

Intro to Lit: My Thoughts

Sunday, April 3, 2016

Week 11

The readings this week all had to do with war. Each reading takes a different approach on how to tell a war story. Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est*, he focuses on telling the story in such a way that focuses on how surreal war is. Tim O'Brien's *How to Tell a True War Story* tries to get the reader to understand the dual realities in war. Both stories have similar feelings of getting the reader to feel how unreal war seems to those fighting it.

Owen's story is over World War I, being set in the world of trench warfare. The brief grim description of the men marching is the setup for a terrible chemical gas attack. But Owen sticks to the surreal and gives the reader the feel of how this terrible moment would seem. The point of view is not from someone outside the gas watching this person die, it's in the chemicals. An ocean of gas, meaning it seemed endless and deadly. To watch a comrade die to this oceanic ambush, drowning, but not on the chemicals, on his own blood as it fills his lungs as we learned in class. As if that's not horror enough there is the horror of taking this wagon full of dead and listening to the bodies gurgle with the blood, constant reminder of how terrible it will be even if death does find you. It would not be relief that the horror and constant fear of death is over, but the most horrific thing. Overall Owen hit the mark he set to tell a war story in all its 'glory'.

O'Brien's story has the same feel to it, but instead of surreal it focuses on how hard it is to tell a 'true' war story. He weaves a narrative that says a lot but tells less. It's a juxtaposition that stresses how confusing war is. How can one side be seen as good when both are committing atrocities on such a scale. This is just one of the types of reasoning's O'Brien uses. He makes the reader question reasoning's one after another to build up to the idea that there is no true war story. While also saying ever war story is true. It forces the reader to put a lot of thought into what O'Brien is trying to say about war.

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