

Ernest Hemingway's Used of Symbolism is Expression of Inner World in 'A Farewell to Arms'

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Abstract

Hemingway is an American novelist famous for his wise use of symbolism in his novels. His novel 'A Farewell to Arms' has a wide range of symbols in it. It mostly exhibits symbols related to nature like rain, mountains, sun etc. This masterpiece is Hemingway's magnum opus and a delight to read in true sense. Symbolism is a literary device wherein a system of symbols is used as a representation or expression of something underlying that which is being used as a symbol. Hemingway had a theory that prose fiction is like an ice-berg of which only one-eighth is visible above the surface of the water. Therefore, it is peculiar to his styles that he makes aware of the existence of something by a method of commutation. Hemingway's works therefore abound in symbols and in images that were symbols of an inner world. In A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway has portrayed certain things as major symbols, for example the mountains, the plains, the seasons and the rain. The three major and chief symbols in the novel, A Farewell to Arms are- Rain, The Mountains and The Plains. The Mountains symbolize Home and Plain symbolize lack of shelter, low security, danger, destruction, obscenity, loss of faith in God.

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Introduction

There are many uses of symbolism in Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms. Most of the symbolism is hidden so that the reader must fully comprehend the novel before realizing and understanding the symbolism. Ernest Hemingway embodies the external reality's world in his novels and short stories. Hemingway is treated as a Naturalist because of his excellent treatment with his interest War, hunting, fishing and bull-fighting. Hemingway's realism had deep suggestiveness but he made use of his symbols judiciously. Although this use of Symbolism is limited but he uses it very finely and he is a very fine Symbolist. Hemingway's works were not only a factual account description but they also acquired deep meaning through the use of Symbolism. His art is permanent and it is built on the foundation of mixing truth and symbolism. He borrows his symbolism from the material world. Three important qualities of the novel one would have to understand to know about the symbolization of darkness are mood, setting, and danger. Knowing the mood will show the reader the feeling of the novel.

Objectives

1. To Understand, How his art is permanent and it is built on the foundation of mixing truth and symbolism.
2. To Highlighting the use of symbolism for the expression of the inner world.
3. To know, how Hemingway is treated as a Naturalist.

Research Methodology

The research is based on the secondary data collected through various resources like journals, books, and web sites.

Concepts of Home and Not-Home

The sub-surface activity of A Farewell to Arms is organized not actively around two poles: the images tend to build round the opposed concepts of Home and Not-Home, each concept being a kind of poetic Tuition, charged with emotional values. The Home concept is associated with the mountains; with dry-cold weather; with peace and quiet; with love, Aconite, health, happiness, and the good life; and with worship or at least on sciousness of God. The Not-Home concept is

associated with low-lying plains: with rain and fog: with obscenity, indignity, disease, suffering, nervousness, war and death; and with irreligion.

Abruzzi Versus the Whorehouse

Henry's Furlough Merely introduced in the first sentence of the first chapter, the mountain- image begins to develop as early as Chapter 2. Learning that Frederic Henry is about to go on leave, the young priest urges him to visit Capracotta in Abruzzi. There", he says, is good hunting. You would like the people and though it is cold, it is clear and dry. You could stay with my family. My father is a famous hunter." But the lowlander infantry chaplain interrupts: "Come on", he says in pidgin Italian to Frederick Henry, "We go whorehouse before it shuts". After Henry's return from the leave, during which he has been almost everywhere else on the Italian peninsula except Abruzzi, the mountain-image gets further support from another low-land contrast. "I had wanted", says he, to go to Abruzzi. I had gone to no place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry and the snow was dry and powdery and the peasants took off their hats and called you Lord and there was good hunting. I had gone to no such place but to the smoke of cafes and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it Stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was."

Mountains Versus Plains

Throughout Book I, Hemingway quietly consolidates the mountain- image. On the way up towards the Isonzo from Gorizia, Henry looks across the river and the plain to the Julian and Carnic Alps: "looked to the north at the two ranges of mountains, green and dark to the snow-line and then white and lovely in the sun. Then I saw a third range of mountains...» lowers his eyes from the far-off ranges, he sees the plain and the river, the Hemingway 1S using the mountains symbolically. When Frederic Henry war-making equipment, and the broken houses of the little town". Already new mountain-image has developed associations with the man of God and his homeland, with clear dry cold and snow, with polite and kindly people, with hospitality, and with natural beauty. Already it has its oppositions: the lowland obscenities of the priest-baiting captain, cheap cafes, one-night prostitutes, drunkenness, destruction, and the war.

Priest's Homeland

When the trench-mortar explosion nearly kills Henry, the priest comes to visit him in the field-hospital, and the Abruzzi homeland acquires a religious association. There in my country", says the priest, "it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke". Repeating for emphasis, the effect of the priest's first account of the highland country, Hemingway allows Henry to develop in his mind's eye an idyllic picture of the priest's home-ground.

Home and High Ground

By the close of Book I, largely through the agency of the priest, a complex connection has been established between the idea of Home and the combination of high ground, cold weather, love, and the love of God. Throughout, Hemingway has worked solely by suggestion, implication, and quiet repetition, preparing the reader for what is to come.

Catherine, Symbolic of Home

The next step is to bring Catherine Barkley by degrees into

the centre of the image. Her love-affair with Henry begins as a 'rotten game" of war-time seduction. Still emotionally unstable from her fiance's death, Catherine is a comparatively easy conquest. But in the American hospital at Milan, following Henry's ordeal by fire at the front not far from the Isonzo, the casual affair becomes an honourable though unchristened marriage. Because she can make a home" of any room she occupies-and Henry several times alludes to this power of hers Catherine naturally moves into association with ideas of home, love, and happiness. She does not really reach the centre of the mountain image until, on the heels of Henry's harrowing lowland experiences during the retreat from Caporetto, the lovers move to Switzerland. Catherine is the first to go, and Henry follows her as if she were the genius of the mountains, beckoning him on. Soon they are settled into a supremely happy life in the winter land on the mountainside above Montreux. Catherine's death occurs at Lausanne, after the March rains and the approaching need for a good lying-in hospital have driven the couple down from their magic mountain the closest approximation to the priest's fair homeland in Abruzzi that they are ever to know.

The Total Structure

The total structure of the novel is developed, in fact, around the series of contrasting situations already outlined. To Gorizia, the Not-Home of war, succeeds the Home which Catherine and Henry make together in the Milan Hospital. The Not-Home of the grim retreat from the Isonzo is followed by the quiet and happy retreat which the lovers share above Montreux. Home ends for Henry when he leaves Catherine dead in the Lausanne Hospital.

Rain as a Symbol

The use of rain as a kind of symbol in the novel has been widely and properly admired. Less apparent to the cursory reader is the way in which the whole idea of climate is related to the natural-mythological structure. The rains begin in Italy during October, just before Henry's return to Gorizia after his recovery from his wounds. The rains continue, at first steadily, then intermittently, throughout the disastrous retreat, Henry's flight to Stresa, and the time of his reunion with Catherine. When they awake in the morning after their reunion night, the rain has stopped, light floods the window and Henry can see Lake Maggiore in the sun with the mountains beyond". Towards these mountains the lovers now depart.

Idyllic Life in the Mountains

Not until they are settled in their quiet, idyllic life in a rented chalet above Montreux, are they really out of the rain. As if to emphasize by climatic accompaniment their struggles, the rain has swept over them during their escape up the lake in an open boat. Once in the mountains, however, they are out of the lowlands, out of danger, out of the huge, tired debacle of the war. Above Montreux, the ridges are "iron hard with the frost". The deep snow isolates them, and gives them a feeling of domestic safety, tranquillity, and invulnerability. For several months the rainless idyll continues. In March comes the first break in the winter, and it starts raining.

Catherine's Fear of Rain

The reader has been prepared to recognize some kind of disaster-symbol in the return of the rain. Much as in Romeo and Juliet, several earlier premonitions of doom have been inserted at intervals. I'm afraid of the rain", says Catherine in

the Milan Hospital one summer night, "because sometimes I see me dead in it". In the fall, just before Henry returns to the front, they are in a Milan hotel. During a break in the conversation the sound of falling rain comes in. Henry has to take a cab to catch the train that will carry him, though he does not know it yet, into the disaster of the great retreat. Months later, in Lausanne, the sound of the rain continues until, with Catherine dead in the hospital, Henry walks back to the hotel in the rain.

Rinaldi Versus the Priest

The contrast between the priest and the doctor, the man of God and the man without God, * provides one further reinforcement to the central symbolic structure. The contrast between the two men becomes more marked when Henry returns to the Gorizia area following his discharge from the hospital.

The Depressing Effects of War

The return to Gorizia is a depressing event. After the "home-feeling" of the hospital and the hotel in Milan, the old army post seems less like home than ever. The tenor of life has noticeably changed. Morale is low. The major, explaining the state of affairs to Henry, uses the word "bad" repeatedly, When Henry picks up the word and asks "Is it so bad" ? the major's reply is: "It is so bad and worse".

The Man without Resources

With Rinaldi the doctor, things also are bad, though not from professional point of view because he has performed many operations on wounded soldiers. He is not the old Mercutio-like and mercurial Rinaldi. Except for his work, and the temporary opiates of drink and prostitutes, both of which interfere with his work, Rinaldi, the man of the plains, the man without God, is a man without resources.

The Priest, a Contrast to Rinaldi

With the priest, the man from the Abruzzi highlands, reintroduced as a contrast to Rinaldi, things are not so bad, "He was the same as ever", says Henry, "small and brown and compact-looking", He is much more sure of himself than formerly, though in a modest way. When Rinaldi, in the absence of the foul-mouthed captain, takes up the former indoor game of priest-baiting, the priest is not perturbed. "I could see", says Henry, "that the baiting did not touch him now".

The Priest's Strength

Out of the evils of the past summer the priest has even managed to draw a faint hope. Officers and men, he thinks, are gentling down because they realize the war as never before. When this happens, the fight cannot continue for 'very much longer. Henry argues that what the priest calls "gentling down" is really nothing but the feeling of defeat: It is in defeat that we become Christian like Our Lord". But the priest does not agree that Christ's humility sprang from the terrible ordeal to which he was being subjected. From his belief comes the priest's strength. He has resources which Dr. Rinaldi, the man without God, does not possess. *Tn lin

Sacred Versus Profane Love

The priest-doctor contrast is carried out in the sacred-versus-profan love antithesis in the novel. Through the agency of Rinaldi the love-affair begins at a fairly low level. The doctor introduces Henry to Catherine, and takes a jocularly profane

view of the early infatuation, thinking it to be just a case of war-time seduction. On the other hand, the background symbols of home and true love and high ground suggest that the lovers' idyllic life in Switzerland is carried on under the spiritual auspices of the priest- neither Rinaldi nor the priest appears in the latter part of the novel. But when, having been driven to the lowlands, Catherine enters the hospital, it is naturally enough a doctor who takes over. And though this doctor does all he can to save her life, Catherine dies. A Farewell to Arms is a naturalistic novel, telling the truth about the effects of war in human life. But to read it only as such would be to miss the controlling symbolism: the deep central antithesis between the image of life and home (the mountain) and the image of war and death (the plain).

Conclusion

In A Farewell to Arms Hemingway consistently used rain as a signal of disaster. The very first chapter contains, towards the end, the following sentence: "At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera". Catherine Barkley is afraid of the rain because, she says, "sometimes I see me dead in it". Rain falls throughout the retreat from Caporetto; it falls when Catherine is trying to have her baby in a Swiss hospital; and it is still falling when she dies and when Henry pushes the nurses out of the room to be alone with her. It wasn't any good", he tells us. It was like saying goodbye to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain". Rain has thus a symbolic significance in the story.

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