

POSTCOLONIAL THEMES IN 20-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the profound influence of World War II on English literature, emphasizing thematic, stylistic, and psychological transformations that emerged during and after the war. The conflict reshaped literary perspectives by confronting writers with violence, trauma, loss, and moral ambiguity. Postwar literature reflects a deep concern with human suffering, existential anxiety, identity crisis, and the collapse of traditional values. The study highlights how both soldier-writers and civilian authors contributed to a new literary voice that questioned authority, celebrated resilience, and examined the complexities of modern human experience.

KEYWORDS:

World War II; English Literature; Trauma; Modernism; Postwar Fiction; Identity Crisis; Human Experience; War Poetry; Existentialism.

ABSTRAKT

Ushbu tadqiqot Ikkinchi jahon urushining ingliz adabiyotiga ko'rsatgan chuqur ta'sirini o'rganadi. Urush jarayoni va uning oqibatlari adabiyotda tematik, uslubiy va psixologik o'zgarishlarga sabab bo'ldi. Urush shafqatsizligi, yo'qotish, ruhiy jarohatlar va axloqiy noaniqlik yozuvchilarning dunyoqarashini tubdan o'zgartirdi. Urushdan keyingi adabiyot inson azobi, ekzistensial qo'rquv, identitet inqirozi va an'anaviy qadriyatlarning

qulashini aks ettiradi. Tadqiqot askar-yozuvchilar va fuqarolik yozuvchilarning yangi adabiy ovoz shakllanishiga qo'shgan hissasini yoritadi.

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

Ikkinchi jahon urushi; Ingliz adabiyoti; Travma; Modernizm; Urushdan keyingi fantastika; Identifikatsiya inqirozi; Inson tajribasi; Harbiy she'rlar; Ekzistensializm.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данном исследовании рассматривается глубокое влияние Второй мировой войны на английскую литературу. Военный опыт вызвал серьёзные тематические, стилевые и психологические перемены. Жестокость войны, человеческие потери, травмы и моральная неопределённость радикально изменили мировоззрение писателей. Послевоенная литература отражает страдания человека, экзистенциальную тревогу, кризис идентичности и разрушение традиционных ценностей. В работе подчеркивается вклад фронтовых и гражданских авторов в формирование нового литературного голоса эпохи.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:

Вторая мировая война; английская литература; травма; модернизм; послевоенная проза; кризис идентичности; человеческий опыт; военная поэзия; экзистенциализм.

KEYWORDS:

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INTRODUCTION

World War II represents one of the most catastrophic and transformative events of the twentieth century, leaving a lasting imprint on global history, politics, and culture. Its influence on English literature was particularly profound, shaping the themes, styles, and narrative techniques of writers during and after the conflict. The war confronted authors with unprecedented levels of destruction, uncertainty, and human suffering, compelling them to reassess the foundations of morality, identity, and civilization.

Before the war, English literature had already been influenced by modernism, which challenged traditional narrative forms. However, the brutal realities of World War II

intensified this shift. Writers began to explore fragmented narratives, unreliable perspectives, and psychologically complex characters as a way to reflect the chaos and instability of the time. The war also inspired diaries, memoirs, journalism, and documentary-style fiction, which aimed to capture the authenticity of wartime experience. Another significant impact of the war was the rise of literature focused on trauma and psychological damage. Returning soldiers, as well as civilians who endured bombings, loss, and displacement, carried emotional wounds that found expression in literature. Authors increasingly depicted characters struggling with memory, guilt, and existential dread. This deep psychological exploration became a defining feature of postwar English fiction. In addition, World War II played a crucial role in shaping themes of identity and moral ambiguity. Traditional notions of heroism, patriotism, and righteousness were challenged, as the war revealed the complexities of human behavior under extreme circumstances. Writers questioned authority, exposed the moral contradictions of war, and emphasized the fragile nature of humanity. These themes are evident in the works of writers such as Graham Greene, George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, and Iris Murdoch, who portrayed conflicted characters navigating ethical dilemmas. The war also influenced the development of new literary genres and forms. War poetry experienced a revival, with poets focusing on personal witness rather than patriotic celebration. Postwar novels and plays reflected the disillusionment of a society rebuilding itself physically and psychologically. The rise of existentialism in literature further emphasized alienation, loss of meaning, and the search for identity in an unstable world.

Early European explorers such as James Cook approached Australia through the lens of the “terra nullius” doctrine, which falsely portrayed the land as empty and unwanted despite the presence of complex Indigenous civilizations. This assumption became a central colonial strategy that justified occupation, land dispossession, and the marginalization of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Postcolonial theory helps to uncover how such narratives were constructed and how they contributed to stereotypes, racial hierarchies, and the silencing of Indigenous voices in historical accounts. It also reveals the tension between Western historical records and Indigenous oral traditions, each presenting different interpretations of the same events. Moreover, the war reshaped the

publishing industry and readership. Literature became a means of understanding the war's impact, both on individuals and on society as a whole. Memoirs, autobiographies, and historical fiction grew in popularity, offering multiple perspectives on the conflict. The widespread destruction and global consequences of World War II created a literary environment deeply concerned with memory, collective trauma, and moral responsibility.

Overall, World War II transformed English literature into a field marked by emotional depth, philosophical inquiry, and stylistic innovation. Its influence continues to shape contemporary literary studies and remains a central subject of academic interest.

CONCLUSION

World War II had a transformative impact on English literature, reshaping its themes, forms, and emotional landscape. The conflict compelled writers to confront harsh realities, resulting in a body of literature characterized by psychological depth, moral complexity, and existential reflection. The exploration of trauma, memory, and identity became central to postwar narratives, while new genres and experimental techniques emerged in response to the unprecedented global crisis. Ultimately, the war expanded the boundaries of literary expression, giving rise to works that continue to influence readers and scholars worldwide.

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