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The Outsider Traits in Ernest Hemingway's Short Stories

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Abstract

Ernest Hemingway, the American author and journalist was a writer who influenced 20th century American fiction greatly and whose adventurous life and magical public image influenced later generations as well. Born in Oak Park, Illinois, he became a reporter for a few months for 'The Kansas City Star' just after he had finished his high school education. At the very young age of 18, we see him at the Italian front working with the World War-I ambulance drivers, he gets wounded there and returned home. His war-time experiences gave him the base for his novel "A Farewell to Arms". He became a modernist and composed his novel "The sun also Rises". Thereafter there is no end to his travels and war expeditions. He goes to Spain to cover Spanish Civil War and after his return writes his well-known novel "For Whom the Bell Tolls". Then he leaves for London during World War-II. He wrote his most famous novel "The Old Man and the Sea" in 1952. Soon he went on Safari to Africa where he met two successive plane crashes. He bought a house in Ketchum, Idaho where he committed suicide in 1961.

Keywords: World War I, Spanish Civil War, a big-game adventures, minimalist style, World War-II.

1. Introduction

The commonly spoken proverb 'Man is the style' fits deservedly well to Ernest Hemingway, the American author and journalist whose writings, according to James Nagel, "changed the nature of American writing." Hemingway's name has been included in American Literature anthologies and his subject matter and style has become archetypal of American Writing. With the publication of his short stories broke new literary ground in America. To examine the formative forces which influenced his mind, broadened his vision and gave a peculiar style to his writings. To begin with his multi-dimensional life— his adventures and mis-adventures, his travels and Safaris, his fishing and hunting adventures besides his war-time hobbies. At the very young age of eighteen we see him as an ambulance driver at Italian boarder, even though, he had been reporting for 'The 'Kansas City Star' earlier. In Italy, he got wounded seriously and returned home but his experiences at the war-front formed the basis for his novel "A Farewell to Arms" however, he never said good-bye to arms. In 1921, he and his first wife move to Paris, where he turns to be modernist and works as a foreign correspondent of some paper or the other. Again we see him in Spain reporting as a war-journalist. His war-loving spirit took him to Paris during World War II and he was very much present at the liberation of Paris. His adventurous spirit on Safari to Africa where he met two successive plane crashes which left him ill-healthy till his virtual end. It is noteworthy that he maintained permanent residences in key West, Florida (1930) and Cuba (1940s and 1950s) Then he bought a house at Ketchum, Idaho where he shot himself in the summer 1961. This wide travelling and this adventurous life sharpened and raised his thinking faculty to new hights. Coming to his writing career we come to know that at Oak Park and River Forest High School, he not only took part in such games at boxing and football but also contributor to the school magazines, the Trapeze and the Tabmla. Leaving the school, he worked as a cub reported for the Kansas City Star. He left the paper just after six months but considered its style as a foundation for his own writing. This paper's directive was 'to use short sentences, to use short first paragraphs, to use vigorous English and to be positive. This style of writing vehemently, forcefully using crisp words and short sentences remained with Hemmingway whether he wrote novels or short stories, more especially in short stories. When he returned to Paris in January 1924, he got some of his early stories such as 'Indian Camp' and ' In Our Time' published in The Transatlantic Review.

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Madox Ford, the editor saw it as an early story by a young writer and praised the story much. Critics in the United States praised him for crisp style which they thought helpful the short story genre in America. They also liked his use of declarative sentences. Hemingway was a brave man since his childhood and his experiences provided him with the source material for his works and much of his life is, therefore, reflected in his fiction. Major General Lanham was a close friend of Hemingway who is reported to have stated at the end of the World War II, "He is without question of the most courageous men I have ever known. Fear was a stranger to him". Hemingway's own principal was "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated". We see many of the male protagonists of his short stories resemble him in his machismo and his hidden pains, yet always exhibited grace under pressure". His style of living certainly is expressed in his style of writing. We may just make a critical analysis of some of his best known short stories to fish out the prominent traits of his art in this field. "The Killers" is taken from Hemingway's "The Nick Adams Stories". The story features Nick Adams, a famous character of the author. The story place in Summit, Illinois in 1920s during prohibition. Two potential killers Max and AL walk into Henry's lunch room. The establishment is run by over George. AL ties up Nick. There follows a conversation between the cook named Sam, Max and George which reveals that the two men are there to kill Anderson, a Swedish Boxer. George sends Nick to inform Anderson after the two killers left the place. Anderson shows no reaction at all. On his return Nick informs George about Anderson's disinterestedness in the matter. George too seems unconcerned about it, Nick immediately decides to leave the town. Hemingway has prominently used minimalism in this story as there is no authorial presence in it and the subject-matter is ordinary. The protagonist in the story is passive, rather affectless and we find very little plot in it. The style is emotionally restrained. The story is simple and there is nothing extraordinary about it. But the question "what outsider forces helped the another to create such a story"? is too easy to find out. The story takes us back to 1920s Chicago society organized crime was at its peak during prohibition there. There prevailed an atmosphere of 'a meaningless of life' in Chicago, rather all over America. Nothing good is happening for the new generation. The story describes the chaos and confusion of the times. Strangely enough, Hemingway is known for his 'manly-men' of his stories, the two criminals of this story are simply clownish. 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' and 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber' are regarded Hemingway's mature stories in which there are complex characters and complex situations. In 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro' we get a stylistic tour de force full of interior-monologue flashbacks from the main Character Harry who is a writer. Harry is dying of gangrene or more safely, we may say that he is symbolically dying of because of the poisonous nature of his wife's wealth. As he supposedly lay dying, he realizes that his writing talent had been ebbing away for years. Harry ruminates on the sum-total of his life experiences but feels sad that he had never reached his potential as a writer simply because he had chosen to marry a series of beautiful wealthy women. Harry recollects his travels around Europe following a war, his hunting and skiing expeditions and such other adventures. As he is remembering all these things, he feels the presence of death which he associates with a hyena going around the camp site. He is removed to a tent where he dreams that a man with a plane has come to rescue him. In the dream, he is lifted onto the plane and he sees the snow-covered top of Mt.

Kilimanjaro. Helen wakes up in the middle of the night to find Harry dead on his cot. We can draw many parallels from the story which shows us the places and events where from Hemingway had got his stuff. Hemingway's own adventures are represented by Harvey. Hemingway suffered diseases like Harvey and on occasions almost embraced death because of accidents. He too had mishaps with his wives. Occasionally he would think that his artistic work would have been of greater magnetic but for his wives. His wounds and injuries reminded him of death. He symbolically represents death in the form of a hyena which makes rounds of the camp where he lays ill. "The Short Happy life of Francis Macomber" is one of the greatest stories by Hemingway. We see Macomber on an African Safari. He is 35 and holds a number of big-game fishing records. At the moment he proves to be coward because he cannot face a lion and bolts away. He has his beautiful wife, Margot with him, who now hates him for being a coward. Macomber is taken to the camp. His wife slips off in the middle of the night with the Safari guide Wilson. The next day Macomber engages himself with a water buffalo with great courage, whereupon his wife has second thoughts. She realizes that if her husband continued to regain strength and courage, he might leave her to get rid of her Ridicule. Macomber gets engaged with 2nd water-buffalo and the stand-off becomes more intense. Margot takes aim at the Buffalo, but shorts Macomber at the back of his head. He dies instantly which ends his short happy life. The story shows Hemingway's great genius in Combining game hunt with death. He had enough experience of game hunt himself and this experience gave him exciting subject matter for this story. He was courageous himself and in the story he puts the courage of his protagonist to test. The style of the story well-corresponds with its action. Full expression is given to the words used by people who go on hunting expeditions and therefore, these words are crisp and dramatic. Then there are about a dozen of Nick Adams stores, Nick Adams being the fictional persona of Hemingway. These stories are largely autobiographical and he got the basic staff of these stories from this own personal experiences. If one has the urge to follow Hemingway on his fish-hunting big game, hunting expeditions and battle-front adventures, one is sure to trace the adventures and misadventures of her characters to his own-self. We find Nick Adams in such stories as, "The Indian Camp", and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife". In the story "The Indian Camp" Nick Adams accompanies a doctor to American Indian Camp and watches the doctor to use a jackknife to slice into a women's abdomen and deliver a baby boy. In the story "The Killers" Nick Adams is seen to leave the place of action in a coward manner. Nick Adams always faces traumatic events and Ernest Hemingway shows Nick's reactions to these events. In short stories like "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "Hill Like White Elephants" Ernest Hemingway uses pared-down style. He removes himself from the role of a narrator, and the narration is almost in dialogue form. This is enough to say that while reading his short stories one is always confronted with Hemingway and his adventures.

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