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Postmodernist Reading of Frank Davey's *Hiroshima*

Nivedita Yohana

Abstract:

Frank Davey has consistently been politically committed to decentralization of the authority and a pluralistic world but none has epistemological primacy over the others. Davey writes with a unique panache as he examines with humour, irony, the ambiguous play of signs in his poem Multiple Choice Games for Hiroshima Day. This paper intends to examine the postmodern elements such as Rejection of master narratives Irony, Paranoia, Indeterminacy, Plurality Participation, Playfulness, black humor Technoculture and hyperreality. Davey uses postmodernist tools to decenter the narratives, Historiography, de-construct the history and has appropriated, recaptured and relocated the elements in the general framework of history despite the difficulties and fundamental paradoxes.

Keywords: postmodernism, irony, narratives, fragmentation.

Introduction

Postmodernism (literature) is a term applied to denote a multitude of trends and attitudes which exist partly as a reaction to high Modernism, and partially as a consequence of post-industrial mass production and late capitalist economy. Postmodernism is notoriously difficult to set; indeed, a central tenet is that certain experiences and concepts resist any kind of representation in writing or art. Nevertheless, one of its most recognizable attributes is certain self-consciousness with regard to the methods of production and to the social contexts of any study, together with a playful incorporation of, or gesture towards, previous styles and ways of thought.

In philosophical terms, Postmodernism is part of a general attack on Enlightenment truth-claims and values, and displays a preoccupation with words as an inadequate vehicle for conveying any form of “reality”; this mode of thought is sometimes called “the linguistic turn”, and admits the language-games of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the “ordinary words” philosophy of John Langshaw Austin. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism are closely related to Postmodernism: this relationship is especially noteworthy in the analyses of society as a system of signs and codes conducted by Roland Barthes, and the origination of deconstruction as a method of learning texts and identifying tacit hierarchies within discourses by Jacques Derrida. Michel Foucault also proposed several major theories about the nature of power and repression, and the marginalization of certain groups throughout history. Important Postmodernist theorists are Jean-François Lyotard, whose book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* is an influential, if arcane, explication of Postmodernism's central concerns, and Jean Baudrillard, whose extreme form of nihilism and theories about the mass media and hyper-reality led him to assert that the Gulf War did not happen, and was only a televised simulation of a war.

In literary theory, Postmodernism refers in part to the crisis in determining significance and signification highlighted by Post-Structuralism and deconstruction. It likewise cites to the procedure of studying the canon of literary “authorities”, that is, the writers who are most

commonly studied in schools and universities, and attempting to pick out the ideological and social currents that have shaped that canon. Influential critics include Fredric Jameson, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, a psychoanalyst and semiotician whose work on gender rejects the notion of traditionally constructed “male” and “female” identity.

In the practice of fiction and poetry, Postmodernism has manifested itself in an experimental and eclecticism which has concentrated on the nature of functionality and of composing itself. The term “Postmodernist” can be attached to almost any work that questions the boundaries and possibilities of the fictional enterprise; that attempts to collapse arbitrary borders between genres and to question what constitutes the nature of the genre; that refers, directly or by allusion, to other texts; and that makes problematic the idea of “characters” and of a narrative that can lead to a fixed point and convey a fixed meaning. Lyotard has identified contemporary culture as “junk Postmodernism” or “eclectic Postmodernism” because of its willingness to absorb a variety of styles regardless of their provenance or status. The growing popularity of “camp” and “kitsch” bears witness to this general trend. The explosion of information technology, and in particular Cyberculture and virtual reality, has increased a sense of the possible diversification of experience.

As one of the main promoters of Postmodernism in Canadian literature, Frank Davey has built up an important volume of work in a period that spans already five decades. He incorporates postmodern notions and techniques in his poetry and critical work, giving them a very personal expression. The version of English-Canadian postmodernism that dominates today has been shaped most directly not by apocalyptic, paradigm-shifting, post-humanist, metaphysical critique put forward by Derrida and the other leading contributors to international postmodernism, but rather by a much more traditional and familiar critical discourse: a powerful but often misunderstood aesthetic that has always played a defining role in critical discussions of Canadian literature. The paper intends to analyse the presence of some of these postmodern elements in the poem “Multiple choice game on Hiroshima Day,” published in 1996, a poignant and haunting reference to the bomb exploded above Hiroshima by the Americans at the end of world war II. The poem is an adequate doorway also to the work of Davey, which combines postmodernist techniques with ideological and political preoccupations. What constitutes postmodern poetry is not easy to define and there is no consensus as to what does the category encapsulate. As we move along the analysis, it will become clearer why we include them under this category.

Rejection of master narratives

In the work entitled *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean François Lyotard defines "postmodernism as incredulity toward metanarratives". This postmodern "incredulity" results in skepticism and distrust of the systems that attempt to explain cultural phenomena in terms of a single, unifying principle; the search for truth and order in human experience collapses. Other authors, such as Henry Giroux, have also defined postmodernism in such terms. Giroux states:

Postmodernism rejects. . . General abstractions that deny the specificity and particularity of everyday life, that generalize out of existence the particular and the local, that smother difference under the banner of universalizing categories.

According to Giroux, universalizing categories are the trademarks of "the Enlightenment and Western philosophical tradition" and he refers to them as "master-narratives." Deleuze and Guattari argue that a minimal structure should be seen as two heterogeneous series of terms that are set in relation by, and converge in, a paradoxical element. This notion of structure is given a postmodern gloss by Deleuze and Guattari, who redefine structure in the form of a "game". This suggests that the structure of society is a human creation, whereas in their work it is not, yet at the same time the game is rule governed and involves the exercise of constraint in a clearly modernist fashion.

The narrative structure of the poem "Multiple choice game on Hiroshima Day" is deliberately debunked by the author. It doesn't follow any rhyme or rhythm; neither does it have a beginning, middle and an end. The entire poem, as the title suggests, is in the form of a game with sixteen questions and some having three and some others having four multiple answer options to choose from. It is this inherent ambiguity built into all languages -- and thus human consciousness -- that drives much Postmodern theory. Davey uses language which is direct, unequivocal, non-judgmental and devoid of any emotions mirroring the brutality of men very subtly through the structure he uses in the poem. He begins with the question of Hiroshima memory reminiscing as a five year old seeing the bomb explode on Hiroshima and not knowing the cruel games involved with the adult world. The description of the war through the eyes of a five year old thus highlights the coexistence of poignant nature of war and innocence of a child. The poem moves on to Hiroshima history in the second question. In the third, the poet contemplates on what caused Hiroshima A-bomb to trigger where he brings forth the two sides of the war, hinting at the adage it takes two to tango. In the fourth, he ponders on the actual essential being of people, which is basically good, but is prompted to commit heinous crime against mankind in Hiroshima and good people. Postmodernism, in rejecting grand narratives, favors "mini-narratives," stories that explain small practices, local events, rather than large-scale universal or global concepts. Postmodern "mini-narratives" are always situational, provisional, contingent, and temporary, making no claim to universality, truth, reason, or stability. Jean-François Lyotard was a key thinker of postmodernism and suggested that postmodernism was both a historical and cultural state of being, based on the essential dissolution of master or meta-narratives in society. Barry states Lyotard's position:

'Grand narratives' of progress and human perfectibility, then, are no longer tenable and the best we can hope for is a series of 'mininarratives', which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative and which provide a basis for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances. Postmodernity thus 'deconstructs' the basic aim of the Enlightenment, that is the 'idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject'

Davey goes on to compare the intensity of bombing in Hiroshima and Dresden as if to submit statistical data on the number of casualties and to compare as a scientist would when he kills animals mercilessly to collect data for his inquiry. As Marilyn Manson says, "The death of one is a tragedy, but the death of a million is just a statistic". The poet poignantly brings to the notice of the readers how human beings can be desperate to wage war and that it always take two to tango in Hiroshima and desperation and then he ironically talks about the lessons learnt from a war and these lessons are discovered at the cost of the massacre of innocent people in Hiroshima and optimism. Since the beginning of humanity, war, cruelty, atrocities meted out against fellow beings has always been justified and that's a sad truth of mankind to establish justification for

war. In Hiroshima and consequences, he subdues and trivializes the magnitude of the bombing by pondering over the destruction of godliness, herd of sheep and a family at a factory and then he goes on to question along with ambiguous answers about Hiroshima and good things, Hiroshima and Canada, Hiroshima and technology, Hiroshima and love, Hiroshima and you. As we can see, there is no definite structure. Just as Hiroshima was bombed and not only vaporized seventy thousand civilians, but also, as many wars would leave, is the psychological destruction, so does the structure of the poem which is scattered. The most devastating and terrifying experience in the history of mankind is dealt in a very matter-of-fact manner with no empathy reflecting the frigidity of the human psyche which drove men to war.

Irony

Postmodern irony, like postmodernism, furthermore is characterized by multiplicity, instability, inconsistency, and paradox (Bernard, 1992; Hutcheon, 1992; Wilde, 1982), which raises questions with respect to the meaning of said irony. If the general purpose of irony is to convey alternative meaning, and if the meanings generated by postmodern irony are multiple and inconsistent, then the derivation of meaning on the part of the audience--the crucial element of irony--is rendered complex indeed. Hutcheon (1991) argues that in its postmodern incarnation, irony functions either deconstructively or constructively:

The first is a kind of critical ironic stance that serves to distance, undermine, unmask, relativise, destabilize Here marginality becomes the model for internal subversion of that which presumes to be central. The other, constructive kind of irony ... works to assert difference as a positive ... this irony's focus is on liminality, where ... irony opens up new spaces, literally between opposing meanings, where new things can happen.

Davey employs this effective tool in order to lay down all the pieces to assess a very important or rather devastating historical event, objectively.

Peter Brooker in *Modernism/Postmodernism* says,

“Postmodernist realizes that the past must be revisited, but with irony”

Peter Booker mentions and also expressing similar views as Umberto Eco that the past must be revisited with irony not innocently, Davey very craftily and eruditely drives home the irony of Hiroshima bombed when Japan had the same with Nanking and allied with the Nazis. Irony opens up many perspectives serves as effective instrument to capture even the emotional aspect of it.

Alan Wilde says in "Irony in the Postmodern Age: Toward a Map of Suspensiveness." *Boundary 2*, no. 9.1 (Fall 1980): 5-46.

"the defining feature of modernism is its ironic vision of disconnection and disjunction"

Postmodernist viewed the reality as situational irony in its nascent state which is disconnected, dislocated and severed and that is indeed as ironic as reality is.

Postmodern authors were certainly not the first or pioneers to employ irony and wit in their authorship, but for many postmodern authors, these became the hallmarks of their way. Postmodern authors will often handle very serious subjects—World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories—from a position of distance and disconnect, and will prefer to describe their histories ironically and humorously.

The poet here ironizes the complexities of politics of adults by juxtaposing with the innocence of a five year old.

1. Hiroshima memory:

a) When I was five, I thought a 'hiroshima' was a plane.

b) When I was five, I thought a 'hiroshima' was the chrysanthemum on Japanese stamps.

c) When I was five, I pointed to a picture of the mushroom cloud. 'What is that?' I asked. 'That,' said my mother, is Hiroshima.'

The words “When I was five” and “Hiroshima” are repeated in order to make clear the horrible nature of warfare. Chrysanthemum flower was on Japanese stamps at the time of the war. The comparability of the structure of the flower with the swirling shape of the mushroom cloud of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and the innocent questioning of the child wrests out the intricacies of the war.

Davey employs irony as a potent tool to condemn the vicious deeds of men in war. In the fourth question, Davey ironically makes reference to people who were responsible for bombing and killing innocent victims, as “good”. And he also makes one of the response choices. At the same time, he is showing the ethical dilemma that a person has to endure while being torn between duties, prejudice and their consciousness

*A good person deplores having had to kill Huns,
Nips, Nazis, skinheads, government agents, house
invaders anywhere.*

And in the third question he subtly mentions the fact that Japanese too, killed many people in their many wars, which is evident in his adjective “suicidal” in relation to Japan just as USA dropped the most powerful and destructive bomb known to mankind on Japan and uses “Dedicated” and “Patriotic” with Americans who in their urge to avenge the harm that Japan had caused and killed many innocent people who had nothing to do with the vicious war the two governments were involved with.

Hiroshima a-bomb triggers:

a) Suicidal Japanese soldiers caused the a-bombing of Hiroshima.

b) Dedicated American scientists caused the a-bombing of Hiroshima.

c) Patriotic American accountants caused the a-bombing of Hiroshima.

He juxtaposes the word “good” and “kill” in the same conviction to make a poignant impression. In the fifth query, when comparing with Dresden, a German city which was from, says,

What is different about Hiroshima and Dresden is that there had been fewer Jews in Hiroshima.

The difference of having fewer Jews died in Hiroshima than in Dresden is used as ironical parameter to review the war. In a truly postmodern epoch, Davey condemns the bestiality as he uses the term “justification for the bombing” to stir the emotions and thoughts of the readers.

Davey minimizes the magnitude of the effects of war in order to emphasize its gruesome nature of war and also skirts around the issue of an insignificant clock factory being wiped away, while thousands of lives have been lost instantly and the effect is still present to this day. He also highlights the historical event of idea of Japanese emperor being ordained by God who was driven to proclaim that he wasn't God ordained thus wiping away a thousand years of belief, and its left to readers to decide if that was fair or none. He proceeds to stress the fact that Japan too was capable of possessing atomic bomb. He also brings up the cruelty meted out against animals by the US which was utilized to test their bombs. For some people with the power, humans and animals were reduced to testing objects to holding out the most terrible war by testing their bombs. The atomic bomb was tested on a herd of sheep in Utah to find out its results:

Hiroshima and consequences:

- a) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out family life at the Shinomura Clock Factory.*
- b) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out the godliness of Japanese emperors.*
- c) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out Professor Suzuki's Japanese a-bomb program.*
- d) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out a herd of sheep in Mountain Springs Utah.*

Davey ironically points out the illusion called optimism in relation to war, when he talks about war and optimism while they are at two ends of the ethical spectrum. It is infact to spread awareness about the inhumanity, savagery and barbarity a man can show to the future generation and may prevent them from becoming beasts themselves after knowing the consequences of it. The reverberations of war can be two fold. One could elicit empathy and knowing that it could happen to them and secondly putting ideas into people who want to inflict pain and suffering in others:

Hiroshima and optimism:

- a) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it taught children everywhere to make paper cranes.*
- b) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it taught North Americans that individual humans*

might live somewhere like Hiroshima.

c) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it made world leaders think about the third world war and forget the second

Paranoia, Indeterminacy, Plurality

Another common component of postmodern literature is paranoid characters. Since accuracy is relative to individual characters, it is often questionable if they experience that which they think they're passing through. Whether or not they are truly inconsequential, there is no such thing as universal truth. Each character's reality is determined by his or her experiences, and in order to understand postmodern literature, one must have these relative truths. Hyper-reality, image saturation, simulacra seem more powerful than the "real"; images and texts with no prior "original".

William James speaks crucially to our condition in a "pluralistic universe":

He who takes for his hypothesis the notion that it [pluralism] is the permanent form of the world is what I call a radical empiricist. For him the crudity of experience remains an eternal element thereof. There is no possible point of view from which the world can appear an absolutely single fact.

Since accuracy is relative, and a character's truth is finally limited by his or her experiences, another staple of postmodern literature is a questionable or unreliable narrator. Oftentimes, in postmodern literature, stories told from the narrator's perspective will involve inconsistencies and plot holes, which are usually intentional by writer. The aim is to keep encouraging you to query your own perceptions of the macrocosm, and quite possibly, time it -- indeterminacy, rather, indeterminacies. These include all manner of ambiguities, ruptures, and displacements affecting knowledge and fellowship. We may think of Werner Karl Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty, Kurt Gödel's proof of incompleteness, Thomas Kuhn's paradigms, and Paul Feyerabend's Dadaism of science. Or we may think of Harold Rosenberg's anxious art objects, de-defined. From Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogic imagination, Roland Barthes' texts scriptable enrolled Bloom's misprisions, Paul de Man's allegorical readings, Stanley Fish's affective stylistics, Norman Holland's Transactive analysis, and David Bleich's subjective criticism, to the last fashionable aporia of unrecorded time, we undecided, relativize. Indeterminacies pervade our actions, thoughts, interpretations; they comprise our universe.

Postmodernists always contend that truth is subjective and arbitrary. For Gianni Vattimo, the `truth' becomes an interpretative matter, similar to an aesthetic or rhetorical experience. Truth becomes a fable. However, he claims, this is not to say that `truth' is reduced to `subjective' emotions and feelings. It is to say that `truth' is not simply the recognition and reinforcement of `common sense': `On the contrary, it is a first step towards recognizing the link between truth on the one hand and what may on the other hand be called the monument, the social contract, or the very ``substantiality" (in the Hegelian sense of the objective spirit) of historical transmission'

In order to know the pluralities of truth, Davey ironically suggests the readers to question crew of Enola gay (Boeing B-29 Super fortress bomber, which bombed Hiroshima), Manhattan project (where the decision to bomb was approved, a CNN columnist who supported the

bombings of Hiroshima and in Smithsonian Museum In 1995, controversy arose over the exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum associated with display of the Enola Gay, the Super fortress used by the United States to execute the first atomic bombing in World War II. The American Legion and Air Force Association believed the exhibit put forward just one position of the argument over the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that it stressed the essence on the victims without the overall context of the war. The Smithsonian changed the exhibit, displaying the aircraft only with associated technical data and without discussion of its historic use in the warfare. Davey enunciates the insensitivity of these people involved in relation to the war that vaporized thousands of people instantly, physically and psychologically crippled many for life and the yet to be born generation waiting to take the effects of chemicals which are still lurking in the air causing physical deformities:

To establish justification for the bombing of Hiroshima:

- a) Ask a crewmember of the 'Enola Gay.'
- b) Ask a scientist from the Manhattan project.
- c) Ask a CNN columnist.
- d) Ask a Smithsonian curator.

There were indeed many conflicting reports in the news papers and journals just as the conflicting truths.

Hiroshima and reporters:

- a) Reports say the Japanese government was ready to surrender.
- b) Reports say the Japanese armed forces would have never surrendered.
- c) 'Reports' can mean gunshots or a distant bomb blasts.

War as we know is desperation, desolation terrifying and horrific act of humanity. In the example of Hiroshima bombing by the US, Davey is presenting the other position of the coin here. The Japanese began moving beyond even fanatical resistance to suicidal resistance by crashing their airplanes into American ships. Even then there was no hope for Japan. American submarines had nearly run out of targets, having surrounded Japan, and were brought down to shelling, fishing boats and even target on earth. American planes were firebombing Japanese cities into oblivion. Japan was alone and starvation was a realistic possibility, but they would not surrender. Japan was a tough foe. Surrender was seen as more than even disgrace; it was a dishonor to the Japanese Emperor, who was the Japanese God:

Hiroshima and desperation:

- a) During World War II more Japanese soldiers suicided than were captured by the U.S. Army.

b) During World War II more Japanese soldiers were captured than Japanese sailors were captured.

c) When a warship is sinking it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the sailors are suiciding or drowning.

Participation

The structure of the poem engages the readers. Equally, we have understood the questions and all the options in answers pose moral and ethical dilemma for the readers. Postmodernist literary works thus grant the reader a privileged view. His special relationship with this author demotes the referential connection between text and reality to a secondary stage. Indeterminacy elicits participation; gaps must be satiated. The postmodern text, verbal or nonverbal, invites performance: it wants to be written, revised, answered, and moved out. Indeed, and then much of postmodern art calls itself performance, as it transgresses genres. As performance, artistic production (or theory for that matter) declares its vulnerability to time, to death, to the interview, to the Other. At its best, as Richard Poirier contends, the performing self expresses:

Energy in motion, energy with its own shape"; yet in its "self-discovering, self-watching, finally self-pleasuring response to... Pressures and difficulties," that self may also veer toward solipsism, lapse into narcissism.

Parataxis (disconnectivity), Fragmentation

Postmodernism, by contrast, doesn't lament the idea of fragmentation, provisionality, or incoherence, but rather celebrates that. Sense of fragmentation and decentered self; multiple, conflicting identities, Subverted order, loss of centralized control and fragmentation. Gloss. For Zygmunt Bauman, 'the postmodern' is not only about disregarding the totality' in our theorizing, but also about the creation of a distinct epoch of history, detached from the past:

Postmodernity is modernity coming of age: modernity looking at itself at a distance rather than from inside, making a full inventory of its gains and losses, psychoanalysing itself, discovering the intentions it never before spelled out, finding them mutually cancelling and incongruous. Postmodernity is modernity coming to terms with its own impossibility; a self monitoring modernity that consciously discards what it was once unconsciously doing. (Bauman, 1991: 272)

As any postmodern literature, this poem too lacks traditional and a lucid structure and the content are only as disconnected as any questions and multiple choice solution. Indeterminacy often follows from fragmentation. The postmodernist only disconnects; fragments are all it professes to believe. The ultimate opprobrium is "totalization"-any synthesis, whatever, social, epistemic, even poetic. Hence the postmodernist preference for montage, collage, the found or cut-up literary object, for protests over hypotactic forms, metonymy over metaphor, schizophrenia over paranoia. Hence, likewise, his resort to paradox, paralogy, Parabasis, paracriticism, the openness of brokenness, unjustified margins. Thus Jean-Francois Lyotard exhorts, "Let us wage warfare on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate

the differences and bring through the honour of the name." The age demands deference, shifting signifiers, and even atoms dissolve into elusive sub particles, a mere mathematical whisper.

One of the most common traits of postmodern literature is a belief that there is no such affair as a general truth. Most postmodern literature is concerned with portraying the view of single parts, thus creating different truths. As anyone capable of empathy can know the truth from victim's side, Davey talks about the truth from the perspective of people who dropped the bomb. Truman was faced with kill now and hopefully stops the war or suffers even more killed on both sides by not using the bomb.

To establish justification for the bombing of

Hiroshima:

a) Ask a crewmember of the 'Enola Gay.'

b) Ask a scientist from the Manhattan project.

c) Ask a CNN columnist.

d) Ask a Smithsonian curator.

As postmodernist stance nothing is concrete. On that point is an ethical dilemma in the awareness of the person who decided to deplore radiation sickness, killing and to kill Huns, Nips, Nazis, government agents and house invaders. Home invaders are ordered to be defeated by the house inmates in self defense in many states. The truth is always under erasure.

Playfulness, black humor

One of the significant traits of postmodernism is to address grave matters in a tongue-in-cheek manner. This contributes to a great deal of irony and black humor in many works of postmodern literature. This irony, along with black humor and the universal concept of "play" related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* are among the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. Though the thought of employing these in literature did not originate with the postmodernists (the modernists were often playful and ironic), they became central features in many postmodern works. For instance, a postmodern book may address issues of war by turning it into a comedy, in which soldiers attempt to share with the very real horrors of war by laughing and jesting with each other. Since postmodern literature is concerned with looking at the world through different lenses, irony and black humor is often used to offer new perspectives. Comparing a war to optimism, Davey sarcastically talks about children reading about the war, North Americans feel blood on their hands for the generations to come and also emphasizes the humanizing effect as a result of the brutality of warfare:

Hiroshima and optimism:

a) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it taught children everywhere to make paper cranes.

b) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it taught North Americans that individual humans might live somewhere like Hiroshima.

c) The good thing about the Hiroshima bomb was that it made world leaders think about the third world war and forget the second.

As a gruesome consequence of war, we all know the Hiroshima bomb killed 70,000 people instantly let alone the family life of an unknown insignificant Shinomura clock factory. The Emperor was not put on trial, but he was forced to explicitly reject the State Shinto claim that the Emperor of Japan was an arahitogami, i.e., an incarnate divinity. It's debatable whether wiping out the beliefs of Japan made any difference to the humanity as such. Japan was a tough enemy too and likely had plans of having an A-bomb program. Davey also humorously uses the fact that bomb was tested on a herd of sheep in Utah before they dropped it on Hiroshima. Davey proposes the generation of men who sacrificed human lives every bit as well as animals, with no mercy but just motivated by sheer destruction to prove their supremacy:

10. Hiroshima and consequences:

a) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out family life at the Shinomura Clock Factory.

b) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out the godliness of Japanese emperors.

c) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out Professor Suzuki's Japanese a-bomb program.

d) The Hiroshima bomb wiped out a herd of sheep in Mountain Springs Utah.

It is indeed sardonic and humorous when Davey compares good things with war. Davey very subtly makes his point that Japan also was not innocent. Japan too had tortured Chinese prisoners ruthlessly. Hiroshima bombing shocked the world that it silenced the mankind, some of them literally by killing them and some by psychologically damaging them and some others with shock and others with shame. Though Americans won the war, blood was on their hands:

Hiroshima and good things:

a) the good thing about the Hiroshima bomb is that it helped ordinary Japanese people not feel guilty about comfort women or medical experiments on Chinese prisoners.

b) the good thing about the Hiroshima bomb is that it helped humanity enjoy 50 years without fighting and killing.

c) the good thing about the Hiroshima bomb is that it helped Americans feel guilty about being winners.

Technoculture and hyperreality

Fredric Jameson called postmodernism the "cultural logic of late capitalism". "Late capitalism" implies that society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age. Similarly, Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the actual. With postmodernity people are flooded with information, technology has become a key focus in many lifetimes, and our understanding of the role is mediated by simulations of the actual. For any event immaterial of its severity, there are always the contradicting and inconsistent reports in the newspaper, a media which is supposed to be reporting the news as it is and not fabricate it with baseless information. This is where techno culture fails:

Hiroshima and reporters:

a) Reports say the Japanese government was ready to surrender.

b) Reports say the Japanese armed forces would have never surrendered.

c) 'Reports' can mean gunshots or a distant bomb blasts.

Technology

From the point of view of today's cultural studies, three fundamental texts for postmodern theory of technology are Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (1953) Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1975), and Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985).

Heidegger in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" says,

That is why the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, "get" technology "spiritually in hand." We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control... The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. ()

Each of the above mentioned texts illustrates that the postmodern moment in the philosophy and history of technology arrive when pressing ethicopolitical questions erupt about collective well-being, freedom, security, and sustainability. This postmodern rupture comes in the wake of mounting postwar critiques of modern scientific technology for its flaws, especially its frenzied utilitarianism; its reflection of life; its abetting of social domination; its nondemocratic mode of functioning; and its dangerous transformation of human rationality into instrumental reason. Davey labours the point that technology helps just as much as destroying the mankind on many levels. He mentions the horror meted out in Hiroshima by Americans at the same time mentions the Nanking Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanking, which was then Chinese capital, an episode of mass murder and mass rape committed by Japanese troop. He also mentions the Japanese involvement with the Nazis who sent thousands to gas chambers and

tortured many to death. The technology with which Japanese used in order to kill many finally ended up being bombed by the same technology to silence:

Hiroshima and technology:

a) *The people who died in the bombing of Tokyo are just as dead as those who died in Hiroshima.*

b) *The people who died at Nanking are just as dead as those who died in the bombing of Tokyo.*

c) *The people who died at Auschwitz are just as dead as those who died at Hiroshima.*

d) *The people who died at Hiroshima are just as dead as those who died at Guernica.*

Conclusion

Thus Davey in his poem “Multiple choice game on Hiroshima” has successfully employed the postmodern elements into the subject of war and discusses with detached and non-judgmental tone on ethics, innocent perspective of a child, history, two sides of the war, ethical dilemma, political situation leading to war, comparisons to other cities which were bombed and bore the brunt of war where human beings were reduced to ashes just as much as in Hiroshima, though the exigency may vary in terms of brutishness and barbarity or the death toll, the repercussion is the same -- many lives are lost. The poet uses the postmodern components as powerful and effective instruments to condemn the war. Truth always has many dimensions.

Greg Philo and David Miller say,

“We share with post-modernists, for instance, a commitment to scrutinise and deconstruct the cultural consensus; to challenge simplistic uses of universal concepts such as ‘citizenship’ and ‘human rights’ to hide differences and inequalities; to subvert modernist optimism in technological ‘progress’ and reveal values embedded in shaping our cultural and social life rather than simply reflecting a reality ‘out there’.”

Davey makes his readers examine and analyze the entire war and all the complexities and intricacies that surround it- conflicting reports, political history of two nations involved in the war, ethical ambiguity, moral dilemma, dual face of men -- horrifying and murderous streak and inherent tenderness which is over-powered by the need to prove supremacy, effect on innocent children, cruel uses of technology and all that in the form of a game of multiple choices where choices are ambiguous just as the reality and truth are.

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