



Ernest Hemingway and His Eternal Creation, the Code Hero: A Redefinition of Manhood

Samapti Banerjee

Student, University of Burdwan, Department of English, Burdwan. West Bengal

Abstract-- Hemingway was an iconic literary figure whose personal life and writing style had several resemblances and reflections in his timeless literary works. This had made his literary works so much authentic, inspiring, original and acceptable to his readers around the globe. The modernist writer and Noble Laureate created a specific type of heroes who were notable for their unique characteristics- their manliness and their indomitable and undefeated spirit -"A man can be destroyed but not defeated" often termed as Code Heroes. Hemingway's code heroes very distinctly follow some of his own characteristic features.

Keywords--code hero, grace under pressure, stoicism, alone, struggle, acceptance, endurance, duty, dignity, unconventional, man

I. INTRODUCTION

Ernest Miller Hemingway was a renowned American Novelist. He was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1954 and Pulitzer Prize in 1953. He was one of the most prominent writers of the 20th century. He was popular for his straightforward prose writing style and his authentic literary voice. After the completion of the 1st World War (1914-18) he left for Paris and joined the expatriate writers and artists there. Accompanied by contemporaries like F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound et.al and under the guidance of Gertrude Stein he started writing and found his unique and individualistic tone and mode of writing. He was a notable member of the 'Lost Generation' writers. Hemingway served in the World War I. He was assigned as an Ambulance driver of the Italian front. His both legs were fatally injured at that time. Hemingway said: "When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you ... Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you."

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses qualitative, descriptive and interpretative research methodology for the better understanding of the characteristics of the code heroes of Ernest Hemingway and the redefinition of manhood.

It goes through close textual analysis and descriptive-analytical approach which help to comprehend the unique features of the heroes and their indomitable spirits. The focus in the detailed analytical study of the selected primary texts -*The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) clarifies the unconventional ethical statures of the heroes which make them eternal literary characters of the World Literature. This paper uses Existential, Modernism, Gender /Masculine Studies, Trauma theory and Ecocriticism theoretical approaches which help in the deeper analysis of the topic. This thematic and character-based approach of the paper show how a man remain stoic, enduring, dignified and intrepid in front of danger, "grace under pressure" and constructs a redefinition of manhood despite his physical vulnerability and with the strength of ethics and his own unconquerable spirit. The secondary sources like critical essays and scholarly writings on Hemingway add more enrichment and profundity of this research work

III. CODE HEROES OF HEMINGWAY

Often termed as Code Heroes, Hemingway's heroes are remarkable for some exceptional characteristic features. The scholar Philip Young has first coined the term 'Code Hero' for the Hemingway heroes for their hyper – masculine qualities in the year 1966. They may have going through some profound mental and physical wounds but are indomitable to achieve their goals in life. Without complaining their shortcomings they fight, struggle and achieve their most desired things. They are indomitable, courageous, bold and hard working and have a great sense of self-worth, self-restrain, loyalty and dignity. They follow the "ideals of honor, courage and endurance". Bertrand Russell called them possessing "despairing courage". The Hemingway code heroes are extremely stoic personalities through persistence, patience and perseverance they achieve victory maintaining calm, discipline and grace throughout their lives. They concentrate and contemplate only on their works, ignoring and overpowering all the limitations and distractions.

They are often associated with masculine activities like hunting, bull fighting, fishing etc. Hemingway's code heroes are often his own reflection- bold, courageous, stoic, man of action, experienced, reticent, graceful under pressure and actually a resourceful man. The paper will examine these Code hero characteristics by focusing some of the excellent code heroes of Hemingway's remarkable novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).

A. Major Characterizes of Hemmingway's Heroes:

- They do not complain but accept the reality and truth.
- They are very hard working, men of actions.
- Never yield to destiny and despair.
- They are honorable and admirable people who consistently adhere to grace in severe adverse situations.
- Through indomitable courage and passionate effort achieve success.
- Well-skilled in their crafts or works.
- Men of integrity, loyalty and are strict followers of ethics and values.
- They possess the quality to accept adversity with grace and dignity.
- Displaying manly interests in bull -fighting, fishing etc
- Self -Reliance is the most crucial characteristic feature of Hemingway's code heroes. Amidst extreme adversity and bad luck they retain their calm and self-confidence. They are very aware of their self -worth and in the darkest days of their lives keep their backbone straight and fight their own battle alone gracefully.
- Perseverance, competence in their work and enduring the hurdles of life but still carry on working and achieving expertise in their work are their virtues.
- These heroes posses some manly interests- bull-fighting, fishing, boating and camping etc. Hemingway himself was interested in these 'manly' activities. He had written about afiction or the culture of bullfighting -"It isn't just brutal like they always told us. It's a great tragedy—and the most beautiful thing I've ever seen and takes more guts and skill and guts again than anything possibly could. It's just like having a ringside seat at the war with nothing going to happen to you."

B. Hemingway Ice-berg Writing Style

In his youth Hemingway was a news paper journalist. He used to report the crucial things without elaborately discussing the details. As a writer he also carried on this minimalistic approach of writing which is famously known as the Ice-berg theory. As a cub reporter for The Kansas City Star, Hemingway acquired the skill of just highlighting the main headline rather than elaborating the topic and its background. His writing style is very precise, simple, and minimalist. His journalistic career helped him to acquire such brevity and concise prosaic writing style. Short sentences like the headlines will direct impact on the reader's mind without explaining elaborately the underlying emotions. Simplicity, straightforward attitude, clarity, originality and a natural freshness are the distinct Hemingway writing style. His writings are full of factual details. The facts are selected wisely. These facts were used by him as device. The vivid description and presentation of the facts make the fiction real, authentic and easily acceptable to the readers. In the words of Jeffrey Meyers "*he objectively reported only the immediate events in order to achieve a concentration and intensity of focus—a spotlight rather than a stage*".

C. Impact of World War (1914-1918) on Hemingway and on his Characters

Hemingway was very much eager to serve in the World War. He was unable to be enlisted in the U.S army due to his visual disability or poor eyesight. Lastly he joined the American Red Cross Motor Cops in Italy and provided voluntary service as an Ambulance driver during the warfare. During this time he underwent a frustrated love affair with a Red Cross nurse, Agnes Von Kurowsky, 7 years older than him. This incident also devastated him emotionally. So, during and after the war he was completely disenchanted with life. Being morally, physically and emotionally broken he experienced the agony of the Lost Generation and the depression after the War.

The research paper will go through detail explanation of such code heroic features focusing on the prominent characteristics of the protagonists of Hemingway's remarkable novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).

D. The Sun Also Rises (1926): is the first novel of Hemingway. It is a roman-a-clef novel. Hemingway's biographer Jeffrey Meyers, opined that this novel is "*Hemingway's greatest work*".

Jake Barnes, the protagonist of this novel is a Roman Catholic; Hemingway himself was converted to Catholicism at this time. According to Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera Jake Barnes was "*a vehicle for Hemingway to rehearse his own conversion, testing the emotions that would accompany one of the most important acts of his life.*" This novel primarily dealt with two epigraphs *Lost Generation* –the term was first coined by Gertrude Stein which classify the disenchanted, directionless generation of post World War 1 who are suffering from alienation and spiritual crisis. Another epigraph is *the sun also rises* extracted from *Ecclesiastes* "*One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*"(*Ecclesiastes 1:3-5, King James Version.*)

Here in this novel Jake is the typical Hemingway Code hero who closely resembles the novelist. He is a representative of the Lost Generation who suffers from a fatal war wound which makes him sexually impotent. Jake's barrenness symbolizes the emasculation effect of war. It leaves its scar, its meaninglessness and moral emptiness through a generation who drinks unrestrainedly and believes in making multiple relationships to hide their loneliness, involved in sexual promiscuity but remains dissatisfied. Despite Jake's physical disability he does not lose his patience and starts working as news paper journalist in Paris where he lives with the expatriates. Jake's impotence causes his heart break and a tremendous frustration in his love life. He is deeply in love with Brett Ashley who is divorced twice. She is sexually promiscuous, seductive, independent and enigmatic woman representing the New Woman of the 20th century. Despite their love they cannot consummate so Jake discontinue the relationship in a dignified manner. Sexually maimed Jake Barnes established a new dimension of masculinity which is of tremendous moral strength, self-restraint, emotional and stoical endurance. Jake is highly interested in bullfighting which provides ritualized courage and discipline in the meaningless and chaotic world. While fishing Barnes feels connected with the nature and enjoys solace and tranquility. People are passionately involved in unrestrained drinking, sexual intimacy and aimless travelling. Alcohol addiction was a way to escape from the reality and to remain in an illusory world for this lost generation people. "*You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. False European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see. You hang around cafés.*

"Barnes too drinks alcohol but maintains control. Jake represents restrain in his action, behavior and words. He chooses reticence, no use of exaggeration in words or expression. Acceptance over escapism is the priority in the novel. Jake's moral code is solely his own internal discipline, dignity not socially imposed or spiritually defined.

E. A Farewell to Arms (1929) :is written during World War 1 and the outbreak of Cholera epidemic which causes the death of the masses. The title of the novel may be extracted from a poem of 16thc British playwright George Peele. Lieutenant Frederic Henry is the protagonist of this novel. He is appointed as an ambulance driver of the Italian army resembling Hemingway himself. He was in an amorous relationship with Catherine Barkley, serving as a nurse in the war. She has lost her fiancé in the warfare. Frederick is suffering from a severe knee injury in the battle. Unlike other code heroes Fredric deserts the battlefield realizing the vainness of the war. He is more passionate about his love life. He had to suffer from pathetic experiences in his personal life due to Catherine's painful delivery of a stillborn baby boy and finally her death. He has to endure these heart breaking incidents and these irreparable personal losses. He disapproves the violence of World War 1. Love is the guiding force of his life and he is loyal and devoted to Catherine. He remains truthful to Catherine to her last breath; he has fought for his love. He shows valor in front of threat and death while escaping the battle. His ideology is not socially or religiously decided but it was his personal code of ethics.

F. For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940): is another novel written by Hemingway. The set is of Spanish civil war 1936-39. Robert Jordan is the central character and the code hero of this novel. This dignified young man is an American volunteer and a dynamiter involved in the Republican guerrilla unit to explode a bridge during the Segovia Offensive on the backdrop of Spanish Civil war. This duty itself can cost his life. But as a typical code hero he is abide by to execute his duty responsibly and maintain his dignity under tremendous pressure. He is in constant conflict to choose between his collective responsibility and his personal happiness. He is passionately in love with the Spanish young woman, Maria, a poor victim of the war. Both of her parents are brutally assassinated in the warfare and she is brutally raped by Falangists. In spite of knowing the futility of the war he had to carry out his work for collective interest as "*No man is an island, entire of itself.*"In the end of the novel Jordan is severely wounded and does his duty quite well.

Till his last breath he has executed his personal duty as a lover to retain Maria in a safe custody with the surviving guerrillas and as a volunteer he has tried his best to keep himself conscious to launch his ambush in the perfect time. Robert Jordan is a true code hero who is brave, courageous, dutiful, and responsible and accepted the inevitable without complaining. He is an expert in demolition has fought sincerely. He has served his allotted work with great effort. He has sacrificed his individual happiness for the sake of others. Acknowledging very well about the destructive nature of his duty, the constant threats of war he has never escaped rather maintained his calmness in front of death.

G. The Old Man and the Sea (1952): is the last major literary work of fiction of Hemingway published in 1952. Santiago is the protagonist and the typical code hero of this novella. This old Cuban fisherman suffers a lot in his life. From the last 84 days he has not got success in fishing. He is ambitious to get Marlin, an 18ft big fish in the Gulf Stream. Though fortune is not in his favor but his indomitable will power, boldness and perseverance proves him win over the giant marlin. He defeats his 'brother', the magnificent fish after struggling continuously for three days. The sharks eat most of the flesh of the fish and what Santiago get is only its skeleton which proves the old man's worth and calm endurance of the unavoidable and uncontrollable adverse destiny. Manolin constantly admires and serves Santiago, his mentor. After this incident they again decide to out for fishing. Santiago never indulges hopelessness and idle life. He keeps on working on his skill. This bold old man never loses his hope. Fishing is his passion and motivation of life. He is self-directed and fights for his ambition alone in his vulnerable old age also he remains stoic, and maintains a dignified calmness throughout his journey and is very much aware of his self-worth and skillfulness. "Pain does not matter to a man," is the underlying spirit of this hardworking, determined old man who himself is an inspiration for the youth. His feeble, exhausted physique did not yield to the external violent nature due to his indomitable spirit.

H. Major Theoretical Approaches:

1. Existentialism- All the Hemingway code heroes had established their own meaning in the post war meaningless, chaotic and absurd world through following their own, self-imposed code of ethics, individuality, idealism, endurance, responsibility, value system and dignified personalities.

2. Modernism: Fragmentation, alienation, unconventional, following individual beliefs, spiritual crisis, experimentation, anti-hero features, disillusionment with war and life, minimalistic style of writing, loss of faith in religion or institution are the common aftermaths of World War 1 and are applicable for all the Hemingway code heroes.

3. Masculinity Studies/Gender Theory: traditional values for masculinity collapses. Emasculation post World War 1 is symbolically shown by the sexual impotence of Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*. Masculinity is redefined after the Great War it is not always power or dominance or physical strength it is something internal. It can express itself from self-restraint and endurance in case of Jake Barnes despite his impotence, with devotion, discipline and determination like Santiago despite his age and feeble physique.

4. Trauma Theory: The war leaves a great scar on everyone. After the war people were suffering from unspeakable trauma, faithlessness, alienation, disenchantment and detachment. The suffering was silent. People cannot communicate or connect with each other.

5. Ecocriticism: Nature is a refuge for the exhausted people. Nature rejuvenates the inner spirit. Boating, fishing recreates human beings. There is a strong interconnection and interdependence between human and nature. For Hemingway nature is the place of refuge, revitalization and rebirth. "*Nature is the place where men act without women: men fish, men hunt, men find redemption.*"

IV. CONCLUSION

Earnest Hemingway was a legendary literary figure of the 20thc American literature. He has established a milestone in English literature by creating an ideal of code hero whose character itself is a direction in extreme chaos. These characters do not follow any specific rules and regulations but follow some internal, strict set of codes of conduct which made them real heroes. They teach humanity how to remain calm and composed in utter chaos and how to remain stoic when there is nothing left. They can start from absolute helplessness and through persistent effort; patience and moral strength can achieve the unimaginable. They reject any kind of despair or hopelessness despite their own shortcomings and weakness.

These heroes are not epic heroes of extraordinary power rather they are the real life common human beings who achieve success through perseverance, discipline, self control and tremendous will power. They are not only heroes they are inspirations for the people who are in absolute turmoil but want to achieve success and prove their worth at any cost only relying on their own skill and effort. World War was unable to wipe out their inner spirit. These heroes have shown how to stand tall in sheer despair and have rejected to be lost with time and in the meaninglessness of the vain war rather with the glory of their character they become timeless characters of Literature.

REFERENCES

- [1] Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. Scribner, 2006.
- [2] Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. Scribner, 2012.
- [3] Hemingway, Ernest. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Scribner, 2003.
- [4] Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*. Scribner, 1995.
- [5] Alex, Rayson K., S. Susan Deborah & Sachindev P.S. *Culture and Media: Ecocritical Explorations*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- [6] Barry, Peter. "Ecocriticism". *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3rd ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009.
- [7] Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- [8] Bladow, Kyle and Jennifer Ladino (Eds). "Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment". Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.
- [9] Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- [10] Bilbro, Jeffrey. *Loving God's Wildness: The Christian Roots of Ecological Ethics in American Literature*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015.
- [11] Putnam, Thomas (August 15, 2016). "Hemingway on War and Its Aftermath". *archives.gov*. Archived from the original on October 18, 2012. Retrieved July 11, 2017.
- [12] Meyers, Jeffrey. (1985). *Hemingway: A Biography*. New York: Macmillan. ISBN 978-0-333-42126-0
- [13] Meyers, Jeffrey. (2020). "Gregory Hemingway: Transgender Tragedy". *American Imago*, Volume 77, issue 2. 395–417
- [14] Herlihy-Mera, Jeffrey (2023). "The Sun Also Rises: A Pilgrimage Novel". *The Hemingway Review*. 42 (2): 25–55 [https://www.academia.edu/101457931/](https://www.academia.edu/101457931)
- [15] Herlihy-Mera, Jeffrey (2012). "When Hemingway Hated Paris: Divorce Proceedings, Contemplations of Suicide, and the Deleted Chapters of *The Sun Also Rises*". *Studies in the Novel*. 44 (1): 49–61
- [16] Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.
- [17] Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery*. Basic Books, 2015.
- [18] LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2014.
- [19] Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh UP, 2004.
- [20] Luckhurst, Roger. *The Trauma Question*. Routledge, 2013.
- [21] Baker, Carlos (1987). "The Wastelanders". in Bloom, Harold (ed). *Modern Critical Interpretations: Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises"*. New York: Chelsea House. ISBN 978-1-55546-053-2
- [22] Herlihy, Jeffrey. (2011). *Hemingway's Expatriate Nationalism*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. ISBN 978-90-420-3409-9
- [23] Balassi, William (1990). "Hemingway's Greatest Iceberg: The Composition of *The Sun Also Rises*". in Barbour, James and Quirk, Tom (eds). *Writing the American Classics*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP. ISBN 978-0-8078-1896-1
- [24] Fiedler, Leslie (1975). *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Stein and Day. ISBN 978-0-8128-1799-7
- [25] Meyers, Jeffrey (1985). *Hemingway: A Biography*. London: Macmillan. ISBN 0-333-42126-4.
- [26] Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed., Polity Press, 2005.
- [27] Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- [28] Moddelmog, Debra A. "Reconstructing Hemingway's Masculinity." *American Literature*, vol. 68, no. 4, 1996, pp. 747–770.
- [29] Strychacz, Thomas. *Hemingway's Theaters of Masculinity*. LSU Press, 2003.
- [30] Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, editors. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature*. Penguin, 1991.
- [31] Childs, Peter. *Modernism*. Routledge, 2008.
- [32] Lewis, Pericles. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 2010.
- [33] Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed., Cengage, 2015.
- [34] Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. 4th ed., Manchester UP, 2017.
- [35] Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.
- [36] Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage, 1991.
- [37] Camus, Albert. *The Rebel*. Vintage, 1992.
- [38] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. Yale UP, 2007.
- [39] Hemingway, Ernest. (1929). *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Scribner. ISBN 978-1-4767-6452-8
- [40] Kaufmann, Walter, editor. *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Meridian, 1975.
- [41] Earnshaw, Steven. *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Bloomsbury, 2006.
- [42] Baker, Carlos. *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*. Princeton UP, 1972.
- [43] Bloom, Harold, editor. *Ernest Hemingway*. Chelsea House, 2005.
- [44] Cowley, Malcolm. *The Portable Hemingway*. Penguin Classics, 2003.
- [45] Meyers, Jeffrey. *Hemingway: A Biography*. Da Capo Press, 1999.
- [46] Nagel, James. *Hemingway in Love and War*. Northeastern UP, 1996.
- [47] Reynolds, Michael. *Hemingway's Reading, 1910–1940*. Princeton UP, 1981.
- [48] Spilka, Mark. *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny*. University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
- [49] Tyler, Lisa. "The Masculinity of Survival in Hemingway's Fiction." *The Hemingway Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2011, pp. 45–62.



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435(Online)) Volume 15, Issue 01, January 2026

- [50] Brenner, Gerry. *The Old Man and the Sea: Story of a Common Man*. Twayne, 2019.
- [51] Moddelmog, Debra A., and Suzanne del Gizzo, editors. *Hemingway and the Body*. Kent State UP, 2016.
- [52] Putnam, Ann. "Trauma and Silence in Hemingway's War Fiction." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2015, pp. 75–92.
- [53] Strong, Amy L. *Race and Identity in Hemingway's Fiction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- [54] Trogdon, Robert W. *The Lonesome Voice: Hemingway's Heroic Code Revisited*. LSU Press, 2020.
- [55] Beegel, Susan. (1996). "Conclusion: The Critical Reputation", in Donaldson, Scott (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-45574-9
- [56] Beegel, Susan (2000). "Eye and Heart: Hemingway's Education as a Naturalist", in Wagner-Martin, Linda (ed.), *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-512152-0
- [57] Beegel, Susan. (2017) "Review of Hemingway's Brain, by Andrew Farah". *The Hemingway Review*. Volume 37, no. 1. 122–127.