Whiteman Poetry

Taylor Chiasson

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# Introduction

Herman Melville’s poems give an idea of self- centralism and persuasions. His beliefs and ideas have remained too narrow when it comes to talking or writing about a certain phenomenon. In his writings, he pursues a personal struggle, which he believes had made himself- appealing and anxious. In his different masterpieces, he had taken, a self- centric approach to create an image for many of his followers, who still enjoy reading his poetry. Another aspect of Melville’s poetry is the use of imaginations and mythologies, to open up the concepts of religion over his readers. By introducing Darwin’ theory of evolution, by referring to the world as a machine, and by introducing God as a watchmaker, Melville has attempted to ease the understanding of religion, for those who find it inquisitive. From his writings, it is very observable, that Melville was prognosticator, forecaster and above all an unmatchable writer. The following paragraphs will analyze Melville’s use of mythology, religion and historical referencing in his poems.

# Discussion

In his poem the Portent, Melville introduces, the image of a body, who is hanging from a beam (Melville 1924, 47). This imagery of a body and its shadow speaks about many different things happening in the slave society of that time. Melville has portrayed that body, as the body of a slave, which has faced the ruthlessness of the society. After, when he is hanged, there are different dark societal traits, which becomes apparent under the shadow of his dead body. The hanging body is posing a dark image of the society, which so many around do not see, Melville has attempted to explore anguish among the slave population of that time. When this slave was hanged, his hood pulled over his head, which Melville believes is that darkness, which has taken over the causes of other abolitionists. This mythological relation of the body, his hood, the shadow and the society at large suggests that Melville had tried to blame the society at large for not showing unity against slavery.

In his other poem, the battle for Mississippi, Melville has used the metaphor of religion for describing a war situation, he experienced in his life (Melville 1963, 75). As the Battle of Mississippi is famous for winning without conflict in the battlefield, and even without fighting a single bullet, similar is the case of Moses who made the Hebrew slaves free, without a conflict. These metaphoric and religious connotations suggest that the world must give a chance to some non- violent conflict. Many believe that since Melville was a poet from the times, when there was so bloodshed, therefore, he attempted to draw the attention of his readers to solving conflicts in a peaceful manner. Melville ideas about Moses response to slaves remains no different from Admiral David’s strategy of winning the Mississippi river fight without fighting.

Melville poem ‘the released rebel prisoner’ is also another literary illustration of human feelings. Melville exposes different feelings about escape and emissions (Melville, Parker, and Tanselle 2009, 36). Melville believes that the human body is also a spirit, which cannot be caged. The human body remains true to its spirit, and there comes a time when this affiliation of body and human spirit becomes successful in breaking the barriers, imposed artificially. This poem of Melville is a complete illustration of human feelings, which he believe become elusive when they are made to feel a certain situation for too long. He has presented his rage against prisoning someone. From mentioning of rebels, he also attempts to justify, another human trait which is anger and annoyance. Throughout his poetry, he has attempted to depict human as not an erroneous creature, yet more pleasing and helping.

# Conclusion

There had been many poets in American history who have influenced the human perception about nature and the worldly environment. But there are few who have literally changed this perception by referring to human’s ability to interpret things and Melville’s writing depicts that he was one among such influential writers of that time.

# References:

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