

A Voice of Political Ethos in America: An Analysis of the theme of ' Grief and Trauma' in Walt Whitman's " O Captain! My Captain!"

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DOI: 10.48047/IJFANS/V10/I2/9

Abstract:

The concept of "Grief and Trauma" in Walt Whitman's renowned poem "O Captain! My Captain!" and its relevance as a voice of political ethos in America are examined in this study(Dumitrica, 290). The goal of this research is to dive into Whitman's reasons for portraying loss and suffering, the problems he attempts to solve, the techniques he utilizes, and the influence on readers. This research provides insight on how Whitman's lyrical representation of grief and trauma works as a commentary on the socio-political milieu of his day by viewing the poem through the prism of political ethos (Walter and Kenneth 2023).The study opens by emphasizing the significance of comprehending the historical background around the production of "O Captain! My Captain!" as well as Whitman's personal connection to the events he laments. It then goes on to examine the underlying sorrow and trauma issues that Whitman is attempting to address in the poem, particularly the aftermath of the American Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln's assassination(Greenwood, 87). This analysis' technique is based on literary theory, namely the examination of sorrow and trauma in literature. The research reveals the deep-rooted influence of loss and tragedy on both the person and the nation as a whole by evaluating the poem's structure, language, and imagery, as well as the emotions portrayed. The poem is both a vehicle for national grieving and a call to action, calling Americans to confront their common pain and work towards healing and togetherness(Haddad, 78). This research investigates Whitman's exquisite study of sadness and tragedy captures the mood of a society suffering from war's ravages and the loss of a revered leader. Whitman presents a striking reflection on the human capacity to survive and heal via his lyrical language, while emphasizing the necessity for political and cultural reform in the face of tremendous loss

Key words: *O Captain! My Captain!, Political Ethos, America, Grief and Trauma, War.*

Introduction:

Walt Whitman's poetry about grieving explores a wide variety of emotions, from personal loss to social and national catastrophe. Through his expressive and evocative language, he reveals the profound impact of these events on the human psyche and collective awareness (Dumitrica, 334). The poetry serves as a vehicle for communal grief, providing comfort and catharsis to individuals who have suffered great loss and sorrow. "O Captain! My Captain!" shows how literature may influence political ethos and engage readers in deep conversation through its capability to arouse strong emotions and foster critical thinking. The writing of Walt Whitman is evidence of the literature's continuing value as a vehicle for societal reflection, bringing to light current concerns and inspiring readers to take an active role in community development. By evaluating the poem's subject topics, the research aims to provide insight on the difficult relationship between individual and societal grief. It analyses how Whitman's depiction of loss acts as a catalyst for social and political thought, encouraging union, reform, and a reevaluation of national ideals in the face of adversity.

The poem is a call to action, encouraging people to consider the significance of national catastrophes and their consequences. Whitman's representation of loss and suffering is not passive; rather, it instills a feeling of urgency and acknowledges that community grieving may lead to social transformation (Haddad, 115). Readers are challenged to evaluate the societal institutions, attitudes, and injustices that contribute to the sense of loss and suffering through engaging with the poetry. Whitman's comments ring true well beyond the backdrop of the American Civil War and President Lincoln's killing. They transcend time and space, prompting people to consider the resilience and power that may arise from deep grief. The poem inspires readers to channel their emotions into useful action, so fostering social transformation and cultural contemplation (Greenwood, 91). This study adds to our comprehension of Whitman's remarkable insights into the human condition. His ability to depict the intricacies of loss and pain while still giving solace and hope demonstrates his lasting value as a poet whose words continue to reverberate and encourage thought.

The complexity of sorrow and its effects on people and society are revealed by looking at "Grief and Trauma" in Walt Whitman's poem "O Captain! My Captain!" as a representative of American political ethos (Dumitrica, 301). The research emphasizes Whitman's function as a socially conscious poet by thoroughly analyzing the poem's topic aspects, linguistic methods, and emotional depth. It demonstrates his ability to manage the

intricacies of loss while also using his lyrical voice to encourage collective introspection, societal reform, and a revitalized feeling of togetherness and progress. Whitman's ongoing significance stems from his ability to stir thinking, encourage action, and provide consolation amid times of great national tragedy (Pournara, 2023). The research advances our knowledge of Whitman's artistic vision and his continuing significance as a socially conscious and politically relevant poet. The research exposes Whitman's unique insights into the human experience by analyzing the vast range of issues in his literary corpus, including the investigation of loss and its enormous consequences. It also sheds light on the transformative power of literature as a platform for political commentary and cultural introspection.

The captain represents Abraham Lincoln, and the ship represents the United States. The poem conveys the nation's hunger for a leader who steered them through the turbulent seas of the Civil War but regrettably did not survive to see the results of their combined work through the metaphor of a ship's trip and victorious return (Greenwood, 90). Whitman's use of repetition, such as the refrain "O Captain! My Captain!" and the poem's rhythmic structure, heightens the emotional effect and emphasizes the speaker's desire and anguish. Whitman's depiction of grieving stretches beyond personal grief to a larger cultural context. The poem becomes a symbol of his unshakeable belief in democracy's strength and the possibilities for societal improvement (Haddad, 89). Whitman draws into the collective consciousness of the nation by addressing President Abraham Lincoln's death and the aftermath of the American Civil War, emphasizing the shared feeling of grief and the need for healing and development.

The poem honor's accomplishments while lamenting the terrible loss felt during a difficult moment in history. It inspires readers to contemplate the ramifications of national tragedies and to strive for unity, reform, and development (Dumitrica, 411). Whitman's excellent use of imagery and the structure of the poem elicit opposing emotions and show poetry's transforming potential in eliciting thought and stimulating social consideration. This contrast emphasizes the contrasting feelings felt during times of bereavement, when optimism and despair, resilience and sadness coexist (Whitman, 33). The poem's form, with its juxtaposition of exultation and sadness, is a strong portrayal of the complicated emotions that accompany loss. Whitman's portrayal of collective grief encourages readers to consider the effects of national disasters and to seek unity, reform, and development. "O Captain! My Captain!" shows poetry's ongoing ability to elicit strong emotions and encourage societal contemplation. It emphasizes the need of collaborative thought, resilience, and striving for a better tomorrow. The poem's call to action and focus on resilience and strength as a result of

immense grief underscores the ability of literature to inspire communal transformation and contribute to societal change (Xia, 201). President Abraham Lincoln is represented by the captain character, a famous and adored leader whose death elicits feelings of personal connection, loyalty, and sadness. The poem opens with the following lines :

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead (1-8)*

The extract from the above lines explains that the victory 'in the form of ' destination ' has ' cost' them the Captain who is no more alive to guide them .The lines express , feeling both joy and sorrow as the outcome but the sight of the captain's dead corpse is disheartening

The ' cold and dead' corpse is a saddest thing to witness , post victory and the poem proceeds as below :

*O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.(9-16)*

The extract from the stanza reflects the fact that the 'sadness' and the ' individual sadness' stand out against the general upbeat mood when it is realized that the pleadings are in vain after seeing the captain's dead body.

The poem acknowledges the continuing grief and profound feeling of loss while celebrating the successes and sacrifices of a turbulent historical moment (Pournara, 2023). Through conflicting imagery such as the triumphant ship and the deceased captain, Whitman brilliantly depicts the bittersweet sense of accomplishment despite terrible sadness. Whitman also uses metaphorical language to emphasize the greater meaning of loss and tragedy (Greenwood, 92). The passage of the ship becomes a symbol of the nation's struggle and collective trauma throughout the Civil War (Adams, 51). The speaker's request that the captain "rise up and hear the bells" expresses the speaker's yearning for resurrection and healing from the terrible grief and trauma he has suffered. Whitman depicts the inner upheaval and lasting impact of these experiences with vivid imagery, metaphorical language, and dramatic conversations (Haddad, 78). His work is a vehicle for communal grieving, developing a greater understanding of the issue of "Grief and Trauma" and its continuing importance in the context of American history and political ethos.

The guiding principles, values, and character of a political group or society are referred to as its ethos. It includes the agreed ideas, moral framework, and goals that influence political acts and choices. The collective views towards governance, justice, social welfare, and the general functioning of a political system are reflected in political ethos. It has an impact on policy formulation, political debate, and public opinion (Pournara, 2023). A strong political ethos frequently generates a feeling of solidarity, civic involvement, and collective responsibility, affecting the direction of a country's political and social evolution. In literature, dialogues are talks or exchanges between characters or speakers within a work (Burleigh, 28). They are used to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, and they frequently provide insight into the relationships, conflicts, or issues covered in the work. Dialogues play an important part in establishing the speaker's personal relationship to the captain and their expression of grief in "O Captain! My Captain!" Readers receive access to the speaker's inner thoughts and feelings through these dialogues, improving their knowledge of the issue of "Grief and Trauma" and its influence on the tale (Xia, 161). As the last stanza goes as below :

*My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!*

*But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead .(17-24)*

In this poignant stanza, the speaker's fervent appeal for the deceased captain to get up and take part in the praise and honors paid to him in this moving verse of Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" has a profound emotional effect. The imperative verbs "rise up" and "hear" help to emphasize how urgent the situation is. The bugle's "trilling" and the flag being "flung" symbolically honor the captain by conveying a feeling of respect. The striking images of flowers, wreaths, and beaches packed with happy crowds convey the people's profound appreciation and thanks. The speaker's sincere approach, "Captain! Dear father!" highlights their close relationship and love for the captain. The speaker hopes that the captain's passing is nothing more than a dream in the last words, which show disbelief and desire. The passage beautifully expresses the speaker's respect as well as his or her deep sorrow at the demise of a revered leader.

Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" uses explanation, conversation, and references to dive into the issue of "Grief and Trauma." Whitman emphasizes on the emotional effect of sorrow and tragedy using these literary strategies, portraying the group experience and investigating the societal repercussions. Whitman grounds his analysis of sorrow and pain within a larger sociopolitical context by constructing these allusions to historical persons and events. Dialogues within the poem, such as the speaker's request for the captain to "rise up and hear the bells," also add to the examination of loss and trauma (Clerico, 112). These conversations express the speaker's emotional connection and need for the captain's presence, conveying the nation's personal and national feeling of loss. Whitman emphasizes the topics of loss and trauma, as well as their influence on individual and social well-being, in these talks. Whitman's use of allusions enhances the content of the poem and connects with readers (Dumitrica, 278). For example, the poem has parallels to the American Civil War and President Lincoln's assassination, offering historical and cultural context that deepens comprehension of the loss and suffering depicted (Kennedy, 48). Whitman pulls into his readers' collective memory and shared experiences by addressing these key events, building a stronger connection and emotional resonance.

We can dive into the poem's significant meaning and influence by exploring the topic of "Grief and Trauma" in "O Captain! My Captain!" through the keywords of importance and

emphasis (Greenwood, 88). Readers can discover the poem's deeper ramifications and resonance as a voice of political ethos in America by investigating its relevance within its historical and cultural context. Readers may also acquire a better understanding of the emotional depth and force of the poem's representation of loss and pain by analyzing the emphasis placed on key parts within the poem (Haddad, 91). These keywords serve as a prism through which readers may connect with the poem on a deeper level, untangling its layers of meaning and comprehending the intricacies of its emphasis on essential topics and emotions. We can understand the poem's relevance in portraying the collective feelings and experiences of a nation recuperating from the Civil War and grieving the loss of President Abraham Lincoln by delving into its representation of grief and pain (Hartzler, 11). Examining the poem's relevance gives for a better understanding of its influence on America's political ethos, stressing its position as a powerful statement of national grief and a catalyst for introspection and healing.

Walt Whitman uses a variety of literary strategies, including vivid imagery, repetition, and metaphors, to emphasise the depth and relevance of loss and pain in the tale. Readers may acquire a better grasp of these aspects' significant influence and how they construct the political ethos represented in the poem by analysing the emphasis put on them. It entails investigating the metaphors, symbolism, and images employed by the poet to portray loss and pain, as well as their meaning within the American political culture. Explanation enables readers to explore further into the poem's depth and complexity, obtaining a better grasp of the interplay between sorrow, pain, and the larger political backdrop (Pournara, 2023). "Oh, Captain!" The conversation, "My Captain!" (Horgan, 84), becomes a strong instrument for articulating the speaker's feelings, reflections, and relationships relating to sorrow and trauma. It lets readers to experience the speaker's personal path of dealing with loss and seeking consolation or purpose. The conversations in the poem provide light on the emotional consequences of these encounters within the political ethos of America by providing insights into individual experiences and social attitudes regarding loss and pain (Xia, 59).

By going into the important keywords, our study can delve into the tremendous impact and an analytical investigation of Whitman's poem to shed light on its themes and the connection to America's socio-political setting (Dumitrica, 361). The social and political setting or framework in which individuals and societies exist is referred to as the sociopolitical milieu. It includes the cultural, economic, and political influences on their experiences, attitudes, and views. The topic of the poem and its portrayal of the nation's

collective grief and pain must be understood in the context of Whitman's period, notably in the aftermath of the American Civil War and Lincoln's killing. The shared experience of sadness and sorrow within a group or culture is referred to as communal grieving. Communal grieving investigates how Whitman's representation of loss and suffering works as a medium for collective mourning and contemplation, connecting Americans in their common anguish and emphasizing the need of unity and healing (Walter and Kenneth 2023). A plea or pushing for people or society to take certain acts or measures in response to a specific crisis or circumstance is referred to as a call to action. In this perspective, the call to action in Whitman's poem "O Captain! My Captain!" enjoins Americans to confront their grief, work towards healing, and campaign for political and cultural transformation in the face of enormous loss and tragedy.

Relevance in this research investigates how Whitman's representation of loss and suffering in "O Captain! My Captain!" links to the socio-political context of his time, as well as its continuing relevance in comprehending and treating communal pain and the need for societal reform (Haddad, 56). The use of descriptive language and analysis to go further into the ideas and topics covered in the poetry is referred to as explanation in the context of the research paper (Horgan, 56). It entails offering insights, analyses, and clarifications to help the reader grasp the poem's meaning and its significance to the theme of sorrow and suffering as a political ethos voice. Dialogues are exchanges or talks between characters or speakers in a literary work (Greenwood, 83). The dialogues in "O Captain! My Captain!" relate to the lines or portions in the poem in which the speaker approaches the captain and conveys their feelings, ideas, and wishes. These talks add to the examination of sorrow and trauma by revealing the speaker's personal relationship to the captain and their loss, as well as emphasizing the nation's collective mourning (Xia, 165). We can acquire a better grasp of the poem's analysis of sorrow and pain as a voice of political ethos in America by exploring these themes.

Conclusion

The poem serves as both a national lament and a call to action. Whitman asks Americans to address their shared pain, work towards healing, and seek political and cultural progress in the midst of enormous loss (Pournara, 2023). It emphasizes the significance of communal grief, emphasizing the necessity for unity and transformation in the aftermath of major national disasters. Whitman masterfully engages readers in a discourse about the ramifications of loss and the obligation to navigate through misfortune by conjuring the

image of the captain, who represents Lincoln. The poetry becomes a vehicle for catharsis and introspection, encouraging people to confront their sadness while also working towards a brighter future. Whitman's superb use of poetic methods connects strongly with readers via its study of loss and suffering within the historical setting of the Civil War and Lincoln's killing (Haddad, 46). In the midst of significant problems, the poem not only serves as a tremendous platform for national grieving, but it also calls for togetherness, healing, and revolutionary action. Its lasting influence stems from its capacity to evoke empathy, stimulate collective contemplation, and motivate constructive change in the face of hardship.

We have seen how Whitman's lyrical expression of loss and pain serves as a reflection on the socio-political context of his day by investigating the poem's significance as a voice of political ethos (Dumitrica, 281). The poem relates to the American people's common experiences and feelings, provoking reflection, cultural introspection, and a demand for societal reform. We have gained a better grasp of the poem's significance and continuous relevance in American history by exploring important ideas such as relevance, sociopolitical environment, collective sorrow, and the call to action. As a whole, "O Captain! My Captain!" exemplifies Whitman's artistic vision as well as his ongoing significance as a socially conscious and politically vital poet. It is a strong reminder of the human potential to endure and heal, while also emphasizing the significance of dealing with loss and suffering via political and cultural change.

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