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CRANE'S INFLUENCE ON HEMINGWAY'S WAR NOVELS

Abstract

This myth that war is glorious, heroic, full of adventure and excitement has been for centuries and even now exists for those who have not experienced it. Romantic visions have always been associated with war. Going into the war as classical heroes, fighting in it with ghastly wounds and returning home with the hope of hero worship and applause of the awaiting countrymen and many other similar visions have been envisioned by the romantic naive soldiers. But there exists a world of difference between seeing war from outside and seeing it from inside. The whole euphoria about war goes in air the moment these romantic naive soldiers participate in the war and confront the harsh realities of war as Erich Maria Remarque has said, "Death isn't an adventure to those who stand face to face with it" (11). The same thing Brian Murdock says about war, "War is not heroism, but about terror, either waiting for death or trying desperately to avoid it" (207).

. Till the end of the nineteenth century, war was portrayed in a romantic fashion, Arthur Guy Empey and Edward Streeter portrayed war in this romantic garb. Then there came a great change on the literary stage for the portrayal of war. The devastating effects of American Civil War World War I brought great change in outlook of the people and authors towards war; they did not think about war in romantic way any more. It was portrayed realistically with all its devastating effects, mental trauma and realities of the trenches. Stephen Crane is the pioneer in this field who brought the stark realities of war to the fore followed by Ernest Hemingway on whose war novels there is perceptible influence of Crane's art of war fiction. This is what this paper will be dealing with- to find out Crane's influence on Hemingway's war-fictions. This study proposes to analyze their war fictions to display that Hemingway has followed in

the foot-steps of Crane. For this very purpose, Crane's works *Red Badge of Courage* and *A Mystery* and Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun also Rises* have been taken into consideration.

Key Words: War, Fiction, Portrayal, Romanticism, Realism,

Characters transformation From Romanticism to Realism:

Hemingway's war novels deal with the realistic aspects of soldiers' life. Only a surface look at his war novels gives two distinct pictures of the characters' personality. At the onset of war, they are too much idealistic, enthusiastic and romantic about war but as the novel progresses, the characters have the realistic experience about the war and as a result become acquainted with harsh realities of war. They find that war is not what they thought about it. Towards the end of the novel, becoming aware with the reality of war, they become realist and disillusioned with the cause for which they enlisted in the war. They transform from early romantic life to realism. This art of displaying the characters' transformation, Hemingway has learned from his predecessor, Stephen Crane, who had shown years ago the same transformation in his characters of war-fiction especially in the protagonist of his novel, *Red Badge of Courage*. This transformation is quite perceptible in the character of Henry Fleming in *Red Badge of Courage*, Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Frederic Henry in *Farewell to Arms* and many other characters of these fictions

Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was too much enthusiastic about the war in the beginning of the war. He is so much idealistic for the republican cause that he leaves his family and his country, American, too to fight for the republican side against the fascists in Spanish Civil War. At the time of joining he was thinking he was joining a good side, that is, republican side. Just in the same way Stephen Crane showed his character, Henry Fleming, who does not listen to his mother entreaties and does not have any regret at the time of his enlistment. He bids god bye to his mother with, "the light of excitement and expectancy in his eyes almost defeating the glow of regret for the home bonds" (Crane 5). Both the characters of Stephen Crane and Hemingway are completely naïve, unaware with the reality of war. It is just because of this unawareness and naivety that both the characters are under the illusion that they are going to fight in glorious or holy war to save mankind or for the betterment of mankind. For Robert Jordan, going into the battlefield was just like a holy war or crusade for all of mankind. He says, "you felt that you were taking part in a crusade" (Hemingway 243). At this

point of time, going in a war is no less than a going in a crusade for Robert Jordan. It is because of this vain belief, idealism and enthusiasm that going in a war is more important than staying at home, doing the job and looking after the family. He further says, "It was a feeling of consecration to a duty toward all the oppressed of the world which would be as difficult and embarrassing to speak about as religious experience and yet it was authentic" (Hemingway 243). To Henry Fleming also, going in a war is no less than going in ancient war of Greek and Rome. He had read about the heroic acts of classical heroes and the same he himself wants to do on the battlefield. Merely reading about the adventure of classical heroes and taking decision to participate in the war and having the cherished to outshine on the battlefield displays Henry's state of mind that he is too much romantic and idealistic just Robert is in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. "He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land. They might not be distinctly Homeric, but there seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds" (Crane 4). As going in a war was a great matter for ancient Greek and Rome, so was it for Henry. "He was about to mingle in one of those great affairs of the earth" (Crane 3).

Pablo, one of the major characters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was also a very fierce fighter at the beginning of the war. His ferocity as a fighter can be seen in the early part of the novel when he blew up a train at Arevalo and killed a number of fascist soldiers at the beginning of the war. But now there has come a great change in his thinking. He tries to avoid fighting as much as possible. Telling about the heroic deeds of Pablo, the Gypsy said about him that, "At the start of the movement, Pablo killed more people than the typhoid fever" (Hemingway 16). But within a short period of time, he has lost the earlier revolutionary spirit and has retreated to the hills to keep himself safe. This change comes in Pablo, realising the devastation, destruction and continuity of war. It is just because of this change that he does not want prolong the war further and runs away with the explosive Robert Jordan has brought to blow up the fascists-controlled bridge. Pilar, his wife makes the same observation about this change in Pablo's Personality. "Pablo would have sacrificed anything for the republicans cause but has gone bad as the war has dragged on" (Hemingway 16). Realizing the devastating effects of war, the atrocities he committed on the fascist, Pablo is sad, repentant and remorseful over his past deeds and thinks of ways to exonerate himself for past sinful deeds. He says, "I could restore them to life, I would bring them all back to life to life" (Hemingway 115). This shows

Pablo's disillusionment with the cause he was fighting for his perturbed state of mind of the devastating effects of war.

It is quite obvious the characters of both Crane and Hemingway are very much enthusiastic and romantic at the beginning of the fight but they are placed in situation in which they have to bring change in their understanding about war and readjust themselves according to the situation of the time till the end of the novel when they become completely realist and realize the futility and devastating effects of war as towards the end of the novel, Henry does. Henry Fleming does not think about soldiers as heroes as he thought earlier on rather thinks about them now as "fighters resembled animals tossed for a death struggle into a dark pit" (Crane 105) and longs for peace and tranquility. He turned now with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks- an existence of soft and eternal peace." Just in the same way, Robert Jordan too realizes the futility of war and does not think about war in terms of holy war and crusade any more. He says, "In the fighting soon, there was no purity of feeling for those who survived the fighting" (Hemingway 128).

It emerges from the above discussion that Hemingway meticulously displays his characters transforming from romanticism to realism in his war fictions. In the early part of the novel, his characters are romantic, idealistic but they become realist, disillusioned with cause they were fighting for because of the situation in which they have been put. They try to reconcile, readjust and long for living with tranquility and peace. This transformation of characters from romanticism to realism, Hemingway learns from his predecessor of war-fiction, Stephen Crane, a realist and pioneer in the field of war-fiction, who had brought the stark realities of war to the fore decades ago.

Alienation

There are several things in which Hemingway has directly been influenced by the art of Crane's. If we review the characters of Hemingway's war-fiction, we find that most of the characters are alienated from the society and friends with whom they live. Frederic Henry in Farewell to Arms has the tendency of thinking too much. The early part of the novel shows him suffering from loneliness. He is so much lost in his loneliness that even the women, wine and brothel do not interest him. As the war becomes more and more fierce and drastic, the sense of alienation in Frederic intensifies with the same vigour. The brutalities of this fierce war has such a damaging impact on his mind that he is not able to have a good rapport with friends on moral and intellectual grounds and ultimately takes the decision of fleeing from the

battlefield to lose himself in the world of loneliness and alienation. He finds solace from this alienation by falling in love with Catherine though that is only for a very short period of time. He says to Catherine, "My life used to be full of everything....Now when you aren't with me I haven't a thing in the world" (Hemingway 198). His wife too exhibits the same tendency of alienation. It is because of this alienation and loneliness that both of them leave the world of suffering, pain and loss and take shelter into the natural landscape of Switzerland where she dies a painful death in loneliness during childbirth instead of choosing to flee to a society where she could have saved herself. What brings alienation in the life of Frederic is the difference between what he thought about combat and what he really found on the battlefield. This dichotomy between his expectation and the reality is very well expressed by Bakshi, "He is an idealist whose knowledge of the ugly social and moral truth shatters his idealism forcing him to change, adjust, transform or develop a new philosophy of life" (Bakshi 28).

Hemingway displays the same sense of alienation in the character of Jake Barnes, the protagonist, of *The Sun also Rises*. After becoming impotent because of the serious war injury, Jake becomes lost in his dull and mundane atmosphere of literature not even paying attention to his beloved, Brett who, not being satisfied with Jake, keeps changing her lovers. Jake tries to remove this mundane and bored existence by roaming here and there and drinking heavily which are the typical characteristics of the whole group of lost generation. This feeling of alienation comes in the soldiers just because of the change that has occurred in their consciousness because of war. They can no longer adjust themselves with the conventional society with its outmoded values that have been unable to stop the war and are of no use in the present context. It is because of this they take shelter into the world of promiscuity and wine to remove their alienation.

As has already been argued that Hemingway has learnt most of the characteristics of his war-fictions from the fictions of Crane's who had done all these things years ago. There is not the slightest doubt about this argument. If we go through his novel *The Red badge of Courage*, we get the same picture of alienation in the character of Henry Fleming, the protagonist of the novel, *Red Badge of Courage*. In the early part of the novel, Henry Fleming is so much alienated that he cannot share his sense of loneliness with his comrades on the battlefield. Since the time he put his foot on the battlefield, there is a fierce conflict going on his mind whether he will be able to stay on the battlefield or not when the real battle ensues, whether he has the same kind of courage or not as his comrades on the battlefield have. He has a mental uncertainty about his courage which brings the feeling of loneliness or otherness in

him. “He felt alone in space when his injured comrade had disappeared. His failure to discover any mite of resemblance in their view points made him more miserable than before. None seemed to be wrestling with such a terrific personal problem. He was a mental outcast. (Crane 19)” He is so much anxiety-ridden on the battlefield that he forgets even to recollect whether his gun is loaded or not. “As he caught sight of them the youth was momentarily startled by a thought that perhaps his gun was not loaded.(Crane 35)” This shows his sense of alienation going on in his mind. Just of because suffering from this alienation and loneliness, he feels that he does not have the kind of courage as other comrades have and fear that he might flee when real battle starts. “It had suddenly appeared to him that perhaps in a battle he might run. He was forced to admit that as far as war was concerned he knew nothing of himself. (Crane 8)”

The above analysis of the war-fictions of both Hemingway and Crane brings to light that their characters are alienated from the rest of the society because of mental trauma and the impact war has on their mind and these characters try to find peace and comfort in this alienation though they cannot.

Destructive Nature of War:

Both the novelists have tried to show the futility and destructive nature of war through their works. Both the novelists are preoccupied with the violent and destructive nature of war. Alfred Kazin makes the following observation regarding both the novelists’ preoccupation of violent and destructive nature of war. “Like his future admirer Hemingway, Crane loved every example of the extreme in human affairs.” In his very first war-novel, *The Sun also Rises*, Hemingway has displayed the suffering, hardship, devastation and destruction caused by war. because of war, lives of most of the characters in the novel are full of frustration, hardship, suffering metal trauma, despair and nada etc. most of the soldiers who participated in the war have become impotent and inert. They no longer find any purpose any life as result keep roaming here and there aimlessly and drinking heavily as Jakes Barnes, the protagonist of *The Sun also Rises*.

The destructive nature of war, Hemingway presents in his *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He shows that in war, neither side is good or bad rather both the opposing factions commit atrocities in the name of different ideals and ideology. When Robert Jordan hears the gruesome tale of atrocities committed on Maria and Pablo’s killing a large number of fascists, he comes to the realization that in war atrocities are committed from both the side and the ideals for its justification are subjective.

In the novel, *Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway deals with the same issue of destructive nature of war. It is just because war that Catherine's life is full of dejection and suffering. She lost her lover in the same war though happiness comes in her life in form love with Frederic but that too cannot continue for long. She flees to the natural landscape of Spain to escape from this battlefield which is full killing, murder, bloodshed and atrocities.

Hemingway has no doubt dealt with realistic aspect of war, its destructive nature, its suffering and the repercussions it brings for the humanity but it was Stephen Crane who for the first time dealt with the realistic aspects of war and broke the age-old notions that war brings good to the humanity and war is glorious or holy. His war-fictions offer a moving picture of the suffering war causes to humanity with the loss of innocence. *Life of Jim Conkline*, the tattered soldiers gives the moving and realistic account of suffering and hardship that a soldier has to go through on the battlefield. The way Jim Conkline dies is highly suggestive of the suffering and pain before a soldier meets his final fate. Crane expressed his pitiable condition in his words as follows. "As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves" (Crane 64). In actual warfare the soldiers go through a period of hunger, thirst, exhaustion, pain and suffering. These things find realistic expression in his war fiction *Red badge of Courage*. This realistic portrayal of war was quite in contrast to the romantic depiction which was done with all the glamour of war. Crane depicts the hard life of a soldier through the character of Henry Fleming in the following words. "He discovered that he had a scorching thirst. His face was so dry and grimy that he thought he could feel his skin crackle. Each bone of his body had an ache in it and seemingly threatened to break with each movement His feet were like two sores. Also his body was calling for food" (Crane 73).

It is quite clear from the above discussion that in the treat of war, both Hemingway and Crane focused the impact the war has on human life- the devastation, suffering and predicament it brings in the life of human beings. Crane was the precursor of this method of realistic portrayal of war and the influence of this quite perceptible in the works of Hemingway.

It emerges from the above discussion that Crane was the first author to deal with themes of war realistically with its grim and stark realities. His follower Ernest Hemingway followed in the footsteps of his predecessor in several important aspects as far as war-fiction is concerned. Hemingway displays the same transformation from romanticism to realism as Crane does in the character of his novel. Hemingway also showed his characters suffering from alienation as felt by Henry Fleming in Crane's novel *The Red Badge of Courage*. Both the

novelist has shown the devastating and damaging effects of war on humanity. Crane has dealt with this issue of destructive nature of war decades ago and Hemingway followed him suit. It, therefore, can be said that the tradition of dealing with war realistically started with Crane and was followed more intensely and vigorously by Hemingway in the vein of realism.

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