



“The Man Of Adventurous And Perseverance In Ernest Hemingway’s The Old Man And The Sea: A Critical Appreciation”

Dr. Regin Sam S.*

*Assistant Professor in English, Department of English, St. Jude's college, Thoothoor

Abstract

This study focuses on the effort of the prominent character of Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, as an example of human effort, in a novel which shows his sense of isolation in the society. Santiago’s consciousness of his individual role in the universe permits him more faithful effort. This major study focuses on Santiago’s consistent effort to restore his character and thereby renew his life and be once again part of the community. Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* is a study of man’s place in a world of violence and destruction. His all the novels lead adventurous tale. He got his experience from lot of misfortune. It is a story in which Hemingway seems to suggest that, at least in the natural order, man can find his own dignity and beauty in learning to understand the mystery of human power that is at the heart of so much that appears violent and cruel.

Key words: Adventure, Love, Santiago, Majesty, Pride, Endurance, Defeat, Triumph, Marlin.

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899, in Oak Park, Illinois, just outside Chicago. He was the second of the six children. His father, Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, was a prominent physician. He was essentially an ‘outdoor’ man, who loved fishing, hunting and unending rambles through the Michigan woods north of Chicago. Hemingway received his early education in the Oak Park High School in which emphasis was laid on liberal arts. He loved to read Bible and the English classics. He took an active part in extra-curricular activities, school athletics, boxing, and football. After leaving school in June 1917, Hemingway tried to enlist in the American army but was rejected because of his bad eye. For seven months he worked as a cub reporter on the *Kansas City Star*. He covered local crime news and accidents. The period of seven months that he spent on the staff of the *Star* was packed with feverish activity and excitement. Hemingway came out with his masterpiece novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). When it first appeared, it was received him a Pulitzer Prize, and the Order of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes.

Our perception of the Hemingway hero is that he is a man who has been wounded—both physically and mentally. Frederic Henry suffers a military injury in *A Farewell to Arms*. Henry makes the effects of misfortunes very obvious. He needs to cease thinking in order to fall asleep at night, and when he doesn’t sleep, he experiences nightmares. The protagonist of *The Sun Also Rises*, Jack Barnes, suffers injuries during the conflict. He cries in the night because he is unable to fall asleep once his head begins to work. The events of three days in the life of Hemingway’s fictional character Robert Jordan—who is serving as an American soldier in the Spanish Civil War—are detailed in the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. His previous experiences are used to support the claim that he is still a wounded man.

The Old Man and the Sea presents a world in which man and beast survive and are at their best only when acting courageously in a bad world where there is no love nor mercy nor charity nor justice unless man can keep his courage. In the exercise of the physicality of both man and fish, Hemingway demonstrates a kind of nobility that exists only in this world when two creatures achieve brotherhood in a trial of endurance which demands every ounce of strength and every skill they possess. “The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its” (9).

Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* is a study of human effort. With the help of his old character, Santiago, Hemmingway portrays the majesty that resides nowhere but inside human beings. Although the old man is in a place where he has to prove himself and is confronted with a dilemma or decision, he feels love and respect for all aspects of life: people, creatures of the sky and sea, and the very elements of the universe itself. Santiago’s effort is shown when he starts struggling against the fish:

“He rested sitting on the unstepped mast and sail and tried not to think, but only to endure” (Hemingway, *Old Man*, 35). Then he advises himself, as self-admonition, saying, “... think of it always. Think about what you are doing. “You must do nothing stupid” (37).

The character of Santiago seems to signify the code of human effort who must pursue his quest alone to maintain his self-respect. As Robert Weeks remarks, “Santiago fights his bloodiest battle alone, without even the awareness of others

to comfort him. He repeatedly wishes that the boy were with him, but he realises that his loneliness is a necessary condition if he is to maintain his self-respect” (125).

Santiago is alone on his excursion, and his solitude represents a determined decision: “My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all the people in the world, now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either of us” (39). He decides to go “too far,” which results in his sublime redemption. Furthermore, Santiago’s eighty-four days of bad luck had no influence on his conviction and faith that he would once again prove himself to be a lucky fisherman and keep his self-respect. Santiago’s nickname, *salao* (unlucky), has a negative impact on him, yet his willingness to travel far out into the Gulf demonstrates his enormous effort. As he explains, “My choice was to go there to find him (the marlin) beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world” (39).

Santiago’s journey a long way into the Gulf evidences his active faith in human effort. He keeps, “Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are neatly” (23). He does all that within his power to show himself once more, which for him, might be to catch a massive fish and not be *salao*. He exhibits notable effort that he will again be blessed with a good catch. “Tomorrow is going to be a good day with this current,” he said (14). Still, the existence of the sharks does not deny the fact that Santiago has actively maintained his faith in his effort. The sharks cannot remove the fact that he has caught the marlin that has helped to reestablish his character. Santiago’s chivalrous effort is also shown as he discharged the belief that he is being punished or that he has erred, though his contemplation that he went ‘too far outside’ suggests that he may fault himself for going so far into the Gulf.

Due to the fact that he actually gets caught up in the game, Hemingway himself emerges as the protagonist of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway, like Santiago, relies on tact and bravery, and he hopes to skillfully exact fate’s will to welcome fate when it smiles on him once more. In Santiago’s resolve to venture deep into the ocean, we witness Hemingway’s fearless spirit stretching out toward the uncharted. Hemingway’s idea of a great writer is one who fights alone in the face of eternity while standing in majestic isolation. His loneliness towards Santiago is stressed frequently in the book. He travels far from the crowd in order to achieve something exceptional, but that does not mean he should be independent of other people.

By exploring the artistic and thematic aspects of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway’s understanding of man becomes apparent. Santiago’s tranquility and splendor seem to have sprung from the mind of a completely different writer. Although Santiago’s solitude in the midst of his battle with the marlin has an epic dimension, he is never self-pitying in his isolation. Rather, Santiago’s isolation is reduced. Santiago is trying to find himself again. He is attempting to know that] he is in the present. He knows what he was in the past, and yet even though his body has aged, the dreams of youth persist; saying “But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day” (23).

Hemingway exactly perceives this nature of American society and depicts it in his novels. Hemingway developed a style of writing longer, complex and artistic fiction. He wrote novels on the new trends prevalent in American society in the twentieth century. His novels represent new events and their result on the individual characters. Hemingway captured imagination of American people. The nineteenth century American fiction concerned itself vague issues like human values including sympathy towards the blacks. Hemingway’s concern was different, because he obviously lived in different conditions, which prevailed in America in the early decades of twentieth century. He chose to write about negative values were strongly felt and experienced by thinking minds of the day. He meets number failures in his life. He never tastes the sweetness of success; he tested only his sweat of salt:

“The fish never changed his course nor his direction all that night as far as the man could tell from watching the stars. It was cold after the sun went down and the old man’s sweat dried cold on his back and his arms and his old legs. During the day he had taken the sack that covered the bait box and spread it in the sub to dry. After the sun went down he tied it around his neck so that it hung down his back and he cautiously worked it down under the line that was across his shoulders now. The sack cushioned the line and he had found a way of learning forward against the bow so that he was almost comfortable. The position actually was only somewhat less intolerable; but he thought of it as almost comfortable”. (47)

Santiago is an old fisherman living alone in a poor cottage. A young boy Manolin brings him food and helps him with fishing. As the old man has not caught any fish for a long time, Manolin’s parents forbade to him to go fishing with the old man because he is “unfortunate”.

The old man believes the destiny will help him and sets out every day to catch his big fish. The eighty-fifth day he manages to catch a marlin. It takes three days till the marlin gets exhausted and the old man kills him. It is the biggest fish he has ever seen, bigger than his boat. He is sad to kill his “fish brother”, but happy to have the fish of his life. During his sail back to the shore, his marlin is attacked by sharks, which eat the whole fish finally. The old man comes

back to the shore in the night, with only a skeleton of a marlin attached to his skiff. The next morning Manolin sees his boat and finds the old man sleeping in his bed, so he leaves him again to obtain some food.

Conclusion

This novel ends with First-generation heroes tend to be either young boys or young men who are still figuring out how to survive in a violent and unreliable world. In a First World War-ravaged world, he is bewildered and confused. Although he is a young man, he is sensitive, honest, and manly. He is a man of the outdoors, and while he has a lot of courage, he also has a lot of anxiety. He experiences a thousand deaths before passing away, and although he learns to deal with some of his difficulties and overcome others, he never fully recovers from his wounds, just as Hemingway himself was unable to do while he was alive and writing about his exploits. Hemingway and his hero always had a close relationship.

References

1. Sheridan Baker, Ernest Hemingway, An Introduction and Interpretation, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.: New York, 1967, pp.15-15. Print.
2. Baker, C. Hemingway: The Writer as Artist. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press. 1973. Print
3. Hemingway, Ernest. The Old Man and the Sea. Beirut: Typo press. 2002. Print.