

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEMINGWAY'S HEROES IN HIS NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Ernest Hemingway is admittedly, one of the most important writers of American fiction, in the twentieth century. The present work, intends to make a comprehensive study of "The Hemingway Hero", who resembles each other and share many common traits. Many of his heroes are drawn from his own life experiences, and it was an autobiography. The Hemingway hero is a man who would never completely recover from his wounds, though he may learn to overcome some of his troubles and learn to live with some. The present paper will help us to understand better, about Hemingway's Heroes.

KEYWORDS: American fiction, Hemingway Hero, life experiences, Hemingway

INTRODUCTION

Hemingway Hero in his Various Characters

The Hemingway hero's, shown as suffering from some wound or scar. It is not just physical, but psychological as well. It is because; Hemingway was obsessed with the problem of learning to live with these scars. Jack Barnes, in the Sun also Rises suffers from a severe war wound that has made him impotent. But his wound went deeper than the fetish. He is emotionally important too, and more so since the expatriate society he lived in suffered from moral aimlessness. Again in 'A Farewell to arms, Henry is wounded in his legs during the war. His physical wound has emotional parallel. Later the horrors that imposed upon him force him to make a separate peace and desert the army and here he goes a step as Catherine dies leaving him alone. In 'To Have and Have Not, its hero, Harry Morgan, Physically wounded is the sense that he has only one arm, because economically wounded due to the separation and a society that allows no allowances. All his struggle through illegal and unlawful means come to sought and as he himself is arrested, he realizes that all is future; one man cannot fight against the forces and ever emerge victorious. Then, in 'For Whom the Bell Tolls, Robert Jordan the protagonist is again a wounded man. He suffers from emotional scars left by his father's death, which committed suicide and thereby failed to endure life with courage. Along with this emotional wound that he carries, he later suffers a physical wound as in the attempt to solve this he joins the liberals in the Spanish Civil War and is severely wounded in his legs, and because of it lies down to cover the escape of the other guerrillas knowing that he cannot escape. And lastly in the novel 'Across the River and into the Trees, the protagonist is again a scarred veteran of both the wars. He also suffers from the scars left by a broken marriage and a dying body. The novel shows how he attempts to expiate his wounds in a love affair with a very young mistress. These themes or shall we say the similarities are anticipated by the wound that Nick Adam is affected by and only by an understanding of the psychic wound and its implication can the readers understand the two different sections of the short story Big Two Hearted River, as also the fishing trip that Nick goes to and with which the volume in our time ends. It is as though he has come out into the water to heal is wounded. The account of the fishing trip serves another purpose. He understands that in order to overcome the scars he received; he shall need time and encourage,

faith and endurance. But he also believes and understands that one day he shall surely overcome his problems.

Hemingway's Identity for his Heros

Hemingway created another recurring figure, which has come to be known as the 'code hero'. This was a necessary outcome of Hemingway's need for a figure to bind the wounds of the Hemingway hero. This figure, referred to as the code hero is in sharp contrast from the Hemingway hero. His function is to balance the deficiencies in the hero and if the position or stance that he has taken is wrong, to correct them. He has been given the term 'code hero' because he represents that code according to which the hero should live. If the hero adheres to his code, then he will be able to live in the world of violence, misery and disorder without discomfort and with success. He can tackle the problems of the world that he has been introduced to and live in it with success. The code hero is therefore an exemplification of certain principles that the hero has to follow. He offers the following code of honour, courage, endurance etc. It enables him to bear the tensions and pain that life imposes on man. These qualities make him a man; stand him in good stead in his battle against life which is usually a losing battle. It enables him to live life as Hemingway prefers "with grace under pressure". The Hemingway code is therefore of great significance in the study of the Hemingway hero.

The protagonist of *The Old Man and the Sea*, the old Cuban fisherman, Santiago is the first example of the Code Hero. He is an old man, who has spent eighty four luckless days without catching any fish and yet he persists. The idea that he shows is that man may grow old and be down on his luck but he cannot be defeated. He may persist and even in defeat score a victory. Santiago catches a huge marlin after struggling for three days and two nights, and then sharks attack the myelin. He struggles against the sharks, but is left with the skeleton of the marlin. Even then he doesn't give up and bring in the skeleton and plans for the next day. His behaviour while losing to the sharks that of honor, courage and endurance are what counts and is a demonstration of how one should behave in the losing battle that is life.

The Sun Also Rises, in this novel, the code hero is not physically presented, but the Hemingway hero is and he understands the code. The hero Jack Barnes shows all the typical characteristics of the Hemingway hero. He is also wounded as a consequence of the war. Only the wound is moved from the spine where Nick was hit in the genitals. Jack Barnes being rendered impotent due to a war wound has literal as well as symbolic meanings. His impotence does not in any way detract from his being a hero. He is still very much a hero. Similarities can be seen in that he cannot sleep at night when his mind begins to think and he cries all night long. He is also an expatriate, alienated from society and living in Paris with other expatriates and forming a dissolute, aimless group who are all in one way or the other victims. They are the "lost generation". In this novel, the "code" is not as yet highly developed and yet Jacks knows what the code is all about so does Romero. But Robert Cohn doesn't and neither does he understand that there are things that have to be properly done while there are still others that need not be properly carried out.

'*A Farewell to Arms* 'In this novel, both the Hemingway and the code hero are put up for comparison and contrast. Frederic Henry is the hero. He wounds during the war almost precisely where Hemingway himself was wounded during the war. He also shows the other symptoms of the hero. He cannot sleep here at night with his thought and he cannot stop thinking. Again he has nightmares when he sleeps. He also runs away from organized society in his desertion of the army and later his escape with Catherine. On the other hand stands the priest as the code here. He stands for stoic endurance and courage. He defines what true love means and stands for peace, a land where religious love is sanctioned. He is a man who draws comfort from sacred love and in the first one to point out how the peace and beauty mountains to

Henry.

Death in the Afternoon is a work of about bullfighting. Hemingway wrote it on the bases of his actual experiences in Spain and his observation of bullfighting. This is clearly a work of non-fiction. The subject here is death and bullfighter is a good example of the code-hero. In his confrontation with death and here a very violent death, his courage and dignity shows him to be high priest of death the ceremonial or ritual out the fight, the clash with the bull. The code is personified in the manner in which he shows grace under pressure.

Green Hills of Africa, a work of non-fiction based on his experiences of big-game hunting in Africa, the subject is death, death of men, horses and big game. Again the hero is a man confronting death and in his quest for big game has made a 'separate piece' and has cut himself away from ordering society and having alienated himself from nature and have experiences which are rather superficial.

The protagonist of To Have and Have Not, Harry Morgan is presented more as a Code hero than as a Hemingway hero. Harry Morgan was a man hard hit by the economic depression in the 1930s. He is rendered helpless to find work and so he cannot support his wife and children through honest labour. He is therefore forced to take to crime and money through illegal means which pores to be his undoing. He is forced to murder when his own life is placed in danger and ultimately is arrested for the crime. In the end, however, he learns the lesson that in this hostile world one man is not enough. One man cannot fight and hope to win. This novel marks the end of the long exits that saw its beginning in the 'separate peace' that Nick Adams made. It also marks the end of the ideological separation the Hemingway has made from the world. Thus, here, Hemingway, who had alienated himself for an isolated existence finds that man has no chance alone. It was probably the Civil war in Spain that made Hemingway release this code.

The Fifth Column is a full length play again dealing with the Spanish Civil war. Hemingway in this play praises the loyalist with whom he was full of sympathy. In this play the protagonist, Phillip, is immediately recognizable as a Hemingway hero. Phillip is similarly afflicted with thoughts and his memories cause him sleepless nights and as with the Hemingway heroes, he was nightmares at night. He cannot stop thinking and unknown to his wife; he has fully committed himself to the loyalist quest for freedom and democracy in Spain. He is therefore in every sense a Hemingway hero. The only point of difference is that he has now come a long way from the earlier heroes like Frederic Henry whom he shares similarities with but who had decided that such patriotism was obscene and abstract and believed rather in the concrete names of places, rivers, streets which to him had more dignity.

The theme of this novel 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' are a continuation of the theme in To Have and Have Not, that a man has no chance alone against the world. Here, the statement is "no man is an island, entire of it", whereas in the earlier novel, 'One man alone isn't got any chance the protagonist, Robert Jordan again symbolizes both the hero and the Code hero. The novel chronicles these days in his life. He has been sent on a mission, to blow up a bridge, to impede the movement of the Fascist during the Spanish Civil War. He is successful, but he severely wounds in his legs and he chooses to stay back and allow his companions to escape rather than going along with them and restricting their movement. He is sure to die and Jordan fully understands this, but not flinches. He has, however, come to see the wisdom of such a sacrifice and the book ends without any bitterness. The hero is still the wounded man. But he has learnt about life and how to live and function in spite of his wounds. His behaviour is commendable. The manner in which he dies proves that life is well worth struggling for. His victory in having done his job well and, to die, to sacrifice is well worth of it, if there is cause

enough.

In the novel *Across the River and into the Trees*, the protagonist Colonel Richard Cantwell is again a Hemingway Hero. He has all the old scars, particularly those he received as Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*. He is also again a wounded man who has alienated himself from society and lived a life of human pleasures with his young mistress.

The Hemingway hero is usually a realist and a pragmatist. He believes in the fact that thought is a necessary guide for action. In order to prove the truth or something he relies on the truth of his own experience. Abstract things are meaningless and insignificant until and unless it is centralized in a particular situation. The Hemingway hero believes in empirical evidence to test the validity of any truth and by observing any practical consequence. For example Jack Barnes, in *The Sun Also Rises* learns about life. "Perhaps as you went along, you did learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about". Therefore the hero is a man interested in the facts of consequences.

The Hemingway hero may be, in many senses regarded as an anti-intellectual and a behaviour anarchist on his insistence that any truth must be empirically proven and that he must learn this truth on his own, his own experiences, regardless of the accumulated experience of another man. He has to learn independent of others. This may seem an absurdity, as no man can be all by himself, but it is a theory that is true of most men. From this point of view the Hemingway heroes are normal, ordinary men of our day. When Jack Barnes could not find any world view, which could explain the facts of the world as he had experienced then, he says that he did not care what it was all about, Hemingway heroes are normal males for their inability to explain the facts that they come across in their youth or which they experience in love and war. He therefore has to learn his own code and in doing this he is a careful planner but practiced. He does not believe in the abstract or any thought of abstract reasoning. It has to be practical and realistic and if it is good it will yield good results, otherwise not. But, even this good result is limited to a certain point because; at that level practical planning way to luck and the requirement becomes that luck should favour the planner. But luck works in an unpredictable manner, and the only way to control luck into take the precaution of following rules, which is the common sensible way but also a negative approach. But knowing the rules of luck poses great difficulty to man in the sense that these rules are not easy to learn. These rules have to be learnt through action and experience there is no short way out. On the other hand, mere adherences to these rules are useless if not unpractical and insignificant. The way out is to choose an ethical pattern to follow wisely and sensibly and after careful consideration of the ethics and virtues being pragmatically proved through empirical methods added to one's own experience and observation of others.

In the Hemingway's hero and the working of his philosophy, issues pertaining to pragmatism; empiricism and rationalism are interconnected and interrelated. However, there also exist elements of hedonism in the hero and his philosophy. Seeking pleasure of the physical senses and material comforts and avoiding sauciness and pain is a natural part of man's constitution. However, man does not live by this principle alone. Thus, the Hemingway's code and conduct that which makes you feel good is moral in pure hedonisticism. But then again restricting the Hemingway's hero to hedonism would be wrong.

The Hemingway's hero and his qualities are not evident in the work, but are to be accumulated from his entire works. However, in the novel, *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway makes his most revealing statement on the characteristics of the hero. As deduced from the statement in this book the Hemingway hero is both an artist and a man of

action. He stands somewhere between the two extremes. The Spanish bullfighters Maria is the model of the man of action and the Spanish painter Goya is the model for the hero as artist.

This actual person serves as the model and in the novel the bullfighter is depicted as a generous, humorous, proud, bitter, foul mouthed and a great drinker. He is neither materialistic and loves money nor is he an intellectual. He loves his sport of bull fighting and loves killing bulls. He lives with great passions and enjoyment. However, the last six months of his life are very bitter. He contracted tuberculosis, but he did not fear death and so took absolutely no care of himself. These qualities taken from a real man or given to the fictional soldier such as Colonel Cantwell. On the other hand Goya, the artist was a believer in "what he had seen, felt, touched, handled, smelled, enjoyed, drunk, mounted, suffered, spewed up, lain with, suspected, observed, loved, hated, lusted, feared, detested, admired, loathed, and destroyed". This is a description of Goya's beliefs and his paintings were a direct result, and consequences of his beliefs and convictions established through difficult empirical means. And similarly, all the fictional Hemingway's heroes starting from Frederic Henry till the Colonel Cantwell share the same attitude and outlook in their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

The style that Hemingway follows is a curt, unemotional and factual style. This style tries to present experience objectively though Hemingway is a stylist of narrow limits. Hemingway's style is a reportorial style that includes the reporting of external actions in a bar, dispassionate way and as a rule this is all that he has ever attempted in presenting his characters and especially in depicting events and accidents. The central character in his novel, the "I" who also functions as a narrator is typical of most of his novels and short stories. However, this "I" is almost all the time generally describes as bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum. The "I" narrates the story, but the style is akin to an impressive recording of the objective data of experience. The "I" is at best a de-personalized being and this is made clear by the absence of ideas and apparent emotion in him compounded by the fact that he has no memory of the past and no thought for the future. Apart from the typical Hemingway hero, he is an accomplished man from a number of angles. He is in the modern sense macho and a potent, red-blooded male. He is a sophisticated and extensive world traveller. He spends his time in the pursuit of women and sex, he drinks hard and plays just as hard and in the face of danger is cool and self-assured. In much the same ways as Hemingway lived life in the fast lane with wine and women, courting death in various ways, so does the Hemingway hero.

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