Slow Death

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**Introduction**

There are certain moments of uncertainty that can make one feel terrible and this horrible emotion can lead to depression and anxiety. When an individual feels that way they fight back this dreadful sentiment by embracing the notion of optimism. This bitter reality is what the recent work by Laurent Berlant argues about. According to Berlant, there are times when attachment with optimism can be quite cruel. Cruel Optimism by Laurent Berlant discusses how in everyday life a person can opt for adjustment and weaken themselves in the process. People mostly do that to survive the radical contingency that is caused by the neoliberal catastrophe. This optimism is to create a new mean of relation or habit to this world. Berlant’s study of the generic convention and aesthetic forms is in regards to post-Cold War American and Europe. Cruel Optimism investigates ways in which impactful relations can arbitrate the national culture and citizenship of a country. Berlant sheds lights on the notion of “the good life” and how this fantasy is becoming more far-fetched by the day. With the help of an introduction and seven chapters, complete clarity is being given on the concept of cruel optimism. This paper will reflect on the book “Cruel Optimism by Laurent Berlant,” specifically the concept of “slow death” represented by the author in chapter three of the book.

**Discussion**

There is no doubt in the fact that “Cruel Optimism” does not end with hope and nor raw pessimism. In fact, Berlant uses this opportunity to shed light on how the political era is in continuous jeopardy. To conclude everything Berlant says that the present environment that everyone is living in is utterly cruel. Cruel optimism can be described as desiring something that may hamper one from thriving. Berlant’s work forms a substantial foundation based on the study of performance and desire. Chapter three of Cruel Optimism “slow death” helps further establish and strengthen Berlant’s foundational point. Slow death is the notion of feeling worn out because of the activity of reproducing life. Chapter three is invested in the concept of biopolitics, given the fact that the book constantly raises Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault. By doing so the author unloads arguments on agency to make the statement that sovereignty is basically a concept that is nothing but a fantasy and this notion is repeatedly mistaken as an objective state. Further, reflection is also done on the fact that often times we comprehend this model as something that is purebred via our knowledge of the sovereign state.

Berlant gives the notion of “slow death” as a method that can aid in conceiving how capitalism avoids agency and moreover, preserves non-living by the formation of subjects that are too caught up to re-produce life. Berlant tries to explain that the concept of neoliberal is not a one-stop simple process, there is no concept of commanding or stopping anything so an individual can make do by catching up. The notion of slow death makes an individual feel uneasy and puts them on edge. There are many awful emotions like anxiety and depression associated with the concept of slow death. So, to compensate, people embrace the idea of optimism. Attaching oneself with something that represents or is optimistic can help a person cope with various negative emotions that might be building up. However, in accordance with Berlant, this acceptance is causing a fair share of issues in the contemporary world.

There is a certain lag and panic associated with slow death which is evident in all of us. A good example to explain this notion would be obesity. There are many individuals who eat to make themselves feel better, but obesity is the dire consequence that they face. Eating might give an individual a sense of control and people might feel that they have immense regulation on their life, however, in reality, things are much different. Obesity can become a cruel result of this kind of an attachment.

The concepts that are explored and given by Berlant help in adding a significant amount of value to the modern psychological and social thoughts. This is being done by giving prominence to the role of slow death and its part in sustaining personal agency in the daily routine. Berlant is trying to explain this concept by explaining the notion of obesity. The issue of obesity not only has an impact on a person’s health but it also pertains an ethico-political condition. Obesity is not the only concept that is being highlighted by Berlant, the notion of coolness, detachment, distraction, alienation and depression are also being discussed as an issue in every society which can push an individual towards an environment of slow death. The concept of masculinity is also a cruel optimism as people talk about manning up but no one can truly describe the notion. Further, it is a dire fact that not acting a certain way makes one feel fearful or shameful in accordance with this concept1.

Berlant’s work is very effective as it is portraying the citizens of the contemporary world as survivalists. Her theory showcases that we mold ourselves in a manner that we make the use of optimism to take down the capitalist annihilation of life. Cruel intentions very cleverly talks about an individual’s physical and mental health to present the gateways of individual tolerance and also social resistance. Berlant constantly puts emphasis on the fact that every citizen fights and endures to survive on a daily basis and how this fact has led to people embracing cruel optimism. However, there are hardly any deliberations on how people suffer and are in this position because of the government. This issue has caused the loss of great creativity and people have made peace with a very mechanical life.

The burden of responsibility caused by various institutes has changed the way people function forever. Capitalism and Neoliberalism have caused great issues in the contemporary world. People make do with what they have and the environment of slow death forms inevitability. The government has played a great part in making cruel optimism a serious problem of today’s world. The world has progressed in a manner that no one even bats a lash on these aspects which are causing a significant issue in various communities. People have come to the notion that life is all about living until one eventually dies.

**Conclusion**

For a common man who works, the concept of life and death where the regular schedule functions and progresses in regards to the intricate procedure of law, state control and globalization, has become old news. Everyone is aware of it and more importantly accustomed to it. People are more focused on making use of the time that they do not have to reproduce and function in their mechanical life. In fact, this way of living is normalized to the point that no one questions in it. It is a vicious circle that is just not stopping. People are have been conditioned to believe in false hope by society. The work that is given by Berlant gives valuable stance to the social sciences and the humanities. Berland has put in great effort by making use of abundant cultural and historical resources to give the audience a perfect image of the troublesome critique of the life of every other person who is living in a post-war society.

End Notes

1. Allan JA. Masculinity as cruel optimism. *NORMA*. 2018;13(3-4):175-190.