation

Although they may have avoided the shells, the men whom Remarque writes about in his novel are "a generation of men who, though they may have escaped the shells, were ruined by the war." Young Germans were forced into the war by their nationalistic elders for a cause they didn't care about, and the war's brutality turned them into numbed zombies. This numbness is highlighted by Paul's monotone voice throughout the book. The soldier would die much sooner or go insane if he allowed himself to experience feelings. As a result, the soldiers either make fun of war—by placing bets on an aerial dogfight, or they adopt a pragmatic rather than romantic attitude. Upon returning home, Paul's disconnect establishes itself once more. He regrets returning home and inflicting emotional wounds on his dying mother since he does not allow himself to form a bond with her. His estrangement is partly a result of his break from the past as he struggles to connect with the rest of his family and other civilians because he thinks that none of them understand his situation. He can hardly recall his life before he joined the military, like the majority of young soldiers who enlisted after finishing their education, and what little he does remember now seems pointless to him. Additionally, he is unable to imagine life after the military because transitioning to civilian life and finding employment seems to be impossible. Paul's youth feel misled by its nationalistic elders like Kantorek as well as by those who romanticise war, such as the French brunette who is solely drawn to Paul as a romanticised soldier on the verge of death. The soldiers' close relationship with one another is the only thing that lessens their estrangement.

Conclusion

Remarque provides an in-depth investigation of the bleak realities of trench warfare and the utter tragedy that the war brings about in *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a result. Paul serves as Remarque's spokesperson throughout the book. Paul is a metaphor for the soldiers' disjointed personalities. The book supports the idea that the troops' hardships are truly unbearable. Gertrude Stein, an American novelist created the phrase "lost generation," and the soldiers are its embodiment. The contradiction between the tragedy of war and the passion for military brotherhood is shown in the book. This book also falls in the category of classic German literature. It also introduces varied themes like anti-Patriotism, anti-heroism, and alienation. Before starting the world war, there was an ideology of heroism, patriotism, and nationalism. People used to believe that participating in the war and coming back with victory makes them stand in the position of heroic figure and well-respected position in society. After seeing the world war, soldiers understand the horror of war and can survive is the ultimate motto of their war life. The battlefield becomes less and less about the country and more and more about individual survival, the horrors of war gradually give them a new sense of patriotism and nationalism. The war has changed the theme of nationalism into anti-nationalism. Since this novel was written after World War I, it introduces a different view of the real world. It shows a world, where humans were killing humans in the name of patriotism. It shows the dark world of politics and greed for power.

Methodology

- Need for Research

In this 21st century, we have come across war (war between Ukraine and Russia), which gives us glimpses of World War of the 20th century. There might be possibilities of World War III in our coming generation. It gives us the thought of soldier or their ideas about war. There are many themes or new ideas that are rising due to war. My paper presents those thinking styles or new genres that affected German literature after World War I.

- Research Objective

a) Discussing the new themes or writing style (German literature) after World War I

- Research Design

My research work focuses on the qualitative and conceptual approaches of research.

- Data type

a) Data from online (google)

b) Various online articles

c) All Quiet on Western Front Novel

d) Various research works on this topic

Bibliography

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4. Erich Remarque's Depiction of Authority Styles in All Quiet on the Western Front, by Kathryn Carethers; talks about the cruelty and war only create distress and death.