

**TRAGIC EXPERIENCE
IN
ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S NOVELS**

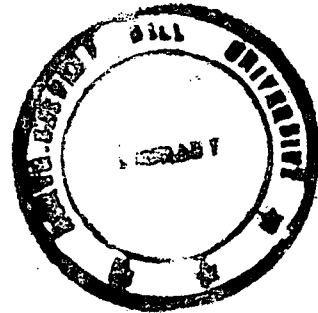
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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

TO



**THE NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
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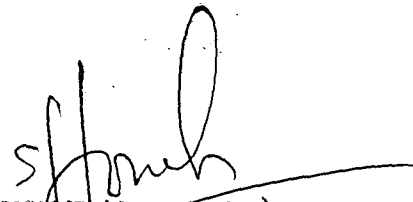
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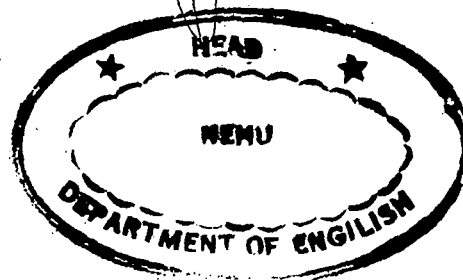
Certified that the dissertation entitled "Tragic Experience in Ernest Hemingway's Novels", submitted by Kiran Chandra Bhuyan embodies the record of original insight, carried out by him under my supervision.

He has been duly registered and the dissertation presented, is worthy of being considered for the award of the M.Phil degree.


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PREFACE

" Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear ? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach : not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is --- to die soon."

----- Nietzsche

Birth of Tragedy : Section 3.

It is the intention of every great novelist to represent through his stories the felt reality of life and the living. Hemingway was one such story-teller who not only rendered his sense of life but also probed deep into the problem of human existence in a world fraught with evil and in surroundings which are definitely hostile. Hemingway's novels bring into sharp focus the unavoidable and terrible predicament of man. He presents not only man's fears and failings but also his courage, his unflinching nature and ability to accept his final fate with grace.

He was positively aware of the sure but unpredictable

menace in the human situation. Bitter experiences in life had taught him that life is essentially volatile and his writings reveal a cosmic sense of the problem of evil and the mystery of the cruelty of things. But his total outlook remains positive.

In spite of all the suffering and the cruel nature of man's lot, Hemingway affirms that life is sublime, beautiful, joyous and worth living.


In my attempt to present Hemingway's tragic view of life I have chosen A Farewell To Arms, For Whom The Bell Tolls and The Old Man And The Sea which represent that vision in a gradual process of unfolding. I have divided my work into five chapters, namely, (1) The Introduction which I have titled HEMINGWAY AND THE IMPERILLED HUMAN SITUATION, (2) FIRST ESSAY IN THE TRAGIC, (3) EPIC STRUGGLE AND NEAR TRANSMUTATION, (4) DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH, (5) CONCLUSION. In the first chapter I have presented a general picture of the theories of tragedy as had been mooted by different philosophers, namely, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Hegel and the position Hemingway's protagonists occupy in the light of these theories.

In Chapter II (Based on A Farewell To Arms) I have

tried to show that the hero, Frederick Henry, through his bitter personal experiences gets an insight and becomes aware of the tragic nature of life and man's unenviable predicament. Though awareness dawns upon him yet at the end of the novel we find him a confused man, quite uncertain and unable to accept his fate graciously.

The next chapter, based on For Whom The Bell Tolls, suggests a progress in Hemingway's design in that the hero, Robert Jordan, is aware of the tragic nature of man's existence and knowing that he cannot avoid it, he at least finds some satisfaction in sublimating his love for Maria.

Chapter IV marks the height of Hemingway's genius. In this chapter, based on The Old Man And The Sea, I have shown that Hemingway has reached the high-water-mark as a tragic writer. In Santiago's victory over the fish, his suffering and agony in trying to retain it and his defeat and ultimate triumph, Hemingway paints in no uncertain terms a picture of the tragedy implicit in life and of the stuff man is made of. Notwithstanding the presence of the cosmic evil that engulfs him he, Hemingway, shows what man is made of and what he is capable of achieving against seemingly hopeless odds. He has shown that though life is uncertain



and volatile, one can still live it fully, joyously and learn to cherish it, that the joy of life and the living lies not in abject surrender to the inevitable but in struggle, in pain and in contemplation and self-purification through suffering.

As suggested by the title itself, the final chapter, the Conclusion, is a summary of all that goes before. In this chapter I have shown the connecting thread between the novels and the way Hemingway's tragic vision is developed from A Farewell To Arms to The Old Man And The Sea.

Shillong, the
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TRAGIC EXPERIENCE IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S NOVELS

With particular reference to:

1. A FAREWELL TO ARMS
2. FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS
3. THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

CHAPTER - I

Introduction

HEMINGWAY AND THE IMPERILLED HUMAN SITUATION

INTRODUCTION:-

HEMINGWAY AND THE IMPERILLED HUMAN SITUATION

John O'Hara once referred to Ernest Hemingway as " the most important author since the death of Shakespeare."1 It is true that Shakespeare's canvas was larger and wider than that used by Hemingway. The similarity arises and is nowhere more prominent than in their treatment and portrayal of the tragic sense of life. Hemingway does not wallow in the quagmire of despair, but like Shakespeare sings of the dignity and splendour of life and living. Life has its inescapable tragic dimensions, but they are to be treated unflinchingly. What was of utmost importance to him was that life was to be lived fully and meaningfully, regardless of the stumbling blocks that might be encountered on the way in the journey through life.

In order to portray man's terrible predicament, his grit, courage, and nobility in the face of insurmountable odds, Hemingway chose the best suited and only medium open to him --- Tragedy. Almost all of Hemingway's major novels are stories of the terrible and terrifying predicament of man. Man is pitted again

1. Ernest Hemingway - Carlos Baker; Penguin Books; p 741

and again against the hostile unknown which is continually at work to stifle and suffocate him and destroy his every design and aspiration. The titanic struggle engaged in by his heroes and the fluctuating fortunes they undergo, arouse our admiration, sympathy, pity and fear - the emotions appropriate to tragedy. That he chose tragedy as his medium of expression was simply because tragedy is the best medium which directly appeals to our deeper instincts and susceptibilities. Thus a proper appreciation of Hemingway's tragic vision would seem to call for a careful look at the various theories of tragedy set forth by philosophers down the ages.

Tragedy and Aristotle are synonymous. One of the earliest of the philosophers, Aristotle defined tragedy as " the imitation of an action, serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in a language beautified in different parts with different kinds of embellishment, through action and not narration, and through scenes of pity and fear bringing about the ' Catharsis ' of these (or such like) emotions."2 It can be defined as a story of collision or conflict. The conflict may be a conflict of feelings, of modes of thought, of desires, wills or purposes. It may also be a conflict of persons with one another, or with circumstances or with themselves;

2. Aristotle. Poetics; A translation and commentary for students of literature.

Translation by Leon Golden. Commentary by G.B. Hardison, Jr. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1968. p 36

one, several or all of these kinds of conflict as the case may be. Originating in a fatal error of judgement, tragedy is a tale of reversal and suffering, leading to self-knowledge and arousing the emotions of pity and terror.

Aristotle's theory of the tragic is aptly portrayed in the dramas of Sophocles. King Oedipus was noble and well-beloved by his people. But in attempting to purge his kingdom of a pervading evil, he himself falls prey to a terrifying destiny he so vainly tries to escape. The evil that swamped his kingdom and for which he was in search was none other than himself, - condemned unawares to slay the father who begot him and marry the woman who mothered him and be both a father and a brother to the children he begot. This unimaginably horrifying knowledge leads Jocasta, both his mother and wife, to death. Shamed, guilt-ridden and in terror he blinds himself and goes into self-banishment from the kingdom he ruled.

No less catastrophic is the story of Antigone, the daughter of King Oedipus. After Oedipus's banishment, Antigone's uncle, Creon becomes the new ruler. But soon thereafter trouble brews in the kingdom

and in the ensuing battle, Antigone's brother, Polynices is killed. Since he had fought against the State, Creon passes an edict forbidding the burial of the traitor Polynices. Antigone, on her part is, however, determined to do her duty towards her dead brother. The intentions of both Antigone and Creon are good, but the demands made by them are incompatible with each other. The family (Antigone) claims what the State (Creon) refuses; honour requires what the law forbids. The forces at conflict (i.e. Antigone and Creon) are both in themselves rightful, and the claim of each is equally justified; but the right of each is pushed into a wrong because it ignores the right of the other, and demands that absolute sway which belongs to neither alone.

Creon is determined to do his duty as a King and carry out the law to the last word even if it means the death of a member of the family. For he says ---

" This girl's proud spirit
 Was first in evidence when she broke the law;
 And now, to add insult to her injury,
 She gloats over her deed. But, as I live,
 She shall not flout my orders with impunity.
 My sister's child - ay, were she even nearer,

Nearest and dearest, she should not escape
Full punishment --- " .

Antigone, on her part, is also determined to do her duty towards her dead brother, Polynices. She knew very well that the law forbade the burial of Polynices and also that the penalty had to be paid for disobeying the order. And yet she breaks the law. When Creon questions her as to whether she knew of the order forbidding such an act, she replies, - " I knew it naturally. It was plain enough ". And when Creon asks, " And you dared to contravene it ? ", she simply replies, " Yes " .

The end of the tragic conflict is the denial of both the exclusive claims.

One reason why the conflict arises lies in the nature of the principal characters themselves. It is the nature of the tragic hero at once his greatness and his doom, that he knows no shirking or half-heartedness, but identifies himself wholly with the power that moves him, and will admit the justification of no other power. However varied and rich his inner life and character may be, in the conflict it is all concentrated in one point. Creon is determined to do his duty as a King. No less resolute is Antigone to do her duty as a sister towards her dead brother. Similar is the case with King Oedipus. They all behave in a manner that contributes to

their own downfall.

Aristotle's views on tragedy were, however, brought into better focus by Shakespeare. In Shakespeare, as with the ancient Greeks, tragedy "is concerned always with persons of 'high degree'; often with Kings or Princes; if not, with leaders in the State like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony; at the least, as in Romeo and Juliet, with members of great houses whose quarrels are of public moment." Even Othello "is no mere private person; he is the General of the Republic".³ A man of standing was chosen because, "the story of the Prince, the triumvir, or the General, has a greatness and dignity of its own. His fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire; and when he falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man, and of the omnipotence - perhaps the caprice - of Fortune or Fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival."⁴

Another characteristic conspicuous in Shakespeare is "Hamartia" or the tragic flaw which refers to the error of judgement on the part of the protagonist.

3. Shakespearean Tragedy - A.C. Bradley; p 18

A Fawcett Premier Book. Fawcett Publications Inc.
Greenwich

4. Ibid. p 19

A good example (incidentally, applicable to all of Shakespeare's tragic heroes) of hamartia is Othello. Hopelessly in love with his beautiful wife Desdemona , Othello falls a victim to his own unwarranted jealousy. The wicked Iago is easily able to mislead Othello into thinking that his wife is guilty of infidelity. Despite being a great General and an able administrator, Othello cannot suppress his inherent dormant jealousy. Iago's cruel insinuations find fertile ground in Othello's imagination, and it is only a matter of time before calamity strikes and the catastrophe occurs.

To the characteristics already mentioned, we can add yet another, namely the element of chance, or fate or accident. It was an act of fate that Romeo never got the Friar's message about the potion and that Juliet did not awake from her long sleep a minute sooner; it was fate again that Edgar arrived at the prison too late to save Cordelia's life and it was the same force at work yet again, that made Desdemona drop her handkerchief at the most fatal of moments. Now, these particular turns of events though not calculated, do occur and are a part of human life. Indeed, man may unwittingly be the cause of starting a chain of events which he can neither calculate nor comprehend nor control.

And that is a tragic fact, very ably put in the words of Jocasta, when she tells her husband King Oedipus, -

" Do not concern yourself about this matter;
listen to me and learn that human beings
have no part in the craft of prophecy " 5

Another philosopher, Schopenhauer, defined tragedy as a clash of ' wills '. 'Will' may be defined as " that which in self-consciousness and hence subjectively, is the intellect, presents itself in the consciousness of other things, and hence objectively, as the brain; and that which in self-consciousness, and hence subjectively, is the will, presents itself in the consciousness of other things, and hence objectively, as the entire organism".⁶ According to Schopenhauer's theory, all energy is accumulated in a universal soul which he refers to as the Will. This universal soul being composed of energy feels the need every now and then to express itself and it does so assuming different and various forms, - " it concerns merely the individual which for a short time is my bearer, and which, like everything else, is my representation." ⁷ These forms were not

5. Oedipus the King; p 141; Lines 707-709

Greek Tragedies Vol. I ; Ed. by David Greene and Richard Lattimore. Phoenix Books. Published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois. U.S.A.

6. The World as Will and Representation, Vol. II - Arthur Schopenhauer; Translated from the German by E.F.J. Payne; Dover Publications Inc. New York. p 245

7. Ibid. p 18

separate entities but only a part or expression of the central universal soul. Conflict arose because these different forms of expressions of the universal soul tried or attempted to dominate or assert their separate wills against one another. The resultant conflict and consequent tragedy that is bound to occur, brings about a resolution to the conflict and the conflict now being resolved, the various wills which were at conflict now return to the central universal soul till such time when the entire process is repeated again. It is evident therefore that Schopenhauer is of the opinion that tragedy belongs to a vicious circle. The conflict occurs; it is resolved and re-occurs again, perhaps and more likely in different shapes or forms. From this premise we can safely venture to say that Oedipus, Othello, Romeo, Juliet, Frederick Henry, Robert Jordan and even the old fisherman Santiago are all personified expressions of the Will or universal soul. They all belong to the same core but assume different shapes and sizes. They also behave differently according to the needs of the situation and the parts they were pre-determined to play. This argument necessarily leads to the implication that life itself is pre-determined; in which case it would automatically follow that tragedy too is pre-determined. A likely question now would be that, if life and tragedy is

predetermined, why then does tragedy move us in the way it does? The answer is simple. Because it appeals to our deeper instincts and susceptibilities and continually reminds us and drives home to us the fact that encased in a frail shell of flesh and bone, man is essentially alone; doomed to a life where his only escape lies in death. Tragedy brings us face to face with the very questions of our existence. It also shows us that despite man's limitations, he does not surrender meekly but is spurred on to battle heroically against the forces threatening him and thus purge his soul. As Hemingway would have put it, - the idea was to go down in a blaze of glory.

Nietzsche, yet another German philosopher, has more or less similar views to propagate. But unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche defined tragedy as a conflict between the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements culminating in the victory of the former over the latter. But it is Nietzsche himself who says that it is the Dionysian element which is responsible for the birth of the Apollonian order, "out of the original Titanic divine order of terror, the Olympian divine order of joy gradually evolved through the Apollonian impulse toward beauty, just as roses burst from thorny bushes --- " 8

8. Basic Writings of Nietzsche - Translated and Edited with Commentaries by Walter Kaufmann.

The Modern Library ; New York 1968.

p 42

thereby once again asserting what has already been suggested that, tragedy is inherent in the forces of life. Tragic emotions are aroused in us only because the principal characters, caught unawares in their terrible predicament, vainly struggle to escape their fate they have brought upon themselves by a flawed perception and an irresistible will. We sympathise with them in their lot and feel pity in their doom. But even in their fall they attract our admiration by their resolute and raw courage against the unbeatable odds. Their futile but valiant struggle hold us in awe because we too are but puppets in the scheme of the awesome unknown. And this is precisely what Hemingway attempts to bring to our notice in his novels, - man's commitment, love, raw courage against hostile odds, his defeat and fall and his ultimate moral victory.

No study of tragedy would be complete without taking a glance at Hegel, another German, and in all probability the greatest theoretician after Aristotle. " For to Hegel belongs the credit of demonstrating afresh that not the flower and fruit but the entire and living root of our philosophy is still the thought of Plato and Aristotle --- "9 Hegel accepted the

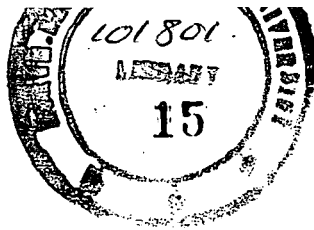
9. An Introduction to Hegel - G.R.G.Mure
Oxford University Press, 1970.
p ix (Preface)

general Aristotelian principle of development. " He strove to close the chasm between the absolutely real and the relatively potential by recasting and absorbing within the absolutely real the whole succession of stages which in the Aristotelian system had led up to but failed to reach it; and he endeavoured in so doing to dominate the residue of contingency which Aristotle had abandoned as intractable.

For Hegel Aristotle's supreme achievement was his identification of fully substantial being with spirit (Geist), and his firmly grasped conception of spirit as in its essence activity; i.e., as that which has activity and is active, but as that which is activity."¹⁰

We are already aware that a tragedy is a story of suffering; but Hegel maintains that mere suffering is not tragic but only that suffering which comes of a special kind of action. Pity for mere misfortune, like fear of it, is not tragic pity or fear. These are due to the spectacle of the conflict and its attendant suffering, which appeal not only to our sensibilities or our instincts of self-preservation, but also to our mind and spirit, which Hegel refers to as the " Geist ".

10. Ibid. pp 52,53.



Hegel argues that the reason why the tragic conflict thus appeals to the spirit is that it is itself a conflict of the spirit (One may note the similarity with Schopenhauer's theory). It is a conflict between powers that rule the world of man's will and constitute his " ethical substance ". The family and the State, the bond of parent and child, of brother and sister, of husband and wife, of citizen and ruler, or citizen and citizen, with the obligations and feelings appropriate to these bonds; and again the powers of personal love and honour, or of devotion to a great cause or an ideal interest like religion or science or some kind of social welfare, such are the forces exhibited in tragic action; not indeed alone, not without other less affirmative and perhaps even evil forces but always in compulsive ascendance. And they form the substance of man, are common to all civilised men, and are acknowledged as powers rightfully claiming human allegiance; their exhibition in tragedy has that interest, at once deep and universal, which is essential to a great work of art.

In many a work of art, in many a statue, picture, tale or song, such powers are shown in solitary peace

or harmonious co-operation. Tragedy shows them in collision. Their nature is divine, and in religion they appear as gods; but, as seen in the world of tragic action, they have left the repose of Olympus, have entered into human wills and now meet as foes. And this spectacle, if sublime, is also terrible. The essentially tragic fact is the self-division and intestinal warfare of the ethical substance; not so much the war of good with evil as the war of good with good (Antigone and Creon in Antigone). Two of these isolated powers face each other, making incompatible demands. The family claims what the State refuses (Antigone), individual love requires what the family forbids (Romeo and Juliet). The competing forces are both in themselves rightful, and so far the claim of each is equally justified; but the right of each is pushed into a wrong, (Here one may consider the case of Santiago. Santiago was wrong in venturing too far out into the sea. On the other hand, the sharks did wrong to have robbed the old man of his victory.) because it ignores the right of the other, and demands that absolute sway which belongs to neither alone but to the whole of which each is but a part.

And one reason why this happens lies in the nature of the characters through whom these claims are made. It is the nature of the tragic hero, at once his greatness and his doom, that he knows no shirking or half-heartedness but identifies himself wholly with the power that drives him and will not admit the justification of any other power. However varied and rich his inner life and character may be, in the conflict it is all concentrated at one point. Antigone is determined to do her duty towards her dead brother, and so is Creon to do his duty to the State; Romeo is not only a son or a citizen but a lover, pure and simple, and his love is the whole of him. Robert Jordan, unlike Romeo, is first and foremost a loyalist then only a lover. Frederick Henry is first a lover, next a soldier. Even the old fisherman Santiago is not merely a fisherman but "El Campeon", the best in the field and determined to prove himself yet again notwithstanding the fact that he had proved it many times before.

The end of the tragic conflict is the denial of both the exclusive claims. It is not the work of chance or blank fate; it is the act of the ethical substance itself, asserting its absoluteness against the excessive

pretensions of its particular powers. In that sense as proceeding from an absolute right which cancels claims based on right but pushed into a wrong, it may be called the act of ' eternal justice '. Sometimes it can end the conflict peacefully, and the tragedy closes with a solution. Appearing as a divine being, the spiritual unity reconciles by some adjustment the claims of the contending powers; or at its bidding one of them softens its demand, or again, as in the more beautiful solution of *Oedipus at Colonus** the hero by his own self-condemnation and inward purification reconciles himself with the supreme justice, and is accepted by it. Sometimes, however, the quarrel is pushed to extremes; the denial of the one-sided claims involves the death of one or more of the persons concerned; and we have a catastrophe as in Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra and so on.

The ultimate power thus appears as a destructive force. Yet, even here, as Hegel insists, the end is not without an aspect of reconciliation. For that which is denied is not rightful powers with which the combatants have identified themselves. On the contrary, those powers, and with them the only thing for which

the combatants cared are affirmed. What is denied is the exclusive and therefore wrongful assertion of their right.

Having taken a look at some of the theories of tragedy of the early philosophers, we can now take a look at Hemingway's tragic insight. Ernest Hemingway had no intention either to show us or to preach to us what was right or wrong, but fairly in keeping with the tragic insights expounded earlier, what he does express through his novels is that right and wrong, good and evil, co-exist side by side both being an irrevocable factor of life. Frederick Henry in A Farewell to Arms deserts the army in order to be close to his beloved Catherine and even consummates his love for Catherine. That is the happy beginning of the story; but in the throes and convulsions of child birth, both mother and child perish leaving him exactly where he was before --- alone. In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Robert Jordan for the first time realises the power and meaning of love but his realisation comes too late - he dies. The old fisherman Santiago in The Old Man And The Sea, is victorious over his fish but even he too loses out to the predatory sharks. But the old man at least understands his fall and he does admit that "I should'nt

have gone so far, fish ". " Neither for you nor for me. I'm sorry fish ".¹¹ And again, " Half-fish, Fish that you were, I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both ".¹² Talking to himself he says, " You violated your luck when you went too far outside ".¹³ But in the case of Robert Jordan and Frederick Henry, and especially Frederick Henry, they do not accept what has hit them and they remain confused, stunned and helpless.

Through his novels Hemingway brought his art to bear upon the menace he perceived in nature and upon the horrors of the war which he had personally experienced and which besides leaving an indelible scar were also fresh in his mind. Perhaps it was his way of explaining the unexplainable and unsavoury truth. Whatever might be the case, he certainly has succeeded in his portrayal of man's eternal struggle against the natural and man-made forces at work against him. It is true that his heroes succumb to the constant pressures they undergo but they succeed in retaining their pride and self-respect which for Hemingway is the hall-mark of man and which he took special care to bring out again and again. As Laurence Lerner says " There is nothing reassuring in the new situation, no promise that a new chain of evil

11. The Old Man and The Sea - Ernest Hemingway
Penguin Books, 1976. p 99

12. Ibid. p 104

13. Ibid. p 105

will not quickly ensue, no lesson that men or the Gods have learned. No message of hope for the future has been brought. The tragic situation, it is implied, is recurrent in human life: that is why we feel terror ; because we have seen men like ourselves yet stronger than we could expect to be, we feel also Pride."¹⁴

Hemingway's tragic vision however deviates in some respects from the vision of the earlier theorists of tragedy. The ancients deemed it proper that the hero must be a person of high rank or status. He should be a King, a General or a nobleman. At the least he should be a person of some public import. The reason why the ancients chose a person of social standing and status as a hero was that the society was conceived of in hierarchical terms and that the fate of the socially important person had a great bearing on the fate of the rest of the society. When misfortune strikes this man and he vainly tries to struggle against it, the sight is indeed awesome and spectacular. The conjecture is that if such be the fate of a noble man what possibly could be the fate of a lesser mortal ? Terror for the man's predicament is aroused followed by pity and sympathy for the fallen hero.

14. Shakespeare's Tragedies ; An Anthology of Modern Criticism; Edited by Laurence Lerner ; Penguin Books.

Like most of the modern writers of tragedy and in keeping with the changed ethos of the times, Ernest Hemingway did not feel that it was necessary that a man of standing was required to play the role of a tragic hero. Any ordinary person would also do, provided he could fit the role. What was of utmost importance and was so strenuously emphasized, was the action arising from the appalling situation. "We feel no desire to rejoice when the perpetrator of evil is brought to his doom, and at the same time we are aware that many characters in these plays are subjected to an evil for which they are in no way responsible. Nor is there in great tragedy the suggestion that these things will be put right in another world."¹⁵ If the action was sustained long enough, the appropriate feelings such as pity, fear and terror would automatically follow. A classic example of an ordinary man in the role of a hero could be Willy Loman the salesman, the hero of Arthur Miller's play Death of a Salesman. The hero here is an ordinary salesman, striving vainly to make both ends meet and put his life and family in order. But his various attempts are fruitless and he ends up as a failure. His failure is not a result of his untiring efforts but a result of

15. Ibid. p 290

something else altogether. He is up against a system which is devoid of feelings. Poor Willy Loman trapped in the quagmire of modern materialism and shunned by his worthless sons, is driven to the only possible escape - death. Like Arthur Miller's hero Willy Loman, Hemingway's heroes are quite ordinary men too. Frederick Henry is only a Lieutenant in the Italian Army. Robert Jordan is not even a soldier in the accepted sense. He too is an ordinary man brought into the stage of conflict only because of his interest in and commitment to a cause. The old man Santiago is what he is - an old man; a humble fisherman who strives to eke out a living. But their being 'ordinary' men does not in any way lessen the feeling of tragedy; for the tragedy that befalls each one of them is poignant and could have happened to any one of us. Their being 'ordinary', like any one of us is why we can readily identify ourselves with them and that is why perhaps we so readily and willingly feel drawn into their struggle and grieve at their defeat and downfall.

Hemingway certainly makes his mark as a tragic artist. The tragic pattern is set into motion with A Farewell to Arms, developed in For Whom the Bell Tolls and finally brought to a close in his masterpiece, the

novelette, The Old Man And The Sea. That he succeeds so well, so easily, and seemingly so effortlessly in his task is because he personally underwent many of the emotions he expresses in his novels. Very early in life, when he was still in his teens, he saw action in Italy where he was wounded and hospitalised. The shock of being wounded brought to him the realisation of the brutality and ugliness and the horrors of war. During his recuperation in a hospital in Milan he fell in love with a pretty nurse, Agnes Von Kurowsky, the prototype of Catherine in A Farewell to Arms. He also took part and actually fought in the Spanish war; and the locations he describes so vividly in For Whom The Bell Tolls are real and they truly exist. His stories of bull-fighting are so realistic and authentic because he was in love with the sport and had had the privilege of watching and bearing witness to some of the greatest acts of courage in the arena. Renowned matadors such as Maera and Ordenez were not only known to him but were his personal friends in whose company he spent endless hours discussing the sport.

Then again, as a correspondent in the Second World War he sometimes exceeded his duties. We are told that he was actually in command of a partisan

band of guerillas that led the allied advance into Paris. And once Paris was taken he even put up a command post in the ' Hotel Ritz ', complete with maps, a stock of arms and ammunition and other paraphernalia of war. On many occasions he himself took active part and led the action in spite of the fact that his vocation did not permit him to do so. Hemingway himself claims to have gone enemy submarine hunting off the coast of Havana in his very own boat, " The Pilar ", in Cuba.

A keen and talented sportsman and marksman, he collected many prized trophies in the dense jungles of Africa, quite often with only a spear in his hand. And as for fishing, - that was what he was very adept at and loved most of all. He even had his own boat " The Pilar " for this favourite pastime. His novelette , The Old Man And The Sea is a direct expression of his experiences of fishing in the sea.

A proud man, he often settled arguments and disputes with his fists. But in spite of his bravado and tough exterior, he was actually a child at heart possessed with the knowledge of his own and man's limitations and of the mystery of his very existence in a world without hope. He knew that human life was fleeting and momentary

and without any permanence. That is why in his own humble way he tries to give to life a meaning and a pattern through his novels and the characters therein depicted. He was aware that being frail and with so many limitations, man was bound to lose the struggle for life. If not anything else, Time the eternal factor would defeat him; as Ruskin Bond so lucidly put it, -

" It is'nt time that's passing by my friend,
It is you and I."

With this realisation in mind he evolved a code of his own which he could follow and which would at least rectify or soften that terrible fate. Hemingway reasoned that if man is destined to go on a one way trip, he might as well make the most of it. The pitfalls of life, he argues, are to be faced and not avoided, for the knowing individual " could bring to consciousness what he is besides and beyond this, he would willingly give up his individuality, smile at the tenacity of his attachment thereto, and say: 'What does the loss of this individuality matter to me ? For I carry within myself the possibility of innumerable individualities.'" ¹⁶ Like Atticus in To Kill A Mockingbird he, that is man, has to try to

16. The World As Will And Representation - Arthur Schopenhauer
Translated from the German by E.F.J. Payne. Vol. II
p 491

do his best even when he knows he is going to lose, because that is the quality expected in a courageous man and the only exercise that will give some sense and form to a life that is otherwise destined to end in nought.

One may argue that Hemingway's heroes willingly err and are rash in their endeavours. But in support of them one could argue that, they act in such a manner only because they are human. Hemingway tellingly drives home the point that the frail human being is essentially alone. This is a truth of life, albeit a frightening and bitter truth. The souls of his heroes always wail for company and people like Frederick Henry and Robert Jordan do find momentary happiness in the company of Catherine and Maria before it is snatched away by providence. Even the old fisherman Santiago who is far more knowledgeable, competent, and composed than any of the earlier heroes, longs for the company of the young boy, Manolin, when alone at sea.

Like the existentialists, Hemingway too tried to come to that point of realisation when one becomes aware that everything is illusory except the fact of

the nothingness of one's being which the Buddhist faith refers to as "Nirvana".¹⁷ That is the bitter and unsavoury truth of life. One way or another our fate begins and ends in nothingness. Tragedy only happens to portray this truth of life in its purest form of expression.

Here one may recount the ancient story of King Midas. "King Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, without capturing him. When Silenus at last fell into his hands, the king asked what was the best and most desirable of all things for man. Fixed and immovable, the demigod said not a word, till at last, urged by the king, he gave a shrill laugh and broke out into these words: 'Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is - to die soon.'¹⁸

Against this stark pessimism Hemingway asserts his lusty faith in man, in his inner resources and a

17. Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary describes "Nirvana" as - the cessation of individual existence; the state to which a Buddhist aspires as the best attainable.

18. Basic Writings of Nietzsche; Translated and Edited with Commentaries by Walter Kaufmann. The Modern Library, New York. p 42

steely will never to be overcome even in the face of
the inevitable and inexorable.

CHAPTER - II

FIRST ESSAY IN THE TRAGIC

Based on A Farewell to Arms

FIRST ESSAY IN THE TRAGIC

Ernest Miller Hemingway blew most of his head off with a favourite shotgun in the year 1961. It is interesting to note that Hemingway's father had also ended his life in a similar shocking manner. Perhaps his father's unnatural death left a deep psychological scar in Ernest's mind or it may have been his numerous confrontations with death which had led him to write stories containing a deep sense of the tragic. Tragedy pervades almost his entire writings. It appears that he seemed to have been pre-occupied with death, - in all its various forms. And nowhere is this tragic sense of life more aptly portrayed than in his novels, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom The Bell Tolls and The Old Man And The Sea, - in all probability three of Hemingway's finest works. All these novels pit man against the imperilled human situation and though the novels end on a note of sadness and unnecessary waste, it also carries with it a positive aspect. Despite the unseen hostile and the unbeatable odds he is confronted with, man is shown as struggling and acting with " grace under pressure ".

Hemingway's sense of the tragic can be examined by making a close scrutiny of his above mentioned novels. One may begin with the study of A Farewell To Arms, the earliest of them.

It is through Frederick Henry that Hemingway tells the story of A Farewell To Arms. The story is told in the first person. Henry was an American citizen before the start of the first World war. At the outbreak of the war he was drafted into the Italian army and placed in charge of a small ambulance unit with the rank of Lieutenant. He was detailed to serve the forces fighting in the Austro-Italian front. Henry was selected in spite of his being a foreigner because " I was in Italy ", and I spoke Italian ".¹

Initially Henry's attitude to the war was a big fun. To him war was no more serious than the mock fight in the movies, for " I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies."² The battle-field in his view was the hunting-ground for glory-hunters, the arena where one could show one's manliness, daring, skill and courage.

1. A Farewell To Arms - Ernest Hemingway

Penguin Books. p 21

2. Ibid. p 33

It was true that he had had enough experience of the callous brutalities of the war in which people suffer without reason. Soldiers were tired of the war as it had drawn them away from the serenity and joy of their homes. They even inflicted wounds on themselves so as to escape being sent to the battle-front. Like a pestilence war had seized one and all without exception but Henry felt sure he would not be killed in that war. When however, an Austrian shell lands in the dug-out in which he was sheltering, injuring him seriously, he was rudely awakened and the myths he had so strongly believed in were shattered. He becomes totally disillusioned with the war in which he was engaged.

When he returned to his unit after the expiry of his leave period, he was haunted with the idea that his life was devoid of any meaning. Everything had seemed to be in good condition and his absence had made no difference. " It evidently made no difference whether I was there to look after things or not. I had imagined that, the condition of the cars, whether or not things were obtainable, the smooth functioning of the business of removing wounded and sick from the dressing stations, hauling them back from the mountains to the clearing-station and then distributing them to the hospitals named on their

papers, depended to a considerable extent on myself .

Evidently it did not matter whether I was there or not."³

" The whole thing seemed to run better while I was away."⁴

This feeling of futility of his having joined the war also gave him a false feeling of soldiering. And during the retreat he ceased to be a spectator but became an active participant. He had seen Aymo, one of his ambulance drivers, trip and fall face down; " Two more shots came from the thick bush and Aymo, as he was crossing the tracks, lurched, tripped and fell face down."⁵ The three of us squatted over him in the rain. He was hit low in the back of the neck and the bullet had ranged upward and come out under the right eye. He died while I was stopping up the two holes." " They were Germans" he had said. " There can't be any Germans over there." " Those were Italians that shot, they were'nt Germans."⁶

The lamentable nature of the situation horrified him when he realised that it was an Italian bullet, not that of a German, that sent the ill-fated man, Aymo, hurtling to his death. He had also seen that Bonello preferred being taken a prisoner than to go on fighting. He had also witnessed with horror the inhuman and callousness characteristics of war when the battle-police killed every officer on suspicion of deserting his unit. It

3. Ibid. p 16

4. Ibid. p 17

5. Ibid. p 166

6. Ibid. p 166

was around that time that he came to the conclusion that it was no longer his war where the establishment like the battle-police was indifferent to the lot of the men they dealt with. This feeling was further aggravated when, he personally faced the battle-police who mistook him for a German in Italian uniform. To escape being tortured or even done to death, he had jumped into the Taglamento river. " Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation. ----- I was through. --- it was not my show anymore."⁷ He had signed a separate peace and he could no longer be bothered with the ruthless war. He had said good-bye to it and all the organisations conducting it. His brief association with it had disclosed to him its inhuman character and the insentiently stony attitude of the establishment. He realised that the only noble and commendable way out for him was to cut himself aloof from it and go after some other benevolent pursuit or to devote himself to someone who would make his life more profitable and meaningful.

The person to whom he now turned was his beloved Catherine Barkley. Initially he had had no intention to love her or to fall in love with her. His only

7. Ibid. p 181

desire had been to take advantage of her situation, and amuse himself at her expense, - " I thought she was probably a little crazy. It was all right if she was. I did not care what I was getting into. This was better than going to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on backwards as a sign of affection between their trips upstairs with brother officers. I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge, you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were. It was all right with me."⁸ But later on, immediately after his escapade with the military police, his true feelings for her surfaced and he was made aware that, " I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine."⁹

Having got away from the battle-front and in the company of Catherine he " did not want to read about the war. I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace."¹⁰ He had told her " Do'nt talk about the war. The war was a long way away. Maybe there was'nt any war. There was no war here. Then I realised it was over for me. But

8. Ibid. p 28

9. Ibid. p 181

10. Ibid. p 188

I did not have the feeling that it was really over. I had the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant."¹¹

Catherine's death in child-birth in a hospital in Lausanne brought to him the realisation that only death was the ultimate reality. Some were killed in the war, some by disease and some just died. He came to the conclusion that, they threw an individual in and told him the rules to be observed by him as combatant and the first time they caught him off base, they killed him, without compassion or compunction, not caring to ascertain the reason or cause or the circumstances responsible for his conduct. They killed him in the end. As he had himself reflected sitting in the corridor of the hospital, " Poor little kid. --- Still there would not be all this dying to go through. Now Catherine would die. That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you."¹²

11. Ibid. pp 189,190

12. Ibid. pp 151,152

In a philosophical bent of mind he broods on the futility of human existence. He compares human beings to ants on a burning log of wood. He recalls to mind an incident " Once in a camp I put a log on top of the fire and it was full of ants. As it commenced to burn, the ants swarmed out and went first towards the centre where the fire was, then turned back and ran towards the end. When there were enough on the end they fell off into the fire. Some got out, their bodies burnt and flattened, and went off not knowing where they were going. But most of them went toward the fire and then back toward the end and swarmed on the cool end and finally fell off into the fire. I remember thinking at the time that it was the end of the world and a splendid chance to be a messiah and lift the log off the fire and throw it out where the ants could get off into the ground. But I did not do anything but throw a tin cup of water on the log, so that I would have the cup empty to put whisky in before I added water to it. I think the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants."¹³

Henry had finally arrived at the truth that there can be no separate peace for man. His much sought-for peace, could only be found in death.

13. Ibid. p 252

Frederick Henry is one of the early heroes of Hemingway who are lost in this big, buzzing and bewildering chaos of this world. They appear to have lost their moorings and are in search of values that would impart some importance and significance to their lives. Henry is afraid of sleeping in the dark and always slept with a light in the room. He is haunted by 'Nada' (Nothingness) and he utilises love as a means of confronting this 'Nada'. Whatever strikes the senses as good is taken to be good by him. In his view, the bloody and brutal operations of war have wholly annihilated whatever was customarily regarded as manifestation of culture and value in pre-war days. The high-sounding slogans infused with heroic sentiments which politicians invented and scattered about were devoid of reality. He avers that " I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations, that were slapped up by bill posters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There

were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage were hollow and were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."¹⁴

Such then was Henry's disillusionment which mirrored the experience of the entire American nation. His experiences symbolise the utter ruin of pre-war values and culture. He also represented the new generation called "the lost generation" by Gertrude Stein, that was in search of new values to substitute the old ones. His experiences as delineated here in the novel in question, is proof positive of his desperate efforts to seek out new values. He finds significance only in personal relationships which are again fraught with the danger of dissolution. He finds no sense or significance in abstract words, abstract ideals and even religious theory and ideology. He achieves some perfection in love, but it is only a limited perfection or integration for they killed

14. Ibid. pp 143, 144.

everybody alike. " The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break, it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry."¹⁵

Separated from the narrator, Henry is a passive character even though he is the hero in the novel under discussion. He is more of a symbol of the mood that prevailed during and after the war than a vigorous personality by himself. He is the embodiment of the author's own disgustfully bitter experience of the war and his confrontation with death or ' Nada ' (Hemingway actually saw active service and was wounded during the Austro-Italian war. He was also involved in and survived two plane crashes within the space of two days). It is the narrator who indulges in philosophic disquisition because he has realised the significance of those chaotic and terrible experiences in which the hero found himself involved. In this destiny ridden universe where human endeavour is of little avail, Henry is a living example of what man can achieve --- fortitude, stoic endurance of pain and suffering and act with " grace under pressure".

15. Ibid. p 193

The novel propounds that death is the grim reality after all and in the presense of this reality a person of Henry's sensibility can only behave with dignity and decency by enduring what is beyond cure. Henry learns this lesson at last. Thus he moves from a condition of indifference and unreality to that of one who is let into the mystery and is made aware of the nature of suffering and the manner in which it must be met and endured.

A striking factor in the novel which immediately attract the attention of the reader is the use of rain as a symbol and harbinger of evil tidings. Catherine especially is terribly afraid of the rain for she admits " I've always been afraid of the rain."¹⁶ When Henry questions her as to why she is afraid of the rain she at first hesitates but a moment later tells him " All right. I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it."

" No ".

" And sometimes I see you dead in it."

Henry reasons with her that it is all nonsense and she agrees " It's all nonsense. It's only nonsense. I'm not afraid of the rain. Oh, oh, God, I wish I was'nt."¹⁷

16. Ibid. p 99

17. Ibid. p 100

All the unpleasant events in the book are accompanied by the rain. It was raining when Henry had to take leave of Catherine for the first time after his recuperation period was over. Then again throughout the retreat the rain came down and Aymo died in the rain " Two more shots came from the thick bush and Aymo, as he was crossing the tracks , lurched, tripped and fell face down. --- The three of us squatted over him in the rain."¹⁸

The lovers' escape to Switzerland is made in a rain-swept and stormy night, " At the foot of the stairs by the door the porter sat behind his desk. He looked surprised at seeing us, ' You're not going out, sir ?' he said. ' Yes ' I said. ' We're going to see the storm along the lake'. ' Have'nt you got an umbrella, sir ?' ' No ' I said. ' This coat sheds water.' He looked at it doubtfully, ' I'll get you an umbrella, sir,' he said. He went away and came back with a big umbrella --- He held the door open and we went out into the rain."¹⁹ Catherine's struggle for life and her consequent death in a hospital in Lausanne also occurs during a rainy spell. The only time the rain looked cheerful was when Henry and Catherine first set foot in Switzerland and freedom, " There was a fine November rain falling but it looked cheerful and clean even with the rain."²⁰ This is the only instance in the whole book where

18. Ibid. p 166

19. Ibid. p 206

20. Ibid. p 214

the rain looked cheering. Little do the lovers realise that even this apparently cheering rain brings evil with it. For just when the lovers feel free and look forward to a life of bliss, Catherine is snatched away by the cruel hands of destiny.

The mountains and the plains are also used as symbols in the book. The mountains represent peace, tranquillity and purity, whereas the plains stand for war, disease and death. All references to the battles waged take place in the plains. The retreat in all its pain and ugliness is also shown in the plains. Catherine too who had been resting up in the mountains meets her end when she comes down to the hospital in the plains of Lausanne for her delivery.

A Farewell To Arms in all its tragic proportions can be compared with the romantic tragedies of Shakespeare. The novel itself makes a passing mention of Othello²¹ at least once. But whereas the crux of the tragedy in Othello is jealousy, there is no jealousy of any kind in A Farewell To Arms. The novel has more in common with Romeo And Juliet, another Shakespearean tragedy. Hemingway

21. Ibid. p 198

himself described A Farewell To Arms as his Romeo And Juliet. The description is appropriate.

A Farewell To Arms is made up of five separate books each embodying a series of scenes and each scene like the scenes in a play being split up into sections which might correspond to stage directions and dialogues. However, the striking aspect of the resemblance lies in the fact that the novel is a love story like Romeo And Juliet which terminates in a tragedy due to causes beyond human control. Fatalists may characterise it as the inexorable working of fate. As in the feud of the two families responsible for the tragedy in Romeo And Juliet, the incidents of war taking place at that time are partly responsible for Catherine's death though the fact is that fate was all along plotting against the lovers loving and living happily together. Objectively considered however, the war is seen as a pestilence prevailing widely and seizing everyone in its grip. Man is caught in its trap and once he is caught up, the novel suggests, there is no means of escape just as in the case of Romeo and Juliet who pay with their lives for the stupid animosity between their two families.

But unlike Romeo And Juliet where both the prime

characters perish, in A Farewell To Arms only the heroine, Catherine, dies; and the hero, Henry, is left to brood over his loss and bear it manfully and gracefully. It dawns upon him that in the scheme of things love is only a fleeting experience and death is the ultimate reality which overcomes one and all and over which one has no control, " That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn."²² The human state of affairs is such that man is alone in the universe. He has to suffer and die, sooner or later. In view of this position it is expected that he, that is man, bows down to his lot with courage and dignity.

Carlos Baker in his book The Writer As Artist has this to say, - " The position occupied by A Farewell To Arms among Hemingway's tragic writings may be suggested by the fact that he once referred to the story of Lieutenant Frederick Henry and Catherine Barkley as his Romeo And Juliet. The most obvious parallel is that Henry and Catherine, like their Elizabethan prototypes might be seen as star-crossed lovers. Hemingway might also have been thinking of how rapidly Romeo and Juliet, whose affair has begun as a mere flirtation, pass over into the status of relatively mature lovers. In the third place he may have

22. Ibid. p 252

meant to imply that his own lovers caught in the tragic pattern of the war on the Austro-Italian front, are not far different from the young victims of the Montague-Capulet family feud."*

The catastrophe in either book is not brought about by a direct and logical result of the immoral social situation. Catherine's bodily structure, an unfortunate biological accident, is partly to blame for her death. Romeo and Juliet also meet their end due to an unfortunate accident, - the detention of the message-bearing friar. Both incidents however, show an artistic inevitability. Neither the war nor the feud are the only factors responsible for the tragedy. They only play a part in the inevitable scheme of things.

The phrase "star-crossed lovers" does not mean that they are the victims of an actual malevolent metaphysical power. Human beings are partly to blame for all the crisis that are set in motion. When Catherine lies dying in hospital, Henry quite naturally has fatalistic thoughts running through his mind, but he never even once blames anything called fate for her death. The labour pains remind him that her pregnancy has been comfortable and apparently normal; the present struggle for life is perhaps a way

* The Writer As Artist - Carlos Baker

of evening things up, - " And this was the price you paid for sleeping together. This was the end of the trap. This was what people got for loving each other. --- So now they got her in the end. You never got away with anything."²³ But he immediately rejects these thoughts, for her death is not because of their having sinful pleasures, " It would have been the same if we had been married fifty times."²⁴ What is implied is that pain is natural and inevitable without either moral or metaphysical significance. The anonymous " they " represents evil and the way things are in the world.

Henry begins to philosophise on the human predicament. He compares the human situation to ants on a burning piece of log. It is plainly a gratuitous death which comes to the ants on the burning log. Some die immediately as Catherine is now dying. Others, like himself, who has survived a mortar explosion, will manage to get away, their bodies scarred, their future course uncertain, except that, ultimately death would get them. " Stay around and they would kill you."**

The pain and suffering borne by Catherine and her consequent death prove nothing except that she should not have become pregnant. " But she had to become

23. A Farewell To Arms - Ernest Hemingway ; pp 245,246

24. Ibid. p 246

** . Ibid. p 152

pregnant in order to find out that becoming pregnant was unwise. Death is the penalty for ignoring the rules; it is also a fact which has nothing to do with rule or reason. Death is the fire which, in conclusion, burns us all, and it may singe us along the way. Frederick Henry's ruminations simply go to show that if he and Catherine seem star-crossed, it is only because Catherine is biologically double-crossed, Europe is war-crossed, and life is death-crossed."*

The theme of Europe being war-crossed, and life being death-crossed, is followed up in Hemingway's consequent novels. Death In The Afternoon portrays the death of Maera, the bull-fighter, and the manly way in which he makes his exit. To Have And Have Not pits one man, Harry Morgan, against a whole society. The novel is a commentary on man's loneliness and helplessness as Harry Morgan realises that "one man alone ain't got --- no chance." This was followed by The Fifth Coloumn which has social discontent as its theme and is set against the backdrop of Civil war, which clearly anticipates the next novel, For Whom The Bell Tolls, a novel which has so much in common with A Farewell To Arms, that a comparison between the two novels is merited.

*. The Writer As Artist - Carlos Baker ; Penguin Books, 1969

Both A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls are set against the background of war. Whereas A Farewell To Arms is set against the back-drop of the Austro-Italian war, For Whom The Bell Tolls has the Spanish war as the background. Both these novels, basically, are stories of love wherein at least one prime character dies and the other is left to grieve over the loss. The difference lies in the respective attitude of the heroes towards the war. Frederick Henry is disgusted and disillusioned with the war and prefers to make a 'separate peace'. But unlike him, for Robert Jordan there is no conflict between love and duty, for both he and Maria are completely devoted to the cause they pursue.

Catherine and Maria, the respective heroines in the novels, both have a painful past. Catherine is shown as just recovering from the blow of losing her fiancée "they blew him all to bits"²⁵, in the front. She is even considered to be a little crazy, - "I thought she was probably a little crazy. It was all right if she was. I did not care what I was getting into. This was better than going every evening to the house for officers ---"²⁶ Frederick Henry takes advantage of her situation and makes use of her for his personal gratification. Only later and more gradually does he realise his true feelings and falls in

25. A Farewell To Arms - Ernest Hemingway ; Penguin Books

p 20

26. Ibid. p 27

love with her, " I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine."* Robert Jordan, on the other hand, falls in love with Maria at first sight. Maria, who had been tortured and raped by fascist soldiers, is a mentally disturbed woman. But Jordan, unlike Henry, does not ever think of taking advantage of her mental situation but does everything in his power to love and console her and remove the trauma from her mind.

The novels differ in at least one other aspect. Frederick Henry could never have been capable of Robert Jordan's sense of mystical union with Maria, even through separation and death.

It is to be noted that both the love stories take place away from the actual homes of the principal characters. Henry is an American and Catherine is a Britisher. Jordan, the hero of For Whom The Bell Tolls, is also an American. It is only Maria, Jordan's beloved, who is a local, a Spaniard.

Yet another of Hemingway's novels, The Old Man And The Sea, also merits attention for a comparative study with the novels already mentioned. A Farewell To Arms and

*. Ibid. p 181

For Whom The Bell Tolls are stories of love; but The Old Man And The Sea is a story based on fishing. What is common in all these stories is that all of them end in tragedy. Each story presents struggle, conflict and resolution, thus keeping in line with the tragic theories of the early philosophers. Each story evokes our pity and fear and each ends on a positive note. The heroes of A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls are young men in the prime of life, but the hero of The Old Man And The Sea is an old man who has gone for eighty-four days without a catch. He ventures far out to sea, and there he hooks his prized fish. But sharks attack his boat and after a valiant struggle to retain his fish, the old man is beaten by sheer odds. No doubt he loses the fish but by his courage and persistence he gains the moral victory. The overpowering odds do not cow him down; they only strengthened his resolve.

All these three novels place man in the midst of a hostile environment. All of them depict man's loneliness and struggle against his predicament. Though the struggle is one-sided and offers no permanent respite, yet, man is shown to struggle because he refrains from submitting meekly and always endeavours to try and overcome his limitations.

In conclusion and with reference to A Farewell To Arms, one may make an observation that, tragedy strikes not only the main characters but also the minor characters on the fringes of the story. It is ironical that Aymo should die as a result of a fatally fired shot by his own men. It is also ironical and tragic that Frederick Henry should shoot the engineer sergeant for desertion when, later on, he himself deserts the army. The fact that his own desertion is more a result of a compulsion does not in any way remove the element of tragedy.

CHAPTER - III

EPIC STRUGGLE AND NEAR TRANSPIGURATION

Based on For Whom the Bell Tolls

EPIC WRESTLE AND NEAR TRANSGURATION

Hemingway's pre-occupation with the human predicament makes it impossible for the reader to avoid the impression that the writer was dealing with something of final importance to us all. Like the Elizabethans, whom he evidently loved, he never lets us quite forget that death awaits every man at some turn perhaps not far along the way. And in his peculiarly distinguished manner as an artist he continually reminds us that it is our performance enroute that is of vital importance.

His incursion into the world of love, war and death as had been depicted in A Farewell To Arms again finds expression in his next novel, For Whom The Bell Tolls. The title of the novel itself is paradoxically furnished, aptly enough, by a quotation from John Donne, -

" And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls:
It tolls for thee"¹

What Hemingway wished to propound here is that no man is an island in isolation. We are all part of a greater design; governed by rules and enclosed in an environment which is positively hostile and unpredictable. It is in this

1. For Whom The Bell Tolls - Ernest Hemingway

awesome landscape that Hemingway places Robert Jordan, the hero of For Whom The Bell Tolls.

In this novel he takes a more complex view of humanity at war than he had projected in A Farewell To Arms.

" A plague on both your houses " - the prevailing mood of Frederick Henry, has been replaced by Robert Jordan's unillusioned sense of the community of the human predicament. " No man is an island, it turns out; but the storms that sweep the human continent are of such force, and the quakes that rock its surface so disruptive, that none of us can depend on better fortune than that of Robert Jordan, who died making his own small and paradoxical effort to maintain its integrity."²

As in A Farewell To Arms, the story of For Whom The Bell Tolls is also told in the first person through Robert Jordan, an American teacher of Spanish, who at the outbreak of hostilities enlists himself on the side of the loyalists. His commanding officer, Golz, who is a Russian General, " I am General Sovietque "³, orders him deep inside enemy country to blow up a bridge in order to facilitate an attack

2. Interpretations of American Literature ; Edited by Charles Feidelson Jr. and Charles Brodtkorb Jr. O.U.P. 1959. p 313

3. For Whom The Bell Tolls - Ernest Hemingway Penguin Books. p 12

and advance on the fascist enemy. Notwithstanding the fact that he is a foreigner, he is chosen for the task because he is an educated man and a staunch loyalist and can be trusted to do the job satisfactorily. In addition, he is fluent in the local language and is also familiar with the particular area having "walked over it on his way to La Granja on a walking trip in 1933."⁴ Also, as he himself explains to Augustin , " I came first twelve years ago to study the country and the language. I teach Spanish in a University."⁵

A close study of the text makes it evident that Jordan liked to live dangerously, and thereby invites his own death. When Golz questions him, " How do you like partizan work", Robert Jordan cheerfully replies that he liked it " very much " adding " It is very healthy in the open air."⁶ Golz reiterates that " To blow the bridge is nothing",⁷ but " To blow the bridge at a stated hour based on the time set for the attack is how it should be done. You see naturally."⁸ Golz also instructs him that he is to "blow the bridge after the attack has started",⁹ because " That is the only road on which they can get tanks, or artillery or even

- 4. Ibid. p 8
- 5. Ibid. p 202
- 6. Ibid. p 11
- 7. Ibid. p 8
- 8. Ibid. p 8
- 9. Ibid. p 9

move a truck towards the pass which I attack. I must know that the bridge is gone. Not before, so it can be repaired if the attack is postponed. No. It must go when the attack starts and I must know it is gone."¹⁰

In order to carry out the plan, Jordan must at first penetrate the enemy positions, and secondly, he has to enlist the aid of the various groups of partisan guerillas operating at the site of the bridge. To help him achieve these ends Golz extends to him the assistance of the old man Anselmo, who " has just come from there. He is a very reliable man, they say. You will see. He has people in the mountains."¹¹ Both the tasks are accomplished without a hitch for Anselmo not only takes him behind the enemy lines but also brings him into contact with Pablo and his band of loyalist guerillas who are operating in the immediate vicinity of the targeted bridge.

Pablo however, is not happy with the arrival of the stranger, Jordan. A born leader with acute instincts, he at once realises the after-effects Jordan's plan would have on him and his men if the plan were to be effected. The intended attack would not only put his men

10. Ibid. p 9

11. Ibid. p 14

in great peril but there was every possibility of his followers being wiped out altogether. He vainly tries to dissuade Jordan, " If it is in this territory, it is my business. You cannot blow the bridge close to where you live. You must live in one place and operate in another. I know my business. One who is alive, now, after a year, knows his business."¹² The fact that Jordan is a foreigner only add to his suspicions. Jordan however, sincerely argues " I come only for my duty." " That I am a foreigner is not my fault. I would rather have been born here."¹³

Jordan's sincerity prevails over Pablo's wife Pilar and it is she who brushes aside all opposition and pitches in her lot with him. This acts as a signal for the rest of the band to throw in their lot with him also, leaving their leader Pablo the lone outsider in his own band. Throughout the narrative Pablo does all in his power to try and stop Jordan from blowing the bridge. He is sure that such an act would definitely jeopardise the lives of his men but instead of heeding his words the men of his band only curse him and are even ready to shoot him as a coward. Here there is the suggestion that a divine hand was pulling the actors to their doom without their even suspecting it.

12. Ibid. p 14

13. Ibid. p 19

Never the one to give in easily, Pablo makes repeated attempts to foul up Jordan's intension of destroying the bridge. He even goes to the extent of stealing the fuses and detonators, " the square box of the exploder was gone. So was the cigar box with the carefully wrapped and packed detonators",¹⁴ a day before the attack. It is only when he realises the resoluteness of the whole gang, including his wife Pilar to forge ahead nevertheless, does he return to their fold. He even assists in the attack because he feels " Nine of you could never have done it. Never. I knew that last night when the Ingles explained it."¹⁵ He was also aware that unless he aided in the escape after the attack they would all be wiped out. The ironical twist of fate is such that Pablo who had been so cruel and who had been responsible for so many deaths at the beginning of the movement should escape with his life when people like Jordan, old Anselmo, Fernando and even Lt. Berrando who were guilty of much less, should meet their end. This factor only strengthens the view that human beings are but toys in the hands of divinity without any say or choice.

Jordan's introduction to Pablo and his band of guerillas also bring him into contact with Maria, the

14. Ibid. p 341

15. Ibid. p 367

heroine of the novel under discussion. Maria, a young girl of nineteen years of age, had been rescued by Pablo's band when they had attacked and derailed a train carrying fascist soldiers and their prisoners. Like Catherine in A Farewell To Arms she too is shown to be suffering from the trauma of her past experiences. As Rafael explains, "When we picked up the girl at the time of the train she was very strange." "She would not speak and she cried all the time and if anyone touched her she would shiver like a wet dog."¹⁶ Pilar also tells Jordan to be "very good and careful about the girl. She has had a bad time."¹⁷ And Maria herself explains "things were done to me. I fought until I could not see. I fought until---until---until one sat upon my head---and I bit him--- and then they tied my mouth and held my arms behind my head --- and others did things to me."¹⁸

We are also given to understand that her "father was the Mayor of the village and an honourable man."¹⁹ He was a loyalist Republican who had been captured and put to death. Her mother had also met a similar fate even though she was no loyalist but only a God-fearing and devoted wife who "would not say, 'Viva la Republica'

16. Ibid. p 30

17. Ibid. p 34

18. Ibid. p 70

19. Ibid. p 332

but only Viva my father who lay there, on his face, by her feet."²⁰ She herself is shorn of her hair, dragged into her father's office chamber and brutally raped by the fascist soldiers,- " they were shoving me across the square, and into the doorway, and up the stairs of the city hall and into the office of my father where they laid me on the couch: And it was there that the bad things were done."²¹ She tells Robert Jordan later that she did resist and fight but to no avail " Always I fought and always it took two of them or more to do me the harm."²² The odds against her had been too heavy.

When we first come across Maria she still bears the scars of her sordid misfortune. Her hair has not yet grown and she is lovingly referred to as the "cropped head" by the members of Pablo's gang. Like Henry in A Farewell To Arms Jordan initially had no intention of falling in love with or in playing around with any woman - " there is no time for girls"²³ --- " I have no time for any woman."²⁴ But then he falls head over heels in love with Maria at the very first sight " and he could feel the thickness coming in his throat."²⁵ His feelings for her is, in turn, also reciprocated by Maria immediately. Their love is very unlike that of Henry

20. Ibid. p 332

21. Ibid. p 334

22. Ibid. p 331

23. Ibid. p 11

24. Ibid. p 27

25. Ibid. p 27

and Catherine in A Farewell To Arms where feelings develop gradually and after many tribulations. The attachment in For Whom The Bell Tolls blossoms at the very first meeting and it is an attachment that is intense and all-enveloping and is sustained right till the bitter end when Jordan tells Maria " Thou wilt go now, rabbit. But I go with thee. As long as there is one of us there is both of us."²⁶ " There is no good-bye, guapa, because we are not apart."²⁷ Here it appears that Jordan whether knowingly or unknowingly does have a hunch that he and Maria are nothing but expressions of the universal Will which can never cease to exist and therefore no one can really die in the true sense of the term. Only the body dies but the soul goes on living. Since they are expressions of the same universal Will, Jordan knows that death cannot part them. They will always be united, even in death.

The story of the novel For Whom The Bell Tolls covers the time span of only three days " Well, we had all our luck in four days. Not four days. It was afternoon when I first got there and it will not be noon today. That makes not quite three days and three nights."²⁸ It is within this very short span of time that the love

26. Ibid. p 436

27. Ibid. p 437

28. Ibid. p 439

between Jordan and Maria not only develop to infinite proportions but is also consummated. Their love is almost sublime in its sincerity and innocence. Never did they ever imagine the fate that awaited them. Their love is totally different from the love between Henry and Catherine which develop only after a considerable period of time spread over several months.

What is common to both these novels is the sense of tragic inevitability that is present throughout the narrative. Jordan suspects all along that he might meet his end. But so total is his commitment - " We'll be killed but we'll blow the bridge "²⁹- to the cause that he is not at all afraid as is reflected by Maria's statement, " The Pilar told me that we would all die tomorrow and that you know it as well as she does and that you give it no importance."³⁰ His sole aim is to fulfil his given assignment no matter what the cost might be. He anticipates the dangers lurking ahead but is unwilling to retreat. To gain his objective he is also not averse to sacrificing the lives of his innocent comrades, " Whatever happens to Andres does'nt matter "³¹ and put the lives of many others in grave peril. He justifies himself by saying " no man has a right to take

29. Ibid. p 351

30. Ibid. p 326

31. Ibid. p 322

another man's life unless it is to prevent something worse happening to other people."³² He firmly believes in his cause and thinks that there is no harm in doing anything wrong if the ultimate result signified victory for the cause, " You see that we are working for one thing. To win the war. Unless we win, all other things are futile."³³ The irony of his beliefs and justifications is such that he is now allied with Pablo and his band who were guilty of cruelly flailing and putting to death many innocent villagers whose only wrong had been that they were fascist supporters,-"Pilar's account of the start of the movement in Pablo's home-town with its unflinching report of the steadily mounting sadism which infused the execution of the local fascists. There is a remarkable tone to this report, as if Pilar were at confession, anxious to tell the whole truth and omitting not even the most shameful details, yet seeking at the same time to make it understood how these grisly acts could have occurred among normally decent Spanish peasants. She tells how, at first, many of the peasants were sickened by Pablo's plan to flail the peasants down between a double line of men leading to the edge of a steep cliff."³⁴

The guerilla leader Sordo and a few of his band meet

32. Ibid. p 288

33. Ibid. p 278

34. Interpretations of American Literature ; Edited by Charles Feidelson Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb Jr. .

C.U.P. 1959. p 314

their end when they go to steal horses to aid Jordan in his attack on the bridge. The valiant Sordo is noticed, given chase and eventually cornered by the Fascists atop a hill. He realises that he is trapped and is not at all happy with the situation he finds himself in. But he is left without a choice. He knows that he is going to die and is willing to accept his death philosophically, "You will have to take death as an aspirin."³⁵ Like all Hemingway code heroes, Sordo too stands up bravely to the inevitable and hurls defiance at his impending death. He is unafraid and unwilling to either submit or surrender and he laughs in the face of the enemy and promises to take a heavy toll of the enemy. He does succeed in tricking and taking the life of Captain Mora as a "comrade voyager."³⁶

Tragedy and death seem to stalk every character in the novel. Sordo takes the life of Lt. Julien and Captain Mora but is himself done to death by the fascists. Lt. Berrando who, albeit reluctantly, decapitates Sordo and his followers also does not escape for it is he who looms on the sight of a mortally wounded and dying Jordan. Old Anselmo who hated to kill, himself becomes a casualty. Fernando too is dead and so are most of the companions of the fleeing Pablo. For all of them the same bell had tolled. An ironical turn to the entire sequence of events

35. For Whom The Bell Tells - Ernest Hemingway

Penguin Books. p 291

36. Ibid. p 302

is the knowledge that the blowing up of the bridge was not necessary at all, " but the Generals will not cancel it until it is too late."³⁷

It is indeed tragic that the young and innocent Maria should be struck by misfortune again and again. She had lost all: her mother, her father and even her honour. She had found comfort and solace and a ray of hope and joy in Robert Jordan. It is a pity that she should lose him also. What is frightening is the fact that the long arm of death does not care to choose between the good and the bad but strikes suddenly and at will without any rhyme or reason. How else does one explain the death of Maria's mother who did nothing wrong by loving and being devoted to her husband. For unlike Maria's father " my mother was not a Republican and she would not say, ' Viva la Republica ', but only Viva my father who lay there, on his face, by her feet."³⁸ Unfortunate and tragic too are the deaths of so many of the so-called fascists from the town of Avilla from where Pilar hailed.

A point to be noted is that death does not differentiate between the good and the bad. It strikes one and

37. An Introduction To Seven Modern American Novelists
 Edited by William Van O'Connor ; University of
 Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. 1964
 p 166

38. For Whom The Bell Tolls - Ernest Hemingway
 Penguin Books. p 332

all alike and offers no chance or choice in the matter. After all it must be accepted that death is the ultimate reality. What is of significance however is the manner in which death is accepted by an individual. Hemingway propounds that death being a reality and inevitable, it is expected that one should submit to it in an honourable manner. That is why Sorde refuses to surrender and accepts and awaits for death with a smile, " he knew that they would die as soon as the mortar came up."³⁹ He prepares " to take death as an aspirin."⁴⁰ " He looked up at the bright, high, blue early-summer sky as he raised the leather wine bottle with his good arm. He was fifty two years old and he was sure this was the last time he would see the sky. He was not at all afraid of dying ---"⁴¹ " He joked about it to himself ----- If one must die, he thought, and clearly one must, I can die. But I hate it. Dying was nothing and he had no picture of it nor fear of it in his mind."⁴²

Similar is the outlook of the wounded Fernando who waits for the enemy bullets to strike him. Jordan himself, though mortally wounded and in great pain, shies away from sheeting himself and ending his misery. Instead he chooses to train his gun at the enemy and waits to go down in a blaze of glory.

39. Ibid. p 293

40. Ibid. p 291

41. Ibid. p 295

42. Ibid. pp 295,296

Even old Anselmo who disliked killing, " All that I am sorry for is the killing "⁴³ accepts death calmly, " If I die on this morning now it is all right."⁴⁴ Though plagued with the realisation of the loneliness of his being he yet retains his composure, " But there was no excitement. It was all calm now and the sun beat down on his neck and on his shoulders as he crouched and as he looked up he saw the high, cloudless sky and the slope of the mountain rising beyond the river and he was not happy but he was neither lonely nor afraid."⁴⁵

The calm courage shown by the fascists of Pilar's village in the face of death is also exemplary. The land owner Don Ricardo comforts his mates and fellow condemned by saying " Do'nt be sad. To die is nothing. The only bad thing is to die at the hands of this canalla."⁴⁶ The courage exhibited by many of the others is also praise-worthy.

Even the blustering Captain Mora, though courageous, foolishly mocks at death and pays the ultimate price.

All these incidents only go to show that human beings are under the control of and at the mercy of the menacing and awesome unknown that is hovering over them. The good

43. Ibid. p 191

44. Ibid. p 416

45. Ibid. p 416

46. Ibid. p 108

and the bad are both equally subjected to the traumatic vicissitudes of life and then violently swept away by the benign indifference of the universe. The uncertainties of life can be ascertained from Robert Jordan's ruminations, " Two days ago I never knew that Pilar, Pablo, nor the rest existed, he thought. There was no such thing as Maria in the world. It certainly was a much simpler world. I had instructions from Golz that were perfectly clear and seemed perfectly possible to carry out although they presented certain difficulties and involved certain consequences. After we blew the bridge I expected either to get back to the lines or not get back and if we got back I was going to ask for some time in Madrid."⁴⁷ But instead he is mortally wounded and left behind by his fleeing comrades. In such situations it is expected that one does not flinch but face the reality with courage and fortitude as has been depicted in the response of the various characters in the novel.

" There are many passages in which Jordan appears more to be struggling for the faith on which he acts than to have achieved it. The hero is still the wounded man and incidents from his past are supplied to explain why this is so; two of the characters remark pointedly that he was too young to experience the things he tells them of having

47. Ibid. pp 218,219

experienced. But Jordan has learnt a lot, since the old days, about how to live and function with his wounds, and he behaves well. He dies, but he has done his job, and the manner of his dying convinces us of what his thinking had failed to do: that life is worth living and that there are causes worth dying for."⁴⁸ At the end of the novel, as he lies dying, he himself says " I have fought for what I believed in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere. The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for --- ."49

There is much in common between the two novels A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls. Both these novels are love stories drawn in the background of war. Both the stories have a tragic end. But unlike Shakespeare's Romeo And Juliet where both the lovers die, in Hemingway's novels only one lover dies; Catherine in A Farewell To Arms and Jordan in For Whom The Bell Tolls. In both the novels the heroes are placed in a land far removed from their own homes. The action too, namely the wars, take place in a foreign country far away from their parental homes. Perhaps it was Hemingway's contention that if death was to overtake one, it could do so at any time and any place. There was no escaping it, be it at home or elsewhere.

48. An Introduction: Seven Modern American Novelists ; Edited by William Van O'Conner ; University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. 1964. p 166

49. For Whom The Bell Tolls - Ernest Hemingway Penguin Books. p 440

Both novels present stories of courage and bravery; morally, physically and spiritually where the tormented characters refuse to yield and rather choose to go down fighting.

Another point of similarity in the novels is that the heroines in both the novels have a traumatic past. Catherine has lost her fiancée "blown to bits" at the front and she is left in a shocked state. She is even considered to be slightly crazy. Maria, on the other hand, is also a pathetic figure who has lost her parents and who had been raped and humiliated by the fascist soldiers that killed her parents. Each of them is made to suffer for no fault of theirs and it is because of this fact that we sympathise with them in their sorry plight and feel pity for them.

As is discerned in Shakespearean tragedies, the element of chance also plays a vital role in Hemingway's scheme. If Pablo had not stolen the fuses and detonators the lives of many including those of Jordan, Anselmo and Fernando might have been spared.

The attitude of the heroes, Henry and Jordan, towards the wars in which they find themselves engulfed, differ. After the initial interest shown till the time

when he is wounded and rudely awakened to the realities of war and also during the retreat Henry loses all interest in the war. He deserts with a could'nt-care-less attitude. He himself says " Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation." " It was not my show anymore."⁵⁰ He had made a separate peace.

Jordan, on the other hand, unlike Henry is totally committed to his war as is seen in his explanation to Pilar " Remember thee in this of a bridge there is no money and no loot and in thy reservations of talking, much danger, and that afterwards there must be a moving from these mountains. Many will oppose this of the bridge."⁵¹ His total committment to the cause can also be seen from the statement he makes to Maria, " We'll be killed but we'll blow the bridge."⁵² He considers everything else of no consequence except the task at hand. Even his intense love for Maria does not dissuade him from carrying out his objective. The incident wherein he shoots a fascist cavalryman clearly brings home this point,- " She had no place in his life now."⁵³ Jordan also does not hesitate to put the lives of other innocent men in danger as long as his objective is gained. One could call him selfish but he does nothing for self gain, only for the common

50. Ibid. p 181

51. Ibid. p 36

52. Ibid. p 351

53. Ibid. p 255

gain or cause. At the end of the novel when he lies dying he refuses even to try and escape. On the contrary he volunteers to keep a rear-guard action in order that he may at least buy some time for his beloved Maria and the rest of Pablo's band of guerillas and enable them to escape to safety.

The fact that he was chosen for the task of blowing the bridge in spite of his being a foreigner, itself speaks volumes of the trust and faith the powers that be had in him. Unlike Henry, for Robert Jordan there was only one road,- duty above all and the ultimate price one has to pay - death. There is no doubt however, that he is a fighter to the core and determined to succeed. So enveloping is the intensity of his interest that it ultimately consumes him.

The lovers too are different in their respective attitude towards each other. For Jordan and Maria it is love at first sight; total and all-enveloping, tilting towards the mystic. The love between Henry and Catherine is flirtatious and gradual.

Tragedy seems to have been a way of life with Hemingway and is the only thread connecting most of his novels. Jake Barnes (The Sun Also Rises) is the

first of the tragic heroes. He is closely followed by Frederick Henry in A Farewell To Arms. Death In The Afternoon presents the heroism and death of Maera the bull-fighter. To Have And Have Not pits Harry Morgan against the callousness of his fellow man. His tragedy is that it takes him an entire life to learn that " One man alone ain't got no chance." The irony of the statement is that his realisation put into words the predicament of the whole human race. Robert Jordan is the next tragic hero presented in For Whom The Bell Tolls. The next in line is Colonel Cantwell in Across The River And Into The Trees. And finally the pinnacle of his tragic achievement finds expression in his Nobel-prize winning novelette The Old Man And The Sea.

If A Farewell To Arms was Hemingway's first attempt at writing a love tragedy based on war, For Whom The Bell Tolls was his second foray into the world of love, war and death. Love and death appear to have had some special place of interest in Hemingway's heart as these two aspects of life appear again and again in his novels albeit in slightly different or variegated forms. If Jake Barnes loses Lady Bret Ashley in The Sun Also Rises, in A Farewell To Arms it is Frederick Henry who is denied by fate a happy life with Catherine. She is snatched away by the cold

clutch of death just when things were brightening up for them and at a time when they were enjoying their new-found freedom. Harry Morgan of To Have And Have Not burns out his life in an effort to keep himself, his wife and his children on the upper fringe of the have-nots. The pathetic heroine of For Whom The Bell Tolls despite the curse of a tormenting past loses out yet again when her lover, Robert Jordan, becomes a casualty in the war in which they are caught up. Whereas the luckless old man in The Old Man And The Sea has to lose out to the marauding sharks.

Hemingway's repeated excursions into the world of love, struggle, death and near transfiguration perhaps find fuller expression in The Old Man And The Sea. It is in this novel that Hemingway ultimately triumphs in his delineation of the tragic concept of life. The earlier novels, A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls, which have been discussed, are pointers to and clearly anticipate The Old Man And The Sea.

CHAPTER - IV

DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH

Based on The Old Man and the Sea

DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH

" But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated."¹ This lofty idea forms the central theme of the novel The Old Man And The Sea. A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls were stories based on political chaos and war. Intermingled and in between each story was a story of love. The Old Man And The Sea, on the other hand, is a story of fishing and man's eternal and vain struggle against the elemental forces of nature.

This novel is Hemingway's high water-mark in the art of fiction for it most comprehensively represents the novelist's tragic vision. It is certainly one of the greatest accounts of man's struggle against odds. Here he also comes to the conclusion of his belief that the tragic is very much a part and parcel of life and it is to be treated as such without nervousness or fear but with stoic fortitude and with courage and nobility. For it is in the conduct alone, against adversity, that man finds his true self and is able to come to terms with the tragic element of his being.

1. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway
Penguin Books, 1976.

Hemingway enjoyed life immensely especially the life associated with athletic sports. His father, the elder Hemingway, initiated and inculcated in him the thrill of sport at a very tender age. He was given his first fire-arm, a gun, when he was barely eleven years old. But even at that tender age he also became aware of the meaning of pain. His first confrontation with pain was in the tranquil Michigan woods when he had taken a trip with his father who was a doctor. His father had performed a Caesarean operation on an Indian squaw without any anaesthetic and he had then sewed her up with fishing leaders. The Indian who had apparently been watching had not been able to bear the sight and had slit his throat in the bunk.

While fishing in " Big Two-hearted River ", away and free in the woods, he had been conscious in a curious way of the cruelty inflicted on the fish, even of the silent agonies endured by the live bait, the grass-hoppers kicking on the hook.

But never even for a moment does he deny that life is not enjoyable. Talking and drinking with his friends was great fun and fishing in " Big Two-Hearted River " was a tranquil and exhilarating experience but at the same time he also never allows us to forget that the brutality of life

is always there and that it is somehow bound up to the enjoyment. He makes a sincere attempt to impress upon us that " the condition of life is pain; and the joys of the most innocent surface are somehow tied to its stifled pangs."² We are made to suffer and in turn we make suffer. " Besides, everything kills everything else in the same way "³ and everybody loses out in the long run. What counts and is of significance is the manner in which we take our way out. The idea consistently advocated was that man should make the exit with honour, with dignity and with " grace under pressure ".

Being outwardly all about the physical sports— hunting, ski-ing, bull-fighting, horse-racing and fishing,^{his works} often tend to lead us away from his actual intentions. He was essentially a writer with a philosophical bent of mind, and his main interest was to represent human life and to consistently set man against the background of his world and universe; to examine the human situation from different angles and points of view. And despite Hemingway's pre-occupation with physical contests, his heroes are almost always defeated,— physically, nervously and practically. But though defeated in every aspect, they still retain their dignity, for the moral victory belongs to them alone.

2. Literature In America ; Philip Rahv ; Meridian Books, New York. 1957. pp 373,374

3. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway
Penguin Books, 1976. p 95

Santiago⁴, " He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf stream ---"⁵, the hero of The Old Man And The Sea, is an aged Cuban fisherman dwelling off the coast of Havana. Though vastly experienced he is shown to presently going through a bad phase and has gone rewardless

4. Literally Saint James. Professor Robert M. Brown first noted the point. Melvin Backman in " Modern Fiction Studies " I (August 1955) p 10, observes the connection between Santiago and the " fisherman, apostle, and martyr from the Sea of Galilee ". See Mathew 4: 18-22. When we reach The Old Man And The Sea, says Professor Backman " we seem to have come a long way from the early works, but there is a pattern into which all of them fall. It is true that the old man is the only hero who is not left alone, at the end of the story, with death or despair. He is old and womanless and humble. Yet in him we have a blending of the two dominant motifs - the matador and the crucified." Santiago's suffering is, however, more remarkable than his matador-like act of killing, " Etched on the readers mind ", says Backman, " is the image of the old man as he settled against the wood of the bow ----- and took his suffering as it came, telling himself, Rest gently now ----- Suffering and gentle and wood blend magically into an image of Christ on the Cross." (Carlos Baker ; The Writer As Artist; Princeton University Press; New Jersey, 1972. Footnote, p 293)

5. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway
Penguin Books, 1976. p 1

for the past eighty-four days. Such has been his ill-fortune that fellow fishermen refer to him as *salao* which is " the worst form of unlucky."⁶ Even young Manolin who used to assist him in his daily chores is withdrawn by his parents and put into another boat " which caught three good fish the first week".⁷ Manolin hated to leave the old man alone to fend for himself for it was he who had taught him fishing and the youngster had great respect and faith in the aged fisherman.

It is not as if the old man had not passed through a similar phase of ill-fortune before; he had. As Manolin kindly reminds him " remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones everyday for three weeks."⁸ He realises that unless his luck changes for the better and unless he made a catch soon it might become difficult for him to even keep body and soul together. As it was he was indebted to young Manolin who not only fed him but also tended to his needs. Though humble and simple he realises his precarious situation and is grateful to Manolin for the assistance and love given to him. Unwilling to submit to his ill luck he makes up his mind to try his luck yet again by venturing far out into waters he had never been before. When questioned by Manolin as to where he

6. Ibid. p 1

7. Ibid. p 1

8. Ibid. p 6

intended going he answers " Far out to come in when the wind shifts. I want to be out before it is light."⁹

Though Santiago was passing through a lean phase he was not disheartened nor was he lacking in self-confidence, " I may not be as strong as I think. But I know many tricks and I have many tricks and I have resolution."¹⁰

Early at dawn the next morning he sets sail far out into the sea to try his luck once again.

Aged, alone, and far out in the sea beyond the sight of his fellow fishermen he manages to make his prized catch, a marlin swimming a hundred feet below in the depths of the ocean. He did not realise what he was up against as he had not seen his quarry till then. For the next three days and two nights he wages a grim battle to subdue his fish which tows his skiff further and further out into the sea. He suffers immensely, " Certainly his back cannot feel as badly as mine does. But he cannot pull this skiff for ever, no matter how great he is."¹¹ His fierce pride and unflinching resolution makes him cry " Fish, I'll stay with you until I'm dead."¹² With the resolution having been made, the battle-lines are drawn. His waning strength and his bruised and

9. Ibid. p 9

10. Ibid. p 18

11. Ibid. p 45

12. Ibid. p 45

bloody hands does not for even once turn his mind away from the task at hand. To reassure himself of his own strength and abilities he recalls to mind the time when he had challenged a big negro at arm-wrestling. Though the negro was bigger and had been favoured to win, he, Santiago had defeated him after a full day's tussle of changing fortunes. Afterwards everyone had called him " El Campeon ". Thoughts of Manolin and also of the lions on the beach gave him strength as these thoughts reminded him of his youth.

Happy at having made a catch Santiago, at the same time, also feels pity for the fish. Despite his mixed feelings his resolution, however, remains unchanged and unshakable, " Fish, I love you and respect you very much. " But I will kill you before this day ends."¹³

On the third day the fish finally emerges from the deep, in all its majesty. Santiago marvels at its size and beauty. The fish makes one last dying and desperate attempt to free away but Santiago has no difficulty in pulling it alongside his skiff and killing it with his harpoon. The old man makes the kill with reluctance and with remorse for he had had great respect for the fish and had triumphed over it only because of his " will and my intelligence."¹⁴

13. Ibid. p 46

14. Ibid. p 56

After lashing the fish alongside his boat, he sets a weary sail homeward. All along, however, he has the premonition that his luck will not hold out. An hour later his worst fears come true when the first shark hits his trail. It was a Mako shark and " When the old man saw him coming he knew that this was a shark that had no fear at all and would do exactly what he wished."¹⁵

With the arrival of the Mako shark " begins a tragedy of deprivation as piteous as that which King Lear undergoes at the hands of his shark-hearted daughters. Lear's hundred knights, the only remaining sign of his power and the badge of his kingly dignity, are taken from him in batches of twenty-five."¹⁶ The forty-pound rippings and tearings which Santiago's fish undergoes, soon reduce his trophy to a skeleton; a pathetic reminder of his epic victory.

It is true that he does put up a great fight " with a knife lashed to the tiller." He even manages to kill a few of the sharks. But, like Maria in For Whom The Bell Tolls, he is overpowered by sheer weight of numbers and succumbs to the inevitable. Sadly and wearily he turns his patched sail homeward. He admits he is defeated physically but not

15. Ibid. p 90

16. Hemingway: The Writer As Artist ; Carlos H. Baker;
Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press 1972.

spiritually as he himself explains, " But man is not made for defeat." " A man can be destroyed but not defeated."¹⁷ A tinge of remorse overcomes the old man and he says "Half fish, fish that you were, I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both."¹⁸ Going out far was to negate the given. That is the paradox of the fortunate fall that he wins even by losing. He redeems himself and mankind through his suffering. His triumph over the fish shows his mastery over the physical and sensual element of his being.

The consequent mutilation of the fish shows that what he achieves is taken away by sheer physical force in the natural process. Only the skeleton remains as a token of his victory. Like the tragic hero he has attempted to do the impossible and has attained ripeness through suffering and purgation and self-purification.

Carlos Baker in his book Hemingway: The Writer As Artist has this to say of Santiago,- " he has reached a condition of absolute physical exhaustion as well as, on the moral plane, an absolute but not abject humility. Both have cost him very little less than everything, which is ofcourse the price one must always finally pay. Santiago's

17. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway

Penguin Books 1976.

p 93

18. Ibid. p 104

victory is the moral victory of having lasted without permanent impairment of his beliefs in the worth of what he has been doing."¹⁹ Like all tragic heroes he remains undefeated only because he has gone on trying.

One of the essential demands of a tragedy is that the conflicting parties should be of equal stature and bearing. In the novel The Old Man And The Sea, both the old man and the fish are of equal strength and noble bearing and proper adversaries, pitting their strength, skill, and cunning against each other. It is the old man's intelligence against the baser instincts of the fish which ultimately triumphs but not without the accompanying pangs of pain, sorrow and suffering.

When the old man at first hooks the fish, he immediately realises the great strength of his adversary and that " I can do nothing with him and he can do nothing with me."²⁰ His feeble attempts to gain some line end in failure for " the line had been taut upto the very edge of the breaking point since he had hooked the fish and he felt the harshness as he leaned back to pull and knew he could put no more strain on it."²¹ Having met and gauged

19. Hemingway: The Writer As Artist - Carlos H. Baker ;
Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1972. p 294

20. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway ;
Penguin Books 1976. p 40

21. Ibid. p 46

each other up, both the parties settle down for the ensuing battle as both the adversaries were unwilling to concede any ground. Santiago realises that he " must impoverise to his because of his great size."²² He knows that if the fish surfaces, he can kill it easily but if the fish refused to surface ----- . Steeling his mind, he decides " Then I will stay down with him for ever."²³ Such was the old man's resolve.

Two days later when the fish rises from the depths of the sea and begins to jump, the old man wonders if the fish was doing that to " show me how big he was."²⁴ He, however, was not the type to be cowed down and he thinks, " I wish I could show him what sort of man I am ----- I am more man than I am and I will be so."²⁵

To prove himself, he suffers. But being courageous " he does not admit his suffering at all."²⁶ He wanted to show the fish " What a man can do and what a man endures."²⁷ He recalls having told young Manolin that he was a strange old man. Now was his chance of proving it. The fact that he had proved it so many times before meant nothing to him. All that did matter to him now was that he was going to prove it yet again because each time it was, for him, a new

22. Ibid. p 52

23. Ibid. p 52

24. Ibid. p 56

25. Ibid. p 56

26. Ibid. p 56

27. Ibid. p 57

experience. But never before had he come upon such a noble adversary. This fact, however, does not deter him in any way for he had unbounded confidence in himself and is sure of his impending victory as he reasons aloud " If you're not tired fish, you must be very strange."²⁸ Ironical and proper that the conflict is between two strange* beings.

Towards the end of the third day the old man begins to tire. He says that he felt good whereas " He did not truly feel good because the pain from the chord across his back had almost passed pain and gone into a dullness---"²⁹ The redeeming feature was that " now I have gained on him in the question of sustenance."³⁰ No sooner is this thought dissolved in his mind when the fish begins to jump and it takes all of his cunning and experience to restrain the fish from breaking away. The speed of the running line cuts his hands badly but he had expected this to happen and he philosophically consoles himself by saying " pain does not matter to man "³¹, driving home the point that man can never be the slave of pain and that pain can be endured and overcome. Santiago knew this fact. He also knew that if the pain was sustained and prolonged the poor fish, which was also suffering, would be driven to a frenzied madness

28. Ibid. p 59

* Tragic heroes are always ' strange ' beings. They are not normal beings. They are a notch above the normal being.

29. Ibid. p 65

30. Ibid. p 66

31. Ibid. p 75

and thereby invite his doom. But the wily fish is also unwilling to give in easily which leads the old man to cry, " Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too ?"³² The epic struggle for supremacy drives Santiago to call upon every ounce of his strength from his ageing body. Often the lonely old man wishes that the boy Manolin were there to aid him. He suffers immensely but he knows " how to suffer like a man."³³

At long last his superior intelligence wins and he succeeds in bringing the fish alongside his boat and kills it. But he does not truly rejoice in his victory for no one loves the fall of a noble adversary.

Any conflict must logically end in a resolution. The conflict between the old man and the fish is resolved in the victory of the former over the latter. Both the parties suffer greatly and the defeat and death of the fish is noble and honourable.

The victory over the fish, however, does not end the old man's agony. His suffering is further prolonged by marauding sharks who attack his frail boat carrying the prized catch. The old man stands up to them manfully but bows down in the face of superior weight of numbers. He

32. Ibid. p 82

33. Ibid. p 82

loses his fish but not his honour and self-respect for he has lost by resisting and fighting till the bitter end. He bears his loss proudly and philosophically saying, " everything kills everything in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive."³⁴ His only regret is the realisation that he had gone too far, " I should'nt have gone out so far fish. Neither for you nor for me. I'm sorry fish."³⁵ By going beyond the limit he had violated his own luck and had only himself to blame for it.

On his return back to shore Manolin questions him, " How much did you suffer ?"³⁶ It is only then that Santiago admits his pain and suffering by simply replying, " Plenty ". The last page of the book tells us that Santiago has again fallen asleep, that deep sleep of renewal and resurrection, - " He was still sleeping on his face and the boy was sitting by him watching him. The old man was dreaming about the lions."* He was dreaming of his youth, his strength, and of hope.

Death plays a prominent role in Hemingway's tragic design. Santiago's suffering, fall and defeat is a direct result of his attempt to hook the fish and the subsequent

34. Ibid. p 95

35. Ibid. p 99

36. Ibid. p 113

* Ibid. p 114

death of the fish. The fish itself has to die only because Santiago had gone too far out. And having gone there he is determined to prove himself. In order to be able to kill the fish, far out at sea, he has to sustain himself. This he does by killing a dolphin, for food, even though he found the taste of dolphin repulsive. Even the little shrimps are not spared by Santiago, in order to curb his hunger. Quite a few of the marauding sharks who scent Santiago's kill and come to feed upon it meet their end in Santiago's hand as he was unwilling to give up his prize without a fight.

Then again we are told of the time when he and the boy had hooked a female marlin. All throughout the struggle that followed the male had stayed by their boat and refused to leave his mate. But eventually the female marlin was hauled into the boat and begging her pardon, for both the old man and the boy felt sad, they "butchered her promptly."³⁷ They could have spared her life but they did not. That was the way it was meant to be.

There is also the incident wherein a small bird, a warbler, comes to rest awhile on his skiff. Santiago wonders as to what would be the fate of the poor bird if it was met

37. Ibid. . . p 42

and attacked by the hawks who preyed upon them. He gently tells the bird, " Take a good rest, small bird. Then go in and take your chance like any man or bird or fish."³⁸

And lastly, Santiago's future itself is left to the imagination of the reader. Whereas critics such as Carlos Baker and Philip Young are of the opinion that Santiago survives his ordeal and looks forward to going fishing again, others argue that, that is not so. After having achieved so much dignity it would indeed be a pathetic sight to see Santiago dying. His having been left alone in his hut to die is in a manner not very dissimilar to the situation of Robert Jordan in For Whom The Bell Tolls. This argument is substantiated by the fact that Santiago's plans to go fishing with the boy are a piece of fiction , similar to what he had indulged in before ---

" What do you have to eat ?" the boy asked. " A pot of yellow rice with fish. Do you want some ?" " No. I will eat at home. Do you want me to make the fire ?" " No, I will make it later on. Or I may eat the rice cold." " May I take the cast net ?" " Of course."

" There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction everyday. There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the

boy knew this too."³⁹

Towards the end of the story, their plan to get a good killing lance which they can get made from a spring leaf of an old Ford is also a piece of fiction because when the boy says " I will have everything in order --- You get your hands well, old man", the old man answers, " I know how to care for them. In the night I spat something strange and felt something in my chest was broken." And, the boy tells him " Get that well too."⁴⁰ The boy very well knows that the old man cannot cure that something which is broken in the chest. He wants Santiago to keep the illusion that he will recover. There is no remedy for something broken in the chest, at least, at his age. It is a piece of fiction similar to the yellow rice and the cast net, especially the latter which the old man pretends he still had even though there was no cast net. It is here that the old man's identification with the turtles become relevant. He has been killed by the sharks but, as he is like a turtle, his heart will continue to beat hours after he has been killed.

Pity, which is an integral factor of tragedy, is largely absent in Hemingway's writings. " Until now, his

39. Ibid. p 11

40. Ibid. p 113

men and women had made themselves, shaped themselves out of their own clay; their victories and their defeats were at the hands of each other."⁴¹ They, one and all, wanted to prove to themselves and to one another how strong and tough they could be. But here, in The Old Man And The Sea, he wrote about pity, " about something somewhere that made them all: the old man had to catch the fish then lose it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks that had to rob the old man of the fish; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all."⁴² We do feel grief at the old man's plight, and pity him for he has lost nothing less than everything.

It is easy to find many a symbol in The Old Man And The Sea even though Hemingway had no intension whatsoever to represent anything he wrote, symbolically. * As he himself

41. Ernest Hemingway ; Carlos Baker ; Pelican Biographies ; Penguin Books 1972. p 768

42. Ibid. p 768

43. Ibid. p 770

* Hemingway's remark to a reporter: " No good book has ever been written that has in it symbols arrived at beforehand and stuck in. " In The Old Man And The Sea I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things."

(Hemingway: The Writer As Artist ; Carlos Baker ; Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1972.

p 323 Footnote)

said of the book that " there wasn't any symbolism."⁴³
 Perhaps his portrayal of Santiago as a symbol of Christ as also the consequent suffering depicted, was only a off-shoot and could be attributed to Hemingway's racial memory. Nor was it his intention to write an allegory. As J.M.Halliday writes in his essay that " Hemingway as far as I know has never written an allegory ----."⁴⁴

Notwithstanding the various arguments given for and against and also what Hemingway had himself stated, we cannot ignore the fact that Santiago is a symbol of Christ. He has the fatherly and kindly disposition, raw courage , determination and the ability to accept and bear suffering as it came,- " Rest gently now against the wood and think of nothing." " The suffering, the gentleness and the wood blend magically into an image of Christ on the Cross."⁴⁵

One should not be taken by surprise at Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago as a symbol of Christ. Much earlier on itself he had provided definite pointers towards this end in his portrayal of the young priest in A Farewell To Arms, and then again in his portrayal of old Anselmo in For Whom The Bell Tolls. Though they were not symbols of

43. Ernest Hemingway ; Carlos Baker ; Pelican Biographies ; Penguin Books 1972. p 770

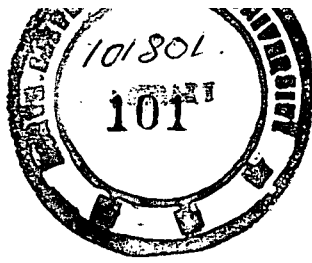
44. Interpretations of American Literature ; Edited by Charles Feidelson Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb Jr.; O.U.P. 1959. p 301

45. Hemingway: The Writer As Artist ; Carlos Baker ; Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1972. p 299

Christ in the way Santiago is, nevertheless they, the priest and Anselmo, were portrayals of good men worthy to be the children of God, just as Christ himself was the son of God.

Hemingway's tragic vision essentially leads one into an exploration of life and confrontation with it at close quarters. Like the existentialists he had fully realised that man is essentially alone, pitting his puny self against the hostile unknown and the unbeatable odds of the universe. Keeping this realisation in mind he advocated that man, in whichever way he can, has to make his way through life in the best possible manner. Hampered as he is by his own limitations, he must always endeavour to present himself with honour, with determination, with nobility and with courage as had been depicted in the case of Santiago. The unsavoury truth that the winner takes nothing and that death is the ultimate and a stark reality is savagely driven home.

Santiago's suffering and loss is a result of circumstances activated by Santiago himself. Santiago had the choice to fish elsewhere. He could have stayed closer to the shore and tried his luck. But being what he is and as he himself says " My choice was to go there



to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together."⁴⁶ Since his predicament is a direct result of his own free choice, he himself is also responsible for the consequences that follow. Logically, he has to accept the consequences: his trial, his suffering and his loss of the fish he so much prized.

Man's loneliness is poignantly portrayed in the old man's longing for company, for Manolin, when alone at sea. Far out at sea "aged and alone" he does not even own a radio because of his poverty, and which could at least have kept him in contact with civilization. Time and again he keeps wishing "I wish the boy were here."⁴⁷ All throughout his ordeal, Santiago keeps yearning for the company and assistance of the boy, Manolin. In spite of his craving for the boy's company, the old man realises and knows that loneliness is man's lot and he has to "Think of what you can do with what there is."⁴⁸ His nobility lies in his ability to accept and live with his terrible fate.

In conclusion, one cannot help but examine the factor of fate. If tragedy arises out of conflict, conflict itself is pre-determined by fate. Fate destined that Santiago go rewardless for eighty-four days. It was also destined that

46. The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway ;
Penguin Books, 1976. p 43

47. Ibid. pp 42, 47

48. Ibid. p 99

he go further into the sea than he ever had done before. And having gone there he should hook the fish he did. That he should win his prize and then lose it to the sharks is, also, a result of fate. Fate had destined that Santiago should get his fish and then lose it after an epic struggle if only to show man's indomitable spirit and that " A man can be destroyed but not defeated."⁴⁹

The Old Man And The Sea differs from the earlier novels, A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls, in many respects. The conflicts are different. Whereas in the former it is a conflict between man and fish, in the latter it is a conflict of ideals in which man is pitted against man. The conflict in A Farewell To Arms and For Whom The Bell Tolls arises out of political chaos and war but in The Old Man And The Sea the struggle emerges because Santiago chooses to prove his capabilities and abilities to himself and because he attempts to transcend his limitations.

The action in A Farewell To Arms and in For Whom The Bell Tolls takes place on land. On the other hand, the setting for The Old Man And The Sea is the vast and endless ocean.

49. Ibid. p 93

Then, again, the earlier novels were stories of love in the background of war. The Old Man And The Sea is a story of fishing.

What is common to all these novels is the depiction of the situation in which man is placed. He is brought into direct conflict with the natural elements and with the menacing unknown which is always attempting to stifle and thwart his every design and aspiration. Under such circumstances, Hemingway advocates, man, alone as he is, is expected to live within his limitations and confront his terrible fate calmly, with courage, with honour and with dignity.

All the heroes in the novels under discussion, do stand up to the inevitable with fortitude. Henry gains and loses a wife. Robert Jordan goes down fighting and in the process loses a new life. The old man gets his marlin but he too loses out to the sharks. In spite of their defeat Hemingway's heroes are in no way humiliated. They retain their dignity, pride and self-respect for they have fully realised their situation in life and also that, they, being only expressions of the universal will, for them there can be no dying, - " In my end is my beginning."⁵⁰

50. Hemingway: The Writer As Artist ; Carlos H. Baker ;
Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey ;
p 320

CONCLUSION

When Ernest Hemingway was still a young boy, a mere child of two years of age, he was once questioned by his mother, Grace, as to what he was afraid of? Without the least hesitation and with great gusto the little toddler had replied that he was "fraid a nothing". It was a statement which later formed the basis of his life, his philosophy of life, and, of all his writings.

At the beginning, his steps as a writer were hesitant and unsure like those of a baby toddler. The results are clearly seen in his earlier writings, especially the early novels. But later on, as he gained more and more experience and became more full of conviction, his steps no longer hesitated or stumbled but strode out purposefully and manfully culminating in his supreme achievement, the novelette, The Old Man And The Sea.

But during his sojourn through life and before he had arrived at the answers to life, he had also to learn that there was much to fear in life including that vast cosmic nothingness which is referred to as "Nada". Gradually he became aware that man is, at best, a puppet, a mere plaything in the hands of the foreboding and awesome

unknown. Realisation had dawned upon him that there was something evil and sinister perpetually and menacingly hovering over man and his world. This fearful and unseen evil was always poised and ready to stifle and thwart man's every aspiration and send him rushing to his doom. Hemingway's achievement lies in the fact that he, through his numerous experiences, knew exactly what he was up against. He was well aware of the odds against him and yet, adopting a pagan approach, he would charge headlong into it nevertheless. He was conscious of what the end had in store; at the same time he also knew that he could neither shy away nor run away as he had no choice or escape. Death would catch up with him --- eventually. But as we are all aware he, as well as all his heroes, did have the choice to pull back and retreat and accept his fate with resignation. However, he refrained from doing so. Instead he dared to defy the will of the Gods and venture into unknown and untrodden pastures. And though he succumbs and falls a victim to the constant pressures of the evil in nature and in life, he arouses our admiration by going down in a blaze of glory. And as advocated by Hemingway himself, it was this quality which was to be cultivated in life; the will to resist evil, to confront it manfully and fight it till the bitter end even if it meant that we might get singed along the way. Notwithstanding the fact that the end is known, man should

never succumb to the pressures of life but face it boldly. The fact that he is going to lose is a foregone conclusion. But his defeat and fall will also yield his spiritual triumph. Physically he may be laid to waste but morally and spiritually he towers above all and victory belongs to him alone.

In order to arrive at the answers to life Hemingway often had to reconnoitre a torturous route. More often than not he found himself bowed down with the pain of life and at times even got singed along the way. When relating experiences in his novels he quite naturally turns to and draws upon his personal experiences as is clearly seen in A Farewell To Arms. Like young Frederick Henry, Hemingway too thinks of the battle-field as a play-ground for the brave, the courageous and the glory-hunters. He looks upon it as a place where one can show one's manliness and courage. But when a shell explodes in the dug-out in which he is sheltering, wounding him seriously, he is rudely awakened to the realities and the horrors of war, and the myth he so strongly believed in, is shattered. He then comes to realise that he is nothing but a toy in the hands of the Generals. He comes to learn of the manipulations made by man but has yet to learn of the manipulations of life and the mysterious unknown. What no one perhaps realises is that the Generals

too are being manipulated by the Gods.

Totally disgusted with the war and the situation he finds himself in, Frederick Henry makes a separate peace and deserts to Switzerland with his beloved Catherine. He now finds comfort and also imagines that his troubles are all over. This is the point where he makes his mistake. By letting down his guard poor Henry is led to believe that the true joys of life now lies ahead but when Catherine dies a painful death at child birth in a hospital in Lausanne, he is shocked into mute silence. He does not really know what has hit him or why ? Even if he does know he finds it difficult to accept his fate. The story of Frederick Henry is only the beginning of Hemingway's long quest to unravel the mystery of life, during which he, like Henry, would have to undergo many more traumatic experiences.

In his next novel Death In The Afternoon death strikes his hero, Maera, in a most unexpected manner. Maera is presented as a brave and courageous man. He defies death time and again inside the bull-ring but he does so more out of bravado than out of any reason. It is therefore ironical that instead of dying a hero's death in the ring, which he probably desired, he meets his end by tuberculosis. As in the case of Frederick Henry, he too fails to come to grips

with the problems of human existence. He dies without having found either a reason or an answer to the questions of life and death.

To Have And Have Not places Harry Morgan in a situation wherein he comes to the painful realisation that " a man alone ain't got no bloody chance ". For the first time Hemingway's protagonist comes to realise that he is up against something which he cannot overcome. But Harry Morgan's realisation too is not complete in itself. His analysis puts the blame on his fellow man who, we must remember, are themselves mere puppets in a hostile environment unconsciously pressurised and dictated to by an all pervading evil that is constantly hovering over the world of man. The incessant pressure of that evil is the ultimate tragedy of man ; a situation wherein he is left a helpless spectator.

Tragedy overtakes and strikes down the lovers, Jordan and Maria, in For Whom The Bell Tolls. There is no denying the courage exhibited by Jordan and, also, by Maria. But, nevertheless, at his death one is left with a sense of unnecessary waste. Jordan's love for Maria and his excessive zeal and committment to the cause were never balanced at any stage of the story. This fact itself provides ample warning of the tragedy that is to occur in the near future.

Had Jordan's love for Maria been truly what it is shown to be, certainly he could have dispensed with the war ; a war in which he is only a volunteer and which, one must stress, has no direct relation to his personal life or his country. The only over-riding factor is his commitment. One could argue that like Frederick Henry he, too, for the sake of personal happiness, had the choice to make a separate peace and get away from it all. Yet again, taking into account his commitment and loyalty to the cause, he could still have conducted the operation on the bridge successfully, directing from the rear and relative safety. This, he refrains from doing so. Instead, like all heroes, he prefers to lead from the front thus inviting his own inevitable doom. It goes without saying that the choice of life and death was in his own hands; he had decided to take his chances and, unfortunately for him, he had to pay the ultimate penalty --- death.

For Whom The Bell Tolls is definitely a development on the earlier novels. Here, Jordan is aware that he is up against something sinister and evil. He also knows that life is fleeting and as such it is the values we believe in and uphold that gives substance and meaning to our lives. No sacrifice is too great to fight for what we believe in. In trying to uphold his values, Jordan fights a battle from

which he suspects he may never return. His unflinching stand and his glorious exit arouse pride in our selves for he, that is man, has tried to and succeeded in transcending his limitations. He wins our respect and we feel sorry at his fall.

Upto this point all of Hemingway's heroes are shown going down in a blaze of glory. But in spite of their glorious fall one is left with a sense of unnecessary waste as is always the case in a tragedy. A waste, one feels, that could well have been avoided. This strain is continued in the next novel Across The River And Into The Trees. Here the old soldier, Colonel Cantwell, also tries to philosophise and arrive at the answers which had previously come to both Frederick Henry and Robert Jordan. This novel is also a development on the earlier novels. But still there was a long way to go; and it was finally left to the old fisherman, Santiago, in The Old Man And The Sea, to provide all the answers that was in Hemingway's vision.

In The Old Man And The Sea the aged hero, Santiago, a fisherman without par, is shown to have gone without a catch for eighty-four luckless days. His ill fortune has been so miserable that fellow fishermen begin to refer to him as "salao" a term denoting the worst form of unlucky.

Even his only close companion and helper, young Manolin, is compelled by his parents to abandon him. Left to fend for himself and absolutely alone in harsh surroundings, one would have expected the old man to break down in despair. But he surprises us: he does not meekly bow down to his fate. On the other hand, adversity only strengthens the resolve in the frail man. One is almost tempted to think that Fate is taunting him to dare. And, he does dare. He calls the bluff of fate and so very fittingly rises to the occasion that one cannot but feel admiration for the old man. Santiago decides to venture far out into the sea where no man had ever been. And it is there that he hooks his prized marlin. His epic battle to subdue and kill the fish and then to retain it from the marauding sharks is now a part of history. What strikes the reader is that, he is left with a feeling as if something or someone had all along been dictating the moves made by Santiago. Santiago is made to go fishless for such a long period in order to drive him deep into the sea. The power that controls him knows very well the calibre of man Santiago is and also knows or foresees that he will not shirk away from a challenge. What is more intriguing, as also evident, is that Santiago himself appears to know that he is being manipulated and is willing to take his "chance like any man or bird or fish."* He dares to go forward. The same

* The Old Man And The Sea - Ernest Hemingway ;

power that controls him tempts him by giving him a fish the likes of which he had never come across before. But in order to impress His power on the puny man he snatches away by force Santiago's victory in the shape of sharks which tear the noble fish apart and leave it a skeleton. From the very outset Santiago is prepared in the knowledge that fate is going to rob him of his victory. But in spite of this premonition he chooses to fight a battle which he knows would only end in his defeat. He does not back away because Santiago had come to realise what the earlier Hemingway heroes had not; that, life is ephemeral and transient wherein humans are but playthings in the hands of the divine. And in the long run, no matter how hard one tried, one was bound to be trampled, suffocated, and finally done to death by the ever-present and menacing evil that is hovering over and around the world.

Santiago knows he will lose - either way, with or without a fight. And his very nature does not allow him to submit. He prefers to battle to the bitter end thereby gaining the readers pity and sympathy and rising to the proportions of a mythical hero.

The question of choice has been discussed earlier. In The Old Man And The Sea Santiago's choice itself, it appears, is governed by the entity that wills him on to his doom.

Santiago's story clearly amplifies the terrible and terrifying predicament of man. The unsavoury truth and fact of life is that man is surrounded by evil; an evil incessantly hovering and watching over him and sinister in its every design. In the world in which we live, Man is not left with a choice. His very existence, therefore, is tragic. The greatness of Hemingway lies in that he advocates that this realisation should not be a cause for depression. On the contrary, it should propel us to greater deeds of heroism; to defy that horrifying and frightening predicament of man --- death. And only by a positive approach to life and by struggle can man rise gloriously from the debris of his fate.

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