



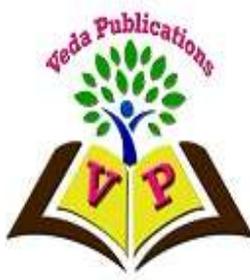
LOSS OF INOCENCE :THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN CHILDREN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT



War is related to the human life from the pre-historical time. And its havoc over the entire world is found during the First World War and the Second World War. Literature, as a mirror of society, portrays war and its calamity in its different branches. Books for children with such a literature have a negative impact on children. In this paper my objective is to analyze the war literature in children's literary books. I will point out the casualty of war on children's psychology, how they are losing innocence, how they are getting real experience before their maturity, and a few more issues. And my paper is concerned with child psychology, history of the Second World War— the recent trends in children literature. I want to mention the names of a few authors whose texts have been drawn for discussion in this paper - Ian Serriallier, Judith Kerr, Michelle Magorian and Robert Westall.

Keywords: *Children Psychology, Post Modernism, The Second World War, Refugee, Children In War.*

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INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of human history mankind are not only fighting against the natural disaster but they are getting involved in intergroup conflicts, whether it be between tribes, city-states, kingdoms, or nations. The impact of war-related stressors may occur as the direct result of physical and visual impact, media exposure, or through the various forms of interpersonal experiences — the wounding and killing of loved ones, malnutrition,

starvation, disease and emotional contagion, and social disruption and the loss of near and dear ones related experiences, routinized family, school and community life. All these things were found during the First World War and also in the Second World War. The Second World War which caused havoc on the human civilization started in 1939 and ended in 1945. The paper discusses how children's literature reflects the brutal reality of war.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AS REFLECTED IN FICTION

In 1933, with the support of traditional conservative nationalists, Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany and the Nazis gradually established a one - party state under which Jews, political opponents and other "undesirable" organizations were marginalized, brutally suppressed, eventually imprisoned and killed. Hitler upheld the party more socially and economically radical factions in the mid-1934 Night of the Long Knives and, after the death of President Hindenburg, political power was concentrated in his hands. The world war is generally said to have begun on 1 September 1939 with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and subsequent declarations of war on Germany by France and the United Kingdom. Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* is a semi-autobiographical story of a young Jewish girl and her family escaping the Nazis and the journey they experience. It is based upon the early life of the author whose Jewish father, well known for being a drama critic, journalist and screenwriter Alfred Kerr was wanted by the Nazis. Kerr's family also fled their home in Berlin via Switzerland to escape to Paris and then to England. She wrote the book when her own son was eight. The book gives a distinctive child's perspective on the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany and the experience of being a refugee, reflecting Kerr's positive feelings about her own experience. The story starts in Berlin, in March 1933, when nine-year-old Anna, finds out one morning that her father is missing. She and her brother, Max, discover that Papa thinks that Adolf Hitler might win the elections, and has fled to Prague. Because the family is of Jewish heritage, and Papa is also a well-known Jewish author, this is important. If Hitler wins the elections, Mama, Max and Anna will come to Papa in Switzerland later. If Hitler loses, then Papa will return home to Berlin. However the parents decide not to wait until after the elections and Mama and the children rushed into Switzerland in alarming secrecy. In another book the *Silver Sword* which is based upon real fact, although fictional names are given to a few of the places mentioned. It is written by Ian Serriallier. It starts with Joseph Balicki, the school headmaster of a Polish school in Warsaw, who was

arrested by the Gestapo in early 1940 and taken away to a prison camp. His school had been taken over by the Nazis after the invasion of Poland, and he was forced to teach lessons entirely in German. Pictures of Adolf Hitler had been put up all over the school, and during a lesson Joseph had turned one of these pictures around to look at the wall. Someone had reported this to the Nazis, and as a result he was taken from his house to the prison camp on a cold winter's night. He was in the prison for more than a year before escaping, after knocking out a guard who was bringing food to his cell and stealing the guard's uniform.

SEPARATION AND ADVENTURE

War results in a lot of people to become refugees away from their original place of residence. Often children get separated from their parents in the process for various reasons like their father going to serve in the army, death of parents in war, or just evacuation from an area as a part of war-time emergency. In England during the Second World War, children were often billeted to foster parents. The change in living standards whether for the better or worse was in many cases not welcome. Separation delinks the very first emotional attachments of a child.

The psychological effect of separation is different at different ages: 1) An infant less than 0.5 years old is dependent on the mother only for physiological needs. It is yet to recognize the parent. If they are provided the same, and their needs are tended to even after separation, they do not refuse it. 2) Towards the end of the 1st year, the mother becomes the instrument of satisfaction for the child, who rejoins her company and dislikes to be left alone. A separation at this time can make them unfriendly or withdrawn from the social world. Restlessness during sleep has been noticed in such cases. The child gradually accepts a mother substitute (if available) on the basis of physiological needs. 3) At the age of 2, a child is fond of its mother, becomes aware of the presence of other members in the family whom it often looks upon as others. Separation from mother at this stage can be very violent. The craving for its mother may over-ride all bodily sensations. Some refuse to eat and sleep, or be handled by strangers. They often cling to a



remembrance (like some toy) of the time when his/her mother was with her. In case of reunion with mother, the child often fails to recognize her more because of the disappointment caused by her and for leaving the child's longing for her unfulfilled. But the refusal to recognize is not consciously driven.⁴) At 3 years and onwards, the child generally starts identifying him/her self with the parent of the same sex. The acts that the child learns are dependent on reward and punishment. Often the child has feelings of jealousy or anger towards their parents, when punished. For anyone who offends them, they childishly wish that the person goes never to return. However a separation at this point results in confirmation of these negative sensations. The child gets frightened by their absence, and suffer from a deep sense of guilt. They act particularly good and obey all orders religiously wishing that their parents would return. In *Silver Sword*, after the capture of their house Ruth, Bronia, and Jan made their way to the Posen and eventually found Edek at a refugee feeding station; he was suffering from tuberculosis. Once the three siblings reunited, they travelled by train to Berlin, intent on finding their parents. They arrived in the city during May 1945, shortly after the end of the Second World War in Europe and the suicide of Adolf Hitler. They arrived at a refugee camp, but Jan soon went missing in pursuit of an escaped chimpanzee, which had managed to flee from the zoo. Jan and the chimpanzee became best friends. He also befriended a British army officer named Mark, who wrote a letter to his aunt about the chimpanzee and its antics. Jan eventually returned to the others, and along with Ruth he joins a temporary job. The children, intent on reaching the River Dunub, paddled along the Falkenberg River and overcame a series of hazards, including an encounter with a soldier who fired a few rounds at Ruth and Bronia. The final adventure, a crossing of Lake of Constancy, proved to be the most dangerous as a terrible storm whipped up and capsized their boat. Edek almost drowned, because he was too weak to swim, but Jan was able to save the Balicki children. Finally, the children were reunited with their parents and reintroduced Jan to their father.

WAR FEAR IN CHILDREN PSYCHOLOGY

Children develop a lot of misconceptions about war. Many of the words which we take for granted are not obvious for children. To many children, 'Home' is a place to which all children are determined to return. 'War' signifies the period of time for which children have to be separated from their parents. Words like 'army' 'navy' and 'air force' may mean strange countries to which their fathers go. When a child gets frightened during a war, it is generally fear induced from parents, mostly mother. They add air raids and alarm sirens to their list of primal fears like policemen, wild animals, or natural calamities like earthquake. In *When Hitler stole pink Rabbit* we find the evidence. The Nazis find out about Papa as he travels, and a price of one thousand marks is put on his head. This really scares Anna and she is afraid that it means that Papa will be put in a room with one thousand coins being dropped onto his head, suffocating him. She goes on believing this until Max tells her what it really means. When Papa soon comes back to collect them, a porter directed them to the wrong train, one that will send them back to Germany, where Papa would have been imprisoned by the Nazis. Fortunately, though, Anna notices the destination label just in time, and they manage to get their luggage back and onto the correct train to Paris.

PICTURE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the Second World War, there were many bombing and killing. And the real picture of those bombing is found in the book *Good Night Mr. Tom* by Michelle Magorian. Here we find that Tom, William and Zach then enjoy a holiday at the seaside village of Salmouth, where they stay in the house of a widow whose sons have been sent out to war. Zach then receives news that his father has been injured by a German bomb in London and he hurries home on the next train saying farewell to all his friends. Unfortunately this is the last time they see him. William later learns that Zach has been killed and is grief-stricken for some time, but his grief is later healed by a hermit artist who tells William about the loss of his own best friend.



LOSS OF INNOCENCE AND BRUTALITY IN CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

The young child lacks the cognitive capacities available to the adult. His/her theories are ego-centric. They are rarely able to talk about their traumatic experiences. Unable to transform their internal conflicts and feelings into words, they are expressed in repetitive re-enactments, intrusive visual images, specific fears aggressive and regressive activities, and other behavioral states. During the Second World War children who saw the war brutality lost their innocence. And there are many changes in their behavior. For example in the *Silver Sword*, we find Edek had fired shots at the retreating van in a bid to stop them from getting away. Ruth had admonished Edek for his folly and realised they had to escape, so the children climbed along the rooftops of the adjacent houses and watched from a distance as their house was blown up. Edek fell in with black market dealers, and regularly stole food and clothes for his sisters and all the other children living with them. Again we find Jan was stealing food from several American trains bringing supplies to the troops. Jan was caught and sentenced to a week's detention.

CHILDREN INVOLVED IN WAR

Criminal violence has its beginning in the abuse, neglect, loss of parents, and exposure to violence in early childhood resulting in disruptions in attachments. Those with disrupted attachments fail to reach pro-social maturity interpersonally, in affect regulation and self control, and in moral development. They may not understand human reciprocity. Relationships are superficial. They may have little or no empathy or remorse. To them the world is not safe and they must always be on the offensive in order to be safe. Children are not safe after they become separated from their parents. They are exposed to violence daily during times of open conflict and always have the fear of a new attack. The effect of this environment on everyone, especially young children can be psychologically devastating. In *Machine Gunners* by Robert Westall we find that during an attack by an Me 110 fighter, the children fire their gun at the plane. They miss but the plane is shot down. The pilot is killed by the rear gunner, Rudi Gerlath. He discovers the children's

hidden fortress and is promptly detained by the children, who take his pistol, even though their machine gun is damaged and inoperable. The children do not hand the German over to the authorities, but keep him prisoner at their fort. The children bribe the German with the offer of a boat if he will repair their machine gun. He agrees and mends it before being taken to the dock where he rows off. In another incident, on the next day it is realized that the children are missing, and so the Polish refugee soldiers are drafted in to look for them. The children, on hearing troops speak in a foreign language, open fire on them with the gun, believing they are a German invasion force. The children are soon overpowered, however, and forced to surrender. In the chaos, Clogger shoots and wounds the German with his own Luger Pistol. Why they are behaving thus ? The answer may be they need someone to take them in and take care of them.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the literature for children after the Second World War was no more what it was during the 20th century. Earlier the children's literature contained fairy tales, poems fictional stories, but after the Second World War it began to deal with real happenings, the brutality, the barbaric war, and the problems that the children faced in a war burst society. And by the children literature we can realize the perils of war is not only a destruction of the contemporary society but also a curse to the future generation. Not only the above mentioned literary books, but also there are many other books which reflect the impacts of war on children. The brutality of war and its effect on the children, in any case is not bliss to the human civilization. The result of the brutal war destroys the innocence of children. Many other present writers of the modern era have also written about this issue.

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