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CHAPTER 34

THE POST CULTURAL COGNITION AND FRAGILE CIVILIZATION IN DENIS JOHNSON'S *FISKADORO*

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Introduction

This paper demonstrates the post cultural cognition and fragility of civilization reflected in the novel *Fiskadoro* from the civilized background, social subjects, and reasons why the civilization by destroyed, respectively. The novel follows a group of survivors living in the aftermath of nuclear war. It is mostly like experimental science fiction with a number of different cultural and literary influences. The post cultural elements deal with the effects and impacts of nuclear war and the cognition about the fragile civilization. It resembles an anthropologist's report on a primitive society. From the ashes of war, people want to create their new lives and find the way from their complex connections with both history and the present. Johnson depicts the dominant theme that civilization is fragile. Among the ruins, America's mainland as considered as a place destroyed by nuclear war. *Fiskadoro* uses an apocalyptic background to recreate the new humanity from the old traits. The bonds of Twicetown from the mainland United States by quickly frayed when a nuclear incident separated a Florida Island. The insistent grip of myths is an additional subject, both from old people and marsh people's stories and customs. The people of Twicetown are technically quarantined, somewhat the rest of America abandoned by the nuclear accident. However, the possible way of life is entirely a matter of their responsibility to continue by self-reliance. The people from the small island were severely constrained their own opportunities. Johnson associates with a strict gender division of labor society which largely reverted to pre-industrial, social and economic patterns. The flashback scenes are more interesting than the present-day scenes in the story by lacking in terms of general consensus among literary critics and readers. In particular, the new post-apocalypse America as a melting pot of cultures by the back story of Mr. Cheung and his grandmother frame. Americans of various ethnic backgrounds try to form the American dream as envisioned the new nation in the Florida Keys to their forefathers.

The Nuclear Fear and Death Dust

The novel shows the cultural cognition of the nuclear fear and death dust caused by nuclear war. The cultural cognition meant that the knowledge about culture and how its values shape public risk perceptions and related policy beliefs. Cultural cognition refers to the inclination of individuals to be conventional beliefs about uncertain matters of truth to ideals that define their cultural identities. In the beginning of the twentieth century, many felt that the humanity to profusion not only of material goods but of brotherhood and wisdom by science. And just as human life begins with a union of man and woman, so to move matter toward rebirth, the adepts aimed to bring about a marriage of “male” and “female” chemical substances. At the time of war, there was solid information about actual nuclear warfare. Most people filled it in with the myths that had come into being long before the first bomb burst. Usually, a fraction of the public paid scant attention to world news, but a poll reported that 98 percent of all Americans had heard about atomic bombs. During the first few years, people did not fear anything specific or immediate. Since the public realization, that at some point in the foreseeable future, no city on earth would be safe by struck many people right from the first news. This is a new experience to the people to hear about many dangerous hints about bomb blasting in the war. The atomic fear still remained in their minds. In the end, civil defense agencies spread images of nuclear disaster more efficiently than even the atomic scientists had done. The demands of survival in our evolutionary past have given power to memories of terrifying events. “My name Fiskadoro,” the boy said, “from over the Army?” (Johnson, 2003) Fiskadoro, a teenage boy, is a central figure in the novel. His story based on many stories about the hopelessness of life that focus on a coming of age into a whole new way of life.

Social and individual regeneration is a major theme in this novel. Physiological embedding is strong and immediate for the emotion of fear, much more so than for other emotions such as shame, lust, or even happiness. “I am a cultural entity. To be a cultural entity is not unique. What is unique about me is that I know about it” (Johnson, 2003). Mayor style had been out of keeping with contemporary passions and beliefs. The one other emotion that has such a strong effect is disgust. Like fear, disgust is a bodily state that in, a few seconds, can imprint the brain for a lifetime. Around the world, people were coming to realize that civil defense could never guarantee their safety any more than international controls could, or spy hunts, or soldiers with anti-aircraft cannon. But such insecurity was intolerable. “The White Dot rushed in utter silence up against his sight and exploded with unbelievable brilliance, the All White, the Ever White, the Ultimate White of the Nucleus, the Atomic Bomb” (Johnson, 2003). A solution had to be founded. Many ideas that became central to the debate over nuclear weapons in later decades got a trial run during the 1930s. For example, the “deterrent”: a nation should develop bomber fleets and poison gas so that its enemies would fear to start a war. Science-fiction stories from the 1920s onward applied the same idea to atomic bombs. As a result of the war, the unimaginable loss held at that time. The effects and impacts of the war are mainly influenced by this novel.

Fragile Civilization

Fragile civilization is a leading theme in this novel. The weakness of present society is mainly distressing because of future threats, which will stress our civilization very harshly. So they need much knowledge and also unity to get safely through the difficulties of the future. Civilization has become more and more complex, and it has become increasingly fragile to disasters. At the time of war, people face lots of problems in personal, social, political, and also economically they are down. "As the black man helped him across the sandy parkinglot, Cheung thought, I'm from the other age-a formerlife-that's why I remember the Atomic Bomb...He hadread about the condition called epilepsy and was afraid itcame from radiation"(Johnson, 2003). The other major character Cheung describes his former life. It is a memory belonging to a ghost. The electricity should fail for a very long period whenever the power cuts or transportation failures due to the effects of war. It is very clear that without electricity, the complex society would stop to function. The country is dependent on the high efficiency of modern agriculture because the population of the world is now so large. People are also very dependent on the stability of the economic system for their survival.Economic collapse is another threat that will have to face in the future. The complex construction of human civilization is far too precious to be risked by a nuclear war. Every individual from various backgrounds affected personally and economically by the effects and impacts of war. By working together, we must now ensure that it is handed on the whole to the future generation. The aftermath of the nuclear war, civilization has been built up using a worldwide replacement of ideas and inventions. It is constructing by the success of many antique cultures. It is essential in need for sharing scientific and technological knowledge. From the part of nature, the power of science is derived by an enormous concentration of attention and resources. Here science is considered as a cooperative not competitive. It should be a memorial put together by many thousands of hands, each totaling a stone to the cairn. This is true not only of scientific knowledge but also of every aspect of our culture, history, art, and writing, as well as the skills that construct day by day substance ahead which our lives depend. For this cause, civilization is very supportive of the development of culture. The cultural inheritance is not only immensely valuable but also so that no individual understands all of it. It is not impossible to neither construct the new culture by a single hand nor, do the vast majority of people work together to attain the goal.

Conclusion

Fiskadoro is a prominently original haunting cautionary story with seeking meaning and aesthetic beauty in a blasted world from the threat of nuclear disaster. Two themes that are mostly interrelated by the novel, one represents civilization, and another one represents nuclear war. As a result, the first part is defeated by the latter one, and the civilization of the country has been destroyed. The aftermath of the war, people from various backgrounds, is trying hard to rebuild their dead society from the wastes of war, but they are stuck in the past.Johnson portrays the optimistic vision of a possible future from the major characters of the novel. Up to here, the story is based on historical fact, but the rest becomes increasingly like a dream. The people from the world of destruction keep their eyes open to witness the upcoming of a new civilization.