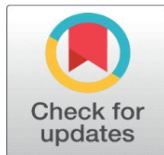
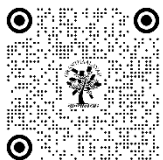


TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURE AND FRATERNITY IN BRUCE MASON'S THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER

Dr. Raeshma Godsen ¹

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of English, Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abisekappatti, Tirunelveli, 627 012, Tamilnadu, India



Corresponding Author

Dr Raeshma Godsen

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.1903](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.1903)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

Bruce Mason, the notable playwright, critic, journalist and fiction writer has centered his writings on the cultural landscape of his country New Zealand. The writings of Bruce Mason reveal his love towards his country, the change of culture and its adverse effects. The real picture of Great Depression era of New Zealand and its impact on the common lives are shown in Bruce Mason's classic play *The End of the Golden Weather*. The rift between the commoners and the ruling class are visibly shown in this play. This paper endeavours the sufferings and agony faced by the common people of New Zealand after the Great depression. This paper further aims to analyse the adoption of European culture and the impact of westernization in the lives of common people.

Keywords: Westernization, Culture, Depression, Ruling Class, Common People

The Great Depression happened in New Zealand during 1930's shattered the economic stability of the country. The Great Depression opened with the wall crash stock market collapse in 1929. Exports and imports in trade got restricted and the prices of the commodities rose high. Majority of the people became unemployed and the decline in the price of wool and dairy products brought pain and fear in people. This traumatic experience of loss and search of better livelihood made the natives to move out of their country. The farmers of the country fell under heavy debts and they even could not gain a minimum amount of profit by selling their commodities.

Bruce Edward George Mason popularly known as Bruce Mason's solo play *The End of the Golden Weather* sets the depression period of New Zealand as its background. The play focusses on an unnamed narrator who as a young man reminiscence his childhood days in his own fictional town Te Parenga: "I invite you to join me in a voyage into the past, to that territory of the heart we call childhood" (11). Bruce Mason describes Te Parenga as a cultural bound united country filled with brotherhood and love through the description of the characters like Sergeant Robinson, Rev. Thirle, Robbie and the narrator's family. Bruce Mason uses the narrator as his mouth piece to describe the communal bonding

of his own country New Zealand and its transformation after the Great Depression: "This is Te Parenga: my heritage, my world" (32).

The play was made into a film in 1991 by Ian Mune with the same title 'The End of the Golden Weather'. The play opens up with the narrator's reminiscence of his lovely childhood days in Te Parenga. The narrator narrates the events as a young man and at the same time the childhood days of the narrator is presented on the same stage as a twelve-year-old boy; hence so the stage shares the narrator in two different age groups. Through the description of the incidents happening around Te Parenga Bruce Mason directly throws light on the cultural clashes and the social conflicts of the depression era.

The play is divided as four parts: 'Sunday at TeParenga', 'The Night of Riots', 'Christmas at Te Parenga' and 'The Made Man'. In 'Sunday at Te Parenga' the author points out the influence of western culture in the country. He mentions the change in the conduct of women as a result of westernization with reference to two young girls Miss Sybil Brett and Miss Effie Brett who lives in Massey street. The impact of westernization influenced the personal lives of the people in New Zealand directly and indirectly. One of the direct influence was on the dressing style. The narrator comments on the change of the dressing style of women through the description of the dressing style of Effie Brett: " Barefooted, huge and rock-faced, dressed in a long calico shift untethered at the waist, she looks as if she is about to be baptised in some outlandish cult" (36).

The narrator also recalls the incident of these two girls fought in their home after consuming liquor: "Miss Effie leaned out of the window and screamed: "She drinks, that woman: she drinks!" Then Miss Sybil appeared briefly, wrenched Miss Effie away, the sound of a sharp slap and fierce yelling" (36). The narrator mentions that this incident had a deepen impact on his mother. The cultural shock had a very bad impact on his mother and he states that his mother was upset on seeing this and never had a good remark about them though they were close to their family.

The narrator comments that the westernization had not affected only the country but it made a severe attack on the personal lives. People living in Te Parenga are found to be under the adopted culture and to showcase themselves in the societal class they dress up and behave as influenced by the other culture. The narrator explains the change of the culture with these words.

A new fashion has recently reached Te Parenga. For the first time, men have begun to appear on the beach in shorts and are no longer encased from neck to upper thigh ... Again and again I recall scenes like this: 'Aw, giddy, Bill. Aw, not so bad. Heat gets yer. Gets all mucky, under me helmet.... What's that? Gubberment? Well, whaddya expect with them jokers down in Wellington ... He lumbers off, muttering: 'Think this is a nudiest colony, a something. (39)

The trauma of depression era its effect on common people and its impact on the life of children is revealed in 'The Night of Riots'. The narrator laments on the ignorance he encountered without understanding the riots between the commoners and the ruling class. The narrator secretly moves to the Queen Street and observes the events that takes place. He finds a mob of people getting ready to attack the police officers. Theses common mob are the set of people who were highly affected by the Great Depression. When their basic requests were not accepted by the ruling class they stood against them and protests against the favour for their rights. "At the junction of two roads, there was an overhead light and it shone down on about twenty men gathered there, the light on their heads turning their eyes into holes, sharply outlining the cheekbones, deeply scoring the loose folds of crepy necks" (47). The protest turned into riots which results in the rise and fall of the stones between the commoners and the policemen.

There was a shuffling, then a sudden concerted move. The stones clattered to the road and the grey-faced, eyeless men passed out of the light, silent, beaten, their spirit as motley and incoherent as their shuffling walk. The policeman sat on his horse motionless, the light falling on his helmet. His face showed neither pain nor pleasure, neither scorn nor pity. Then he put his heels into his horse's flanks – I shrank as he shot past my hidingplace and the gallops declined to a faint, clinking patter in the dark. (49)

The narrator's secret encounter of the riot changed his attitude towards the society. The narrator expresses his concern for his society stating that it was that day he understood that there are people in the society who are still struggling for a single penny and a slice of bread. He realizes that he was polished in the name of childhood by his own family and was

not allowed to understand the societal class distinctions and the frustrations of the people. He realizes that the country is filled with the common factors like "Greed, Authority, Pride and Law" (49). The bitter understanding of the harsh realities of his society brought out a question on his own life. The narrator announces that: "That night marked an end: the end of the golden weather" (49).

Dylan Taylor in his article "Riots, Strikes, and Radical Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand" explains about the historical depression strikes and riots happened in 1932: The ensuing riot traversed the length of Queen Street. Naval troops with fixed bayonets quelled the unrest the following day. Then, on 10 May in Wellington protestors assembled to contest hastily passed legislation granting police greater powers for dispersing riots. Shortly thereafter a riot broke out, leaving a trail of broken glass and looted stores stretching along Lambton Quay and up Willis and Manners streets" (88).

As a refusal of the unemployment the mob stormed into a grocery store. Further the riots of the mob continued with the protest of ten percent salary cut off.: People started throwing bottles at the stage and soon there were bottles everywhere, smashing on the concrete of Aotea Square, all around us. It rained bottles. Crowds surged down Queen Street, breaking windows and looting shops. Later we caught the bus home and the Police stopped the bus, got on and arrested some people with stolen stuff. (qtd. in Mitchell 130) Bruce Mason has brilliantly connected the reality of the country with his imagination through the fictional town Te Parenga. The author has strongly pointed out the cultural transformation and loss of humanity among people. The author underlines the impact of the depression with the statement that Love yourself but not others with these depression incidents.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

WORKS CITED

Mason, Bruce. *The End of the Golden Weather*. Vitoria University Press, 1961.

Taylor, Dylan. "Riots, Strikes, and Radical Politicsin Aotearoa New Zealand." *Counterfutures*, June 2019, pp. 74-115,

Tony Mitchell. "One Black Friday: Another Look at The Queen Street Riot." *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies*, vol. 13, 2012, pp. 130-51.