

DISTRESS OF DISPLACEMENT IN THE SELECT POEMS OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

R. RAMESH

PhD Research Scholar (Ext), Department of English, Annamalai University.

Dr. S. AYYAPPA RAJA

Associate Professor of English, Department of English, Annamalai University.

Abstract

William Carlos Williams is an eminent American poet and he has focused upon various themes of life in his poetry. He is a keen observer of the happening of the world. This study aims at analysis of his poems "Broadway" and "Dedication for a Plot of Ground" so as to bring out the distress experienced by two women due to the displacement.

Keywords: Distress, Displacement, Language, Alienation and Trauma

William Carlos Williams is an eminent American poet and he deals with various themes in his poetry. He has employed the diverse aspects of nature to connect his emotions in his art. He has plenty of materials and put them in his poems conveniently as he is close to the society. His medical profession gives much about the existing social problems in his surroundings. His observation about them is the key of his artistic presentation. He has employed the objective and subjective features in his creative art. He has glorified the land of his birth for its natural landscape and abundant beauty. This paper explores the distress of two women caused by displacement in his poems namely "Broadway" and "Dedication for a Plot of Ground." In "Broadway," the poet depicts the real account of a woman, known to him who is a French expatriate, a Baroness belonging to a noble family. He portrays skillfully the unfortunate life of the French woman, the white blond with pity, who has suffered from her deserted life in the migrated land, the USA. She becomes a quarrelsome one and steals materials in opportune moments while shopping and later she is imprisoned for the crime. The displacement of her life from Europe to the USA has the adversity and she suffers from the sense of alienation without proper companions and relatives. Emily Dickinson Welcome is another migrant woman from England and she has endured the alienation and pathetic condition. She is one among the common folk, none but Williams' own loveable grandma and whose sufferings are interspersed in the poem "Dedication for a Plot of Ground." Williams' grandmother, husbandless in London once, has reached the shore of the United States in storm, but she maintains calm. She encounters everything steadily and marries an American second time. She wisely brings up her children as well. She has undergone distress similar to that of the Baroness, by putting hard efforts, she has overcome her difficulties. The ostentatious attitude of the Baroness goes worse in the seclusion in the alien land as she does not have anyone to alleviate her miseries.

William Carlos Williams is a highly regarded American poet, novelist, essayist, writer of short stories who writes about many aspects of life in his works, such as emotional, social. He was born in 1883, Rutherford, New Jersey, the United States of America for the parents of European descent. He did his school education both in Europe as well as in the US and medicine at University of Pennsylvania. Basically, he is a physician, a pediatrician who writes more about children and woman.

It is the diaspora, one of the themes that the writers are more concerned with their literary works all over the world since migration is inevitable in terms of survival. The authors concerned are also the migrants who empathize with other people of the same kind. For example, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul who speak about identity crisis of Indians in their works. William Carlos Williams was born in America but his parental origin is Europe, his mother line is Spain and father's is of England. Since America is the land full of migrants where one can come to know all sorts of issues such as sentimental, alienation, dislocation, economical, losing of properties in their own land and leading the life without the financial background and so on. Migrating from one's own land is poignant and it pricks on incessantly for the entire life of a person. Materialistically, it seems pleasant to have journey and settle in some one's location of the earth, but it disturbs oneself as well as others in the alien land. On the other hand, the native is really natural, comfortable, economical and always peaceful.

Migration happens always necessarily in the earth. Human life is geographically rotational for livelihood or situational on account of miseries in the existing place. Under both conditions, the dislocation takes place. Though financially they are well off in the alien land, their longing to the root is painful that disturbs them very much. This is what happens in the case of the author's own grandmother Emily Dickinson Welcome, whose account is depicted well in the poem, "Dedication for a Plot of Ground." If there is no assurance for the financial stability, life becomes difficult one and it forces a person to move away. This is what occurs in the life of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, the French expatriate, the Baroness as depicted in the poem "Broadway."

It is almost impossible for a person to detach himself of herself from the country of birth and nativity. The French woman mentioned in the poem is a baroness in her country. She might have settled in France itself, ostentatiously she has reached the USA, but her life style makes her unable to cope with in the new land. She struggles to meet both ends of life pathetically. She steals wherever she goes and is imprisoned for this crime. She is a known woman to William Carlos Williams unfortunately. In one of her arrests, she seeks the help from him for bail and he has done it. After taking her out from the police custody, he takes her to a restaurant for a meal. Unexpectedly, she attacks him physically in full vigour in a fit of rage, expressing her anger at him. She has no one loyally to support her. First, her extravagant lifestyle leads her to an unenlightened state and the alien land aggravates the wretchedness further. The poet remarks the Baroness and feels pain about her state of life. He says: "it was then she struck --- from behind,/ In midair, as with the edge of a great wing!/ And instantly down the mists of my eyes...." (1-3). The Baroness attacks Williams in a fit of rage as she believes that he is not fit to save her from the desolation caused by spouseless state. She committed larceny frequently

and often conducts herself rudely. Williams patronizes her in trouble and he has taken her out in bail. Though Williams helps her in crisis, she is angry about him. She is frustrated and out of control. Wherever she moves she involves in controversies with other people.

Paul Mariani, the biographer of William Carlos Williams observes about the Baroness in **William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked:**

Then Williams gave her another two hundred dollars and she went, living for a while with a German newspaper boy in depression-racked Berlin and, when she began to deteriorate physically, she moved with some Frenchman into Paris tenement. There, on December 14, 1927, the French boyfriend left her sleeping, turned on all the gas cocks on the kitchen stove, closed the door, and left her to die. (201)

Paul Mariani clearly presents the promiscuous relationships of the French Baroness who has been suffering from alienation. She wants to drive away it with the help of her partners. Unfortunately, in the absence of emotional fulfillment, all her relationships end in failure.

The life of the Baroness ends miserably like a pauper's one in the foreign soil. Her disturbance dooms her to the destruction and she died miserably to no body to care for her. Never in her life has she realized her mistakes to set right her path. Her attitude of parading her royal blood that is establishing herself the Baroness has no way helped her to lead a peaceful life in the host country. Her days go worse in the seclusion in the alien territory as she has no one to patronize her in difficulties especially the kith and kin or childhood friends. In the absence of relatives and friends, terribly, a sense of alienation creeps up in her mind that leads to the seclusion. It causes deviation from the right path of life and she never gets comfort and consolation from anyone in the alien land.

Another woman of different kind is portrayed in the poem entitled "Dedication for a Plot of Ground" in which the poet pictures his own paternal grandmother's personal life. She has been from England on whom the poet has great admiration and respect. Emily Dickinson Welcome is the grandma who has cherished Williams more in his childhood. His father is the first son of his grandmother.

Emily Dickinson Welcome belongs to England and married there. Unfortunately, she has lost her husband and departed from England with her five year old son to New York. These details are artistically presented by the poet. He says:

This plot of ground facing the waters of this inlet is dedicated to the living presence of

Emily Dickinson Welcome who was born in England; married; lost her husband and with her five year old son sailed for New York in a two-master; was drive to the Azores. (1-9)

Her journey from her country of birth to the USA is not a smooth one. She experiences hardships in crossing the water of Atlantic Ocean. She faces stormy weather. The migration causes her trauma and mental agony.

Emily Dickinson Welcome has borne the bitterness of alienation. She is a common folk, whose sufferings are interspersed in the poem "Dedication for a Plot of Ground". Williams'

grandmother is also spouseless in London once, has reached the shore of the United States in storm, but she is calm and encounters everything steadily and she marries an American second time wisely brings up her children well. She has experienced the sufferings similar to the Baroness. On the contrary, she takes hard efforts and has overcome the difficulties. She is portrayed decently by the poet, though she suffers. Her pain is sentimental and she has the longing for the roots in England. She has the only comfort that is the language English. Though the language employed in England and the U.S.A is English, the settlers come from England always long for the country of their birth. Language similarity may bring comfort to them but longing for the roots is very much conspicuous in them.

The grandma of the poet has migrated to the USA and she does not have any problem to speak the language like people from other countries who have struggled to speak English language. She speaks better English than a French, Italian, Sicilian, and so on. At the same time, she never forgets the country of her birth especially the land, home, in which she was born. Being a writer Williams accepts the culture of other countries and he does not have any qualms in accommodating various features of other countries. Williams' mother who has come from Spain has the strong attachment towards her country of birth. Williams and his brother Ed have their part of the education in France and Williams' children to learn the art of drawing in Paris. His mother, Elena too has learnt drawing in Paris.

All the family members have made attempt to adopt their lifestyle to suite the alien soil. Williams has expressed the reservation about the broken English spoken by the settlers. They struggle to speak English properly in the USA. The language crisis occurs for Europeans too in the USA. In "Sicilian Emigrant's Song," he speaks about the pronunciation, and syntax which have been used improperly in America by the Sicilians. Sicilian is a sample of others. The language disparity exists everywhere in the world and it causes alienation on the part of the settlers. The faltering language employed by the Sicilian migrant is recorded by the poet in the poem and he presents his song:

O -eh—lee La- la!

Donna! Donna!

Blue is the sky of Palermo;

Blue is the little bay. (1-4)

The migrant could not use the proper English expression here and it is vividly presented by the poet. The dislocation causes distress to the expatriates of different destinations.

Paul Mariani, the biographer of Williams Carlos Williams said about the issue in **A New World Naked**: "The way the Irish and Poles and Italian each spoke their own version of the common language: American English. . . . He could still hear in his mind's ear Italians speaking in Milan and Rome and Naples, and he remembered Sicilians in the streets of Palermo" (119).

Europeans have discovered the new land, America and migrated to the land in proportion. The new land or the target land where one arrives with the expectation may fulfill his or her objectives and sometimes render to a great failure. The net result is a loss of peace and the

luxury remains in compromising it. Human birth is geographically associated. Life seems to be artificial in the foreign land. The migrants are affluent and they lead a lavish life, availing all facilities such as medical, security, by the government perfectly but they lack something very important. It may be termed as the sense of belonging. It is revealed through the analysis of the select poems of William Carlos Williams.

References

1. Berry Wendell, the Poetry of William Carlos Williams of Rutherford, the United States: Counterpoint Berkeley, 1934.
2. Mariani, Paul, William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked, San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 1990.
3. Moran Joe, First You Write a Sentence. The Elements of Reading, Writing... and Life. Penguin Books, Penguin Random House, UK, London.
4. Preminger Alex and Brogan T.V.F., the New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, Princeton University Press (1993), Princeton, New Jersey.
5. Preminger Alex and T.V.F. Brogan, the New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1993.
6. Williams Carlos William, I Wanted To Write A Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 8th Avenue, New York 10011.
7. Williams Carlos William, the Autobiography of William Carlos Williams, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 8th Avenue, New York 10011.
8. Williams Carlos William, The Collected Earlier Poems of William Carlos Williams, The United States: New Direction Books, 1951.
9. Williams Carlos William, The Collected Later Poems of William Carlos Williams, The United States: New Direction Books, 1950.
10. Williams Carlos William, William Carlos Williams Poems, The United States: Poemhunter.com – The World's Poetry Archive, 2004.