

Children As Merc: Scrutinizing Martha C.Nussbaums's Objectification Theory In Alan Gratz War Novel Grenade

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Abstract

War is an intense armed conflict between states, government, societies or parliamentary group such as mercenaries, insurgents and militias. In all ages war has been an important topic of analysis. Because the war is not only about spending money, but it actually spending the sweat of the labours, genuine of the scientist, the hope of its children. War affects many innocent lives. It makes the country and its people as homeless, hopeless, foodless and peaceless. To gain power and significance for a country, the authorities make use of people lives and also wield them as a tool for succeeding in war. In some war the authorities even recruited the school children as their soldiers when they need bunch of soldiers in their army. This paper is to analyse the objectification of children during war using the reframed theory of Martha C. Nussbaum's Objectification and her concepts like Instrumentality, Denial of Autonomy, Inertness, ownership, Denial of Subjectivity.

Key Words: Objectification, Instrumentality, Inertness, ownership.

Introduction

If we are to teach real peace in this world,

And if we are to carry on a real war against war,

we shall have to begin with the children”

- Mahatma Gandhi

It an inspirational quotes of Gandhi on education. He emphasised on the importance of educating children and creating future leaders who can lead the society with humanity and true wisdom. Inversely, in reality and in history, there are many evidences of war that uses children as their soldiers by forbidding them from their studies. The school children were forced to recruit as combatants. The authorities used to entangle the children in war and its chaos and use them as their weapons, when they need bunch of troop for the hostility.

Martha Nussbaum is an American philosopher and the current Ernst Freund distinguished service professor of law and ethics at the University of Chicago, where she is jointly appointed in the law school and the philosophy department. She has a particular interest in ancient Greek, roman philosophy, political philosophy, existentialism, feminism and ethics including animal rights. Nussbaum is the author of number of books, including “The fragility of goodness, cultivating humanity: A classical defence of reform in liberal education, sex and social justice, Hiding from Humanity:

Disgust, shame and the law, *frontiers of Justice: Disability, nationality, species, membership etc.*, “Objectification” is an article written and published by Martha C. Nussbaum in a magazine called *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. In that article Nussbaum has argued that the topic of objectification is not only important to sexuality, which has been discussed at length, but to the Marxist view on capitalism and slavery. In social philosophy, objectification is the act of treating a person as an object or a thing. It is a part of dehumanization, the act of disavowing the humanity of others.

Martha Nussbaum has argued that “sexual objectification is a familiar concept. Once a relatively technical term in feminist theory, associate in particular with the work of Catherine Mackinnon and Andrew Dworkin, the word “objectification” has now by passed into many people’s daily lives. It is common to hear it used to criticize, advertisements, films and other representations and also to express scepticism about the attitudes and intension of one person to another, or of oneself to someone else. Generally it is used as a pejorative term, connoting a ways of speaking, thinking or socially objectionable usually not always, in the sexual realm”(250).

According to Nussbaum a person is objectified if one or more of the following properties are applied to them: Instrumentality, Denial of Autonomy, Inertness, Fungibility, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity.

This paper tries to probe Martha Nussbaum’s objectification theory in Alan Gratz Historical fiction and war novel *Grenade*, where school children are objectified as soldiers during Second World War. Alan Gratz is an American writer who lives in Tennessee. His works expresses his didactic teaching towards youngsters for their future life in the problematic society. He writes for young adults. Most of his novels set during a sudden destruction like war, natural hazard, famine economic and political instability. Most of his protagonist used to be teenagers who lost their ordinary life in a sudden destruction and yearns for their life and attains it with hope. His work portrays the survivalist spirit within his protagonist. Gratz wants to showcase the reality of the world to the young generation and also to guide them to overcome overwrought situations.

The novel *Granede* set during the Second World War in Japanese island Okinawa, where okinawan especially the school children has been treated as tools by the Japanese government to defeat American Army. The story revolves around two protagonists Hideki and Ray, the child soldiers of Japanese and American army respectively. Hideki is a middle school student, while Ray is almost same as in his age with Hideki. Both of them are objectified during the Second World War by the authorised respective governments.

War is an intense armed conflict between states, government, societies or parliamentary group such as mercenaries, insurgents and militias. In all ages war has been an important topic of analysis. In the later part of the 20th century, in the aftermath of the second world wars and in the shadow of nuclear, biological, chemical holocaust, more works are written on the subject than ever before. During the thirty years of war in Europe, the population of German states was reduced by about 30 percentage. The Swedish armies alone may have destroyed up to 2000 castles, 18000 villages and 1500 towns in Germany, that is one third of all German towns.

The effects of war are widely spread and can be long term or short term. Soldiers experience war differently than civilians. Although both suffer in terms of war, women and children suffer atrocities in particular. In the past decade, up to two million of those killed in armed conflicts. It has long lasting effects on a countries economy. Armed conflict has important indirect negative consequences on infrastructure, public health provision and social order. Another important consequence of war is the transformation of refugees.

According to the United Nations there are 15 million refugees worldwide who have had to leave their home due to conflicts or persecution. The war has taken away their home and their livelihood. The psychological effects too have an impact on the everyday lives of the survivors. Fear and insecurity is resulting from daily experiences of war.

“The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of the labours, the genuine of its scientists, the hope of its children” said by Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of United States and Supreme commander of allied forces during world war II. War affects children in all the ways it affects adults. First children are dependent on

the care, empathy and attention of adults who love them. Their attachments are frequently disrupted in terms of war, due to loss of parents. The child may be in Substitute care for him or her only slightly relatives or orphanage.

War affects children far more than adults. The children lose opportunity for education during war, children who are forced to move into refugees or displaced person camps, where they wait for years in miserable circumstances for normal life to resume, if it ever does. It is the impact of war, that the lives will never attain the before potential they had after the impact of war. The most horrible situation is recruiting children forcibly into army. Every child has a right to a normal childhood, the right to develop his or her human potential. Yet all too often in wartime, children are helpless witnesses of atrocities. They may themselves be imprisoned, wounded or killed or separated from their families in some other way as they are often forced to flee.

Forced recruitment of children into armed forces is often a means of terrorizing and blackmailing civilians. Children can be used for purposes other than direct participation in hostilities. They can be used as spies, messengers, domestic servants, sexual slaves etc., This is why the widely used term “Children Soldiers” is often regarded as being too restrictive. Whatever the circumstances, it is abusive to put the children at terrible risk. Children are enlisted as soldiers because they are easily manipulated, are not fully aware of the dangers and have undeveloped notions of right or wrong. Children associated with armed forces or armed groups will always suffer physically, psychologically and socially. Thousands of children are deprived of their liberty every year for their alleged participation in hostilities.

The novel talks about the two teenage soldiers who belong to opposite army, America and Japan. Nussbaums’ few concepts like instrumentality, Denial of autonomy, Inertness, ownership and denial of subjectivity are portraying the objectification of school children in the novel Grenade.

The story of the novel revolves around the war that is happening between America and Japan during the Second World War. Americans are trying to occupy one of the Japanese island called Okinawa. Catching Okinawa will surely help America to get power over Japan. Japanese has to fight against America. At the same time they never like to lose many of his soldiers in the Okinawa war. They planned to use Okinawan as their tools to fight against America. For that purpose they made many okinawanschool children as their soldiers. The protagonist Hideki is one of them. He and his friends are recruited into the army vociferously. Some of his friends are manipulated by the government to enter the army voluntarily. Most of them are attracted by the position of the colonel Sano, Lieutenant of the Japanese Imperial army. So they are all very quiet and sincere before him. In truth, they never know what the Japanese are doing to them and how cunningly they are operating them as their equipment.

Olara ottuni, a Uganda politician has said in one of his speech that, “Compelled to become the instruments of war, to kill and be killed, child soldiers are forced to give violent expression to the hatred of adults”. As the children are immature and easily manipulated, many were recruited into army. Colonel Sano keeps on manipulating them by the words against America and its brutality which convinces many children, but indirectly Colonel Sano is mutilating the life of the children. “Amercian devils, whose only purpose is to kill you and your families in the most brutal, merciless way possible”(6) these are the words of colonel Sano against Americans. When he also says “Then after you have killed as many as Americans as you can, you are to use the other grenade to kill yourself” (9). It is easy for them to order such children as they are young to understand fiendish notion of them.

Prior to the war, many Okinawan women along with their children have been shifted to mainland Japan to avoid attacks on them. Hideki as a middle school student is planned to send along with his mother and brother while his eldersister Kimiko was already caught by the Japanese army to serve the war zone as nurse. When they are about to climb over the ship, Hideki is compelled by the Japanese soldiers to stay in the island to join army as he is appeared to be sizable and suitable for horde. Hideki is recruited in Blood and Iron Student Corps. Not only children, but also all the okinawans even they are in good position in the society, some of them like, Hideki’s school teacher, their principal has been used by the Japanese army as their tools in the warfare.

“One grenade is for the American monsters coming to kill your family. You are to use the other grenade to kill yourself”(116). This is what the manifesto given to the school children who are all provided with two grenades to attack Americans. Japanese never consider them as the children who are serving the army or the government, but in fact, they consider every children as a grenade thrown out by them towards the Americans. The title of the novel “Grenade” itself is symbolizing them as human bombers not as human beings. Nussbaum’s concept of instrumentality is describing such kind of objectification of human beings.

All the okinawan people and the school children are used by the Japanese government as their human bomb or human grenade, sometimes as their shield which protects them from American’s attacks during war and sometimes, keep them as their hostages for negotiating the American army. In the beginning of the narration, Hideki and his other schoolmates are gathered before their school in an army uniform and was given two grenades each. They were keep on advised by the Lieutenant Colonel Sano to make themselves aware of the fact that they are simply there to fulfil the task of Japanese’s order. They are completely denied by the Japanese government to be accepted as human beings. Not only okinawan but also the American soldiers at times lose their acceptance as humans. Many of the American soldiers have been nicknamed after some of the instruments such as “Cornhusker”, “barbeque”etc., Though these names are used to make fun of some junior American soldiers by their seniors, the names are symbolizing that these soldiers are always undervalued and lowered than humankind.

On one occasion, Hideki is on his way to find his only hope his sister, Kimiho. In the middle of the wood he falls into a mud. Little later he notices his body is covered with maggots and he can feel its crawling. Hideki feels helpless and started to run nakedly amidst the cold night. That time, Hideki run into IJA Japanese Lieutenant who stays in a cave with a lot of Japanese Soldiers and many of okinawans has captured by the Japanese as hostages. He reached the cave where all the IJA Soldiers are halting. The IJA Lieutenant get him caught and gave him a uniform removed from a dead soldier. There he happened to see many Okinawan Hostages.

The Japanese Soldiers are preparing them like a shield to protect themselves from the enemies. There a young lady with her little baby. The IJA soldiers are trying to tie a bomb in her waist to send her before the army crew to get the sympathy of American Soldiers. But in reality they use her as a bomb to blast the American crew before they attack the Japanese. Hideki fights a lot to stop the foolish activity of the them, but all that went in vain. Hiideki understood that the Japanese Soldiers and their treatment towards Okinawan is monstrous and they, Okinawans are powerless to say or do anything. “But the price of the Okinawan life was far cheaper even than one man for ten of the enemy. Far cheaper than the life of one Japanese Soldier, that was for sure. And Hideki was tired of sacrificing people he cared about.” (208)

After finding his sister in a camp for serving injured soldiers, Hideki shocked to find the fact that all the children along with kimiho is going to be used as shield for Japanese army on the next day. “They are going to use the Okinawan children as human shields”(203). But hideki who become so bold and does not like to see the sufferings of his people helped them to escape from there along with his sister. Even after getting objectified some sorted out it well like Hidaki some became victim along in the cruelty.

Some other important ideas given by Martha Nussbaum are Inertness which means treating the person as lacking in agency or ctivity, Denial of autonomy implies that treating the person as lacking in autonomy or self determination and denial of Subjectivity means treating the person as though there is no need for concern for their experiences or feeling and ownership which means treating the person as though they can be owned, bought or sold. All of them are very inhuman and injustice given to one human being towards another. The Japanese who came to Okinawa in name of guarding their land started to take charge and create a government against okinawan people. They take authority over their properties, their land, their lifestyle and even of their identity. After their domination the okinawan are forbidden to speak in their native language, the school children were given Japanese army uniform, their homes and caves even their tombs which was their sacred place has Also been occupied by them.

Okinawa is a tiny island just a hundred and ten kilometres long and eleven kilometers wide. It was once an independent kingdom with its own language and religion. But Japan had taken over Okinawa when Hideki's grandparents were children. Now, as Okinawa is belonged to Japan, America was coming to attack the island.

At last, Okinawa becomes like a puppet in the hand of Japan. The teachers and students who are all wearing Japanese army is simply standing and watching their school getting blast by the bombs. Japanese in the name of saving their land is spoiling it. Their school principal who is the strong supporter of Okinawan emperor is standing near Lieutenant Colonel Sano of Japanese army. The emperor has already sold okinawan to the Japan.

Once Hideki wants to run away from the warfare and wanted to find shelter. He remembered his family cave where his forefathers are resting after death. He went there and found his wounded father unexpectedly. His father is deadly wounded . He really wanted to save his father from death. Because he knows that, his father is his only hope at the time. He never wants to lose his father. From his father he learns about the death of his mother and brother. Out of nowhere there arrived a Japanese soldier who threatens them with his gun. He ordered them to leave the place immediately. Hideki argued with him with the rights he has on the tomb of his forefathers. The soldier got never turned up. He almost ordered them as his own place. "This is my hiding place. Get out! This cave is for army personnel only!...You are not in real army. You are not even real Japanese! Get Out!"(92). That much authority was given to the Japanese over the Okinawan. Hideki wants to use his grenade to kill the authoritative Army man. But he knows well that it will also hurt both him and his father. He left the place along with his deadly wounded father. Even his ownership was snatched away from them. They left their only cave like a tramp. His father oto was died on the way of their escape. Before dying he made Hideki to promise about finding his sister.

The Jewish Refugee Hannah Arendt has mentioned in one of her essay "we refugees" that "We lost our home, which means the familiarity of life. We lost our occupation, the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of Gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings". As she said it is true. Taking power over the language will made people to loss their naturalness and the bondage between their life. Here in the novel, okinawan was forbidden to speak their native language. When Hideki decided to run to their ancestors tomb, he went there. Initially he was afraid to enter the cave. He thought that there some Japanese or any other American for shelter. Still he call inside the cave in his native language. It was his hope that he might found a person to share his true feelings. He knows well that if any Japanese inside to found him speaking Okinawan language he will be severely punished. "Japanese might overhear him and punish him for speaking his native language. When the Japanese had taken over Okinawa all those years ago, they'd made it illegal for the okinawans to speak their own language or practice their own religion"(72).

On his way to find his sister he has entered into a cave crowded with IJA Japanese army and okinawan hostages. They capture him with the heavy bag, which he carries from Ray after killing him. Japanese find cigarettes in them. And they enquire Hideki about that. One of the old women in the hostage tries to help Hideki from the enquiry but she speaks to them in Okinawan native language that arise the rage in one the Japanese soldier. He yelled at them as "you were told to speak only Japanese!... Anyone who doesn't speak Japanese is the enemy"(160). In all the means the Japanese wants to destroy Okinawan's identity, autonomy and self determination. On the whole, they desire to keep the Okinawan as their Cat's paw.

Cindy Sheehan is an American anti-war activist, whose son, was killed during Iraq war when he was in the American army. she said that "What our Children are dying for is to make their governments war machine rich". The government and the Authoritative are utilizing the people who are powerless and destitute to get the desideratum. John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is a historical novel which clearly portrays the difference between the child who belongs to powerful people and the child who is destitute. The novel makes it easy to understand the treatment towards the children who is impuissant. Similarly here in Grenade too the powerless okinawan has made by the Powerful Japanese government as their instrument for making their government more rich and more significant.

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