



AUTO BIOGRAPHICAL TOUCH AS BEING ATTACHED TO THE FICTIONAL FORTE OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY: A BRIEF APPRAISAL

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Abstract

This paper brings out the autobiographical touch as being attached to the fictional forte of Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway has illuminated the whole starlit key of American literature through his novels and short stories which all reflected his real life experiences. Thus, this paper has evidenced numerous incidents in his works that indicate his own life experience and created an autobiographical touch.

Key Words: Autobiography, Philosophy of Life, Experiences, Complex Effect, Reflection of Life, Death.

Ernest Hemingway is one of the leading lights of American literature, whose literary output brought him laurels throughout the world. Fitting recognition came to him in 1954, when he was conferred with the greatest literary award. Nobel Prize for Literature'. Generally speaking, Hemingway's writing style and his personal life did tremendously exert a profound influence on the American writers of his time, for many of his works are regarded as classics of American literature. As a literary luminary, he illumined the whole starlit sky of American literature as nobody else could do, thereby riding on the literary stage like a Colossus. No doubt this twentieth century American author wrote novels and short stories which all reflected his rich life experiences as a war correspondent.

As one of the foremost authors of the era between the two world wars, Hemingway in his early works depicted the lives of two types, one type consisted of men and women deprived, by World War I, of faith of the moral values in which they had believed and who lived with cynical disregard for anything but their own emotional needs. The other types were men of simple character and primitive emotions, such as prize fighters and bull fighters. Besides a good collection of short stories and ten poems (1923), he has to his credit publication of such works as

1.*The Sun Also Rises* (1926), 2.*Men without a Woman Rises* (1927), 3.*A Farewell to Arms* (1929), 4.*Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and 5.*Green Hills of Africa* (1935).

Hemingway's economical writing style often seems simple and almost childlike but his method is calculated and used to complex effect. In his writings, he provided detached descriptions of actions using simple nouns and works to capture the scenes precisely. By doing so, he avoided describing his character's emotions and thoughts directly. Indeed, in providing the reader with the material of an experience and eliminating the authorial viewpoint, Hemingway made the reading of a text an actual experience as closely as possible. In his original works, he used themes of helplessness and defeat, but in the late 1930's he began to express concern about social problems. His novel *A Farewell to Arms* is often regarded as his best artistic achievement. It was certainly his greatest commercial success. The novel established Ernest Hemingway as the literary nester of a style that was characterized by brisk assertive crisp precise prose. The novel also gave rise to the infamous myth of Hemingway as the epitome of American machismo. Rather undoubtedly, Hemingway's novels are rooted in his experiences and responses to life. Leon Edel writes:

".... Man is the style, the fragments of experience of the man have been moulded to produce the art and that if we went to know enough about any artist, we could redissolve his art to find in at, the biological ingredients that shaped it" (31).



Hemingway's life and the identification of corresponding parallels are reflected in his fictional world. His writings are somewhat autobiographical and his writings attest to Deon. Edel's view as :

“ . . . the words we speak and the phrases
and sentences we build out of them, the
image we conjure up and the object eyes select,
are autobiographical acts so that a book
we write is a book of ourselves when a
poet writes the simplest lyric his choice of
words and images is his own” (P 43).

Hemingway, even as a boy, learnt from none other than his father, how to accept suffering with grace. Equally important were the lessons he received from his father regarding the appreciation of nature and the arts of fishing and hunting interests which were to be sources of joy for the rest of the son's life. Madeleine writes:

“Dad particularly enjoyed Ernest's
Companionship, especially teaching
him about folklore and the fine points
of Swimming. Fishing and hunting as
well - which they did a lot of together
while taking a walk during the Summer” (61).

There is no denying the fact that writing prose or poetry or drama-bears the special stamp of its author's personality. There are many authors who use themselves, their own immediate surroundings, their own ideas, impulses, and feelings, their own attitudes, reactions and responses, their own preferences and prejudices more than others as materials for their works. Ernest Hemingway is one such another in whose writings and literary compositions, the author is very much felt and seen. The places described are mostly the ones which are visited by him and the actions are mostly the exponents of the author, the ideas and ideals are the once espoused by Hemingway himself. His heroes are mostly Hemingway himself. The disguises in his works are so thin that even the most casual reader who is conversant with the life of Hemingway will recognize him everywhere. There is no doubt about this fact and the novel. '*A Farewell to Arms*' is no exception or for that matter, any of his novels. So, the life experiences depicted in the novels and short stories of Hemingway are nothing but reflection of his own life experience and there is a heavier dose of autobiographical element in *A Farewell to Arms*. Frederic Henry is an American who is enlisted as an Ambulance Driver in The Red Cross Unit of the Italian Army he is fashioned on Hemingway himself. Other novels and short stories also have a strong doses of autobiographical element. His novels *The Sun Also Rises*, *For Whom the Bell tolls*, *The Old Man and the Sea* to name only a few are autobiographical. Similarly, Hemingway's experiences of the Spanish Civil War, big game hunting in the African jungles, the bush country, deep sea fishing bull fights, his early experiences of outdoor life with his father, his knowledge of natural history, fine arts and music all are pressed into service in his writings. Nemi D.Agastio observes:

“Hemingway's attitude to reality remained
Unchanged, Life is solitary struggle, a
Desperate fever of action conscious of
Having no sense or reason beyond itself” (64).

Sigmund Freud postulates the existence of two basic instincts in man and he writes:

“After long doubts and vacillations, we have decided
to assume the existence of only two basic instincts,
Eros and the destructive instinct. The aim of the first
of these basic instincts is to establish even greater
unities and to preserve them thus – in short to bind
together the aim of the second in on the contrary,



is to undo connection and so, to destroy things. We may suppose that the final aim of the destructive instinct is to reduce things to an organic state. For this reason we call it the destructive instinct” (564)

This destructive instinct is evidence in the writing of Hemingway. Throughout his life, Hemingway had been fascinated by death. He took a great deal of interest in violence and suffering. But this interest has often been interpreted as evidence of the existence of a serious ‘death wish’ in Hemingway, as proof of that Hemingway. Sought death. While it is time that he was objectively interested in death as a writer, his indulgence in what may be called reckless death was really due to his obsession with flaunting. His masculinity which he associated with was nothing but ‘fearlessness’. He indulged in dare-devilry not because he sought death but because he was out to prove that he had the guts to play a life-and-death game from which he would emerge victorious and alive. Maxwell Geismar says:

“Hemingway ‘s life is merely the prelude to death if death no longer exists (in the form of war), he must seek it out” (P 58).

Bates considers Hemingway “above all a tragic writer, haunted, repelled and attracted by the everlasting fear of mortality” (P 76). While Hemingway accepted death as a natural phenomenon, an inevitable event in human life, he was not prepared to envisage a natural death for himself. He had his own views regarding the time and the manner in which he would like to die. It was the destructive instinct in him which goaded him to determine the nature of his death. He was of the opinion that a man must face life bravely and try to ward off death as long as possible. At the same time, he felt, “if a thing got bad enough, Suicide was permissible”. (Baker 352). So long as he was interested in life, he was satisfied with it and had no desire to die. Life and living meant a lot to Hemingway and he always tried to get the best out of life in spite of that there were many trying moments in it. It may sound paradoxical but the truth is that it was the attraction towards violence and destruction, suffering and corruption, or rather, the seamy side of life that awake in Hemingway a desire to live. It made him aware of the value and meaning of life, the freedom a man can enjoy and all that he can get out of life. In other words, violence taught him to live life fully *For Whom the Bell Tolls* expresses Hemingway’s entire philosophy of life and he feels that man must live as fully as is possible.

To conclude, Hemingway’s novels indicate his own life experience and all his characters are always turned to life, the presence of death making their consciousness of life all the more acute and autobiographical touch is given to his fictional forte in all respects.

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