Critics Of The Nature Of War In Catch-22 And Full Metal Jacket

Intro

Wess Haubrich states “Satire is one of the most powerful weapons of speech in a free society. It stirs the collective consciousness against oppressive governments and laws, rulers, the rich and powerful, and moreover points a mirror at we ourselves as individuals.” Throughout Catch-22 and Full Metal Jacket, Joseph Heller and Stanley Kubrick respectively express there similar Juvenalian satirical views and exemplifies the devastating experiences experienced by the soldiers. Both Catch-22 and Full metal Jacket criticise the nature of war as it removes people from their natural mindset of good and evil, and turn violence and inhuman actions into the norm. The distinctively literary and visual techniques then, utilise satire and humour to communicate the madness of war.

Body 1

In Catch-22, Joseph Heller reveals the perversions of bureaucracy, powerful and the society at large. By manipulating the 'classic' war setting and the language of the novel Heller is able to depict the society as foreboding and morbid. The lives of Yossarian and the men in his squadron in Catch-22 are not determined by their own decisions but instead, by the decisions of the impersonal bureaucracy. Heller portrays the bureaucracy through the eyes of his protagonist, Yossarian, who realises that the bureaucratic control represented by his ambitious and powerful superior officers possess arbitrary command of his life. It shows how the individual soldier loses his uniqueness not as much from the battlefield like Full metal Jacket which is set in a war, but from the bureaucratic mentality. It incorporates satire, to exemplify the idiocy and folly of military institutions. The ‘dead man’ in Yossarian's tent, Mudd, is really the belongings of a KIA soldier who arrived to camp and was never properly checked in before dying in a mission. The absurd logos of ‘Mudd… never checked in properly, so he doesn't exist in the camp according to the official word by Yossarian’s superior, Sergeant Towser, 'Because he never even got here. Captain, please don't bring that up again.” This leaves Yossarian with the remnants of the dead man's life in his tent and nothing he can do with him. While this scene is very much comical in its situational irony, it is ludicrous and incredibly lamentable. The man has died, and the system is broken in such a way it cannot recognise his presence or his absence. The worlds Heller depict are not horrific in violence, but rather because of an impersonal and omnipotent bureaucracy that neither understands nor cares about them and the society.

Body 2

Full Metal Jacket exposes the loss of morality and vulnerability within the soldiers. By also manipulating the “classical” war setting like Catch-22 at the beginning of the movie, Kubrick satirical war movie set in the Vietnam War criticises the lack of humanity and the dehumanisation and vulnerability of the soldiers. Kubrick accentuates that the war has no morals with a point-of-view shot of a helicopter gunner, while the audience watches the gunner murder civilians outside the helicopter window. A POV shot from Joker’s perspective, “How can

you shoot women or children?” addressed by “Easy! You just don't lead 'em so much! - Ain’t war hell?” communicate to the audience a man so mad from the war and the loss of his morality that he finds shooting civilians justifiable because they may be the Viet-Cong. This is a disturbing scene for the audience and creates powerful satire a consideration of our own wars on terror. To further enhance this Kubrick utilises irony, in the form of a symbolic visual imagery between a peace badge and a helmet which reads “born to kill”, which advocates for the us that men and its society is complex and they need to choose between the good or the evil. When Joker explains to the General, I was trying to suggest something about the duality of man” reinforcing the choices they need to make. The general response draws on a team analogy, “why don’t you jump on the team and come on in for the big win?” the irony is that the bureaucracy, like in Catch-22, cares only for rules and results, not humanity. Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket in its absurdity conveys how war has a corrosive effect on every man's mental stability and their loss of moral compass.

Body 3

Both Catch-22 and Full metal Jacket interconnect the loss of individuality in each soldier. In the novel, the loss of individuality through the lives of the soldiers, the insanity of war and the idea of 'there is always a catch' in life is shown to a dramatic extent. In Catch-22, Yossarian must accept what seems to be a logical infallibility. This ‘catch’ causes individuals to lose there individuality by challenging there understanding and logic “… Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Ask… and he would be no longer crazy and would have to fly more missions.' The audience finds the circular logic inherent in the ‘Catch-22’, as a way to abuse and demoralise the soldiers into accepting their being sent into real peril based on a logical fallacy. As a parallel, in a scene of Full metal jacket, a mis-en-scene of Private Pyle’s suicide represents him as a killing machine. When he yells “This is my rifle. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must shoot him before he shoots me.”, within the scene the light and shadows symbolism of Pyle’s language and actions, which is a metaphor for a robot illustrates how Private Pyle has become a killing machine in the literal sense. All he knows is how to recite the Marine code, the training drill, and to kill. He has no morals anymore and ultimately kills himself. This is what brainwashing in the Vietnam war reduces individuals into. In this way, the director is able to portray their individuality destroyed by the army and them losing their individuality. Through these linkages we see how the loss of individuality is cause by oppressive leadership and how it causes the dehumanisation of each and every soldier.

Conclusion

“Satire is one of the most powerful weapons of speech in a free society. It stirs the collective consciousness against oppressive governments and laws, rulers, the rich and powerful, and moreover points a mirror at we ourselves as individuals”. Within Catch-22 and Full metal Jacket, both these Juvenalian satires express discontent for the oppressive power that the higher ranking people have over society, they cause individuals to lose their individuality and morality.