

## INTRODUCTION

## I

Modern American fiction is a vast and complex literary phenomenon. Almost every major American writer has received ample critical attention from various critical perspectives. The major literary trends, authors and classics have been studied and interpreted. These studies have concentrated both on single authors and texts as well as on the entire tradition, the contextual ideology, history and culture of writing. Given this wealth of hermeneutical exercise, it becomes desirable to turn to micro-level analysis of authors or genres. Keeping in view the specific nature of the sophistication of American studies, I have chosen [a very small but significant area of study] in the present dissertation.

I propose to undertake in this dissertation a [thorough study of the works of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway dealing with the theme of war and violence.] The term 'War' in the context of fiction is used to indicate the depiction of not only the actual military conflicts but also their effects on characters directly involved or associated with it in moral and spiritual terms. Crane and Hemingway show an obsessive interest in war. They seem to use it as a metaphor for the human existence. I propose to make a thorough study

of the plot-construction, characterization, themes and style in the war-fiction of these two writers, with a view to examining the influence of Crane on Hemingway's war-fiction.

## II

The present dissertation is divided into four chapters, namely i) Plot-Structures ii) Characterization iii) Themes and iv) Style. In the chapter on plots, I try to present comments on the plots of war-novels by Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway with a view to establishing similarities of conception and treatment of plot in the works of these two writers. Mere accidental similarities of events, episodes or the turn of action do not make valid grounds for comparison. However, when there is a perceptible recurrence of such similarities, one has reason to build a tentative hypothesis of influence, reception and therefore, possible comparison. With this caution in mind, I offer as a starting point of the argument of my thesis, the outlines of plots of the works subjected to analysis in subsequent chapters. In presenting these outlines, (I emphasize the element of war which in my view is the very essence of the fiction of Crane and Hemingway.) The more striking similarities in what constitutes their plots have been pointed out. Thus, the chapter is devoted to narrating plot-outlines, the narration being

'tendentious' e.g. with the theme of war at the centre of my narrative.

The chapter dealing with characterization argues that the novelistic devices and the formal features of the war-fiction of Crane and Hemingway are manifest expressions of their vision of this world as a crisis-ridden existence. In order to demonstrate that this is the case, I undertake in this chapter a (close analysis of the art of characterization) ? in Crane and Hemingway.

It can be said that Crane's characters are a combined product of the social, political and moral contexts of his times. It is argued that they display a violent conflict between the expediency of duty and the skepticism of thought. This chapter tries to show that Crane's characters are like pawns in a cosmic game of deceit which is equally true of Hemingway's characters. It establishes that Crane's principal characters act as precursors of Hemingway's heroes.

Generally speaking, Hemingway's characters have a triple existence : 1) they are men and women with restless emotions and passions and often imbued with heroism; 2) they live in a world of private, psychological anxieties and fantasies; and 3) they are symbolic representation of a scheme of existence which is dominated by an absurd malice beyond the control of any individual human being. Thus, the ontological status of a typical Hemingway character is defined here in

terms of a tripartite relationship between action of the character, its psychic privacy and its tribulations conditioned by an impersonal and absurd fate. This scheme of characterization enables Hemingway to combine the heroic qualities of man with the philosophical disenchantment and even utter helplessness when one is confronted with the dire cosmic design.)

(The most substantial chapter in this dissertation is the one dealing with themes. It treats almost all significant thematic concerns of Crane and Hemingway from a comparative perspective with the view to establishing the thematic kinship of these two writers. The themes discussed here are war and violence, the nexus between war and life, death and destiny, nature, courage and heroism, ethics and non-conformism, and alienation. It is at the level of themes that Hemingway shows the closest affinity with Crane. However, Hemingway's modernism does introduce inevitable deviations from the norms established by Crane.)

A separate chapter is devoted to the analysis of style of Crane and Hemingway. Style as a descriptive concept is long disputed. It is sometimes seen as a choice of language or as a deviation from the norm. In analysis of fiction, style acquires a crucial significance, for style in fiction is the aggregate of linguistic functions, structural arrangements and aesthetic strategies. Crane's Naturalism dominates his narrative style. The plotting done by him deliberately

highlights the Naturalistic strain in his perception of events. The style of Crane is further complicated by his impressionistic tendency. The dominant images, motifs and symbols acquire, therefore, multiplicity of significance. Above everything else, Crane is a fascinating story-teller. His descriptions of shades of emotions are arresting and the philosophical insights in the nature of human existence are profoundly disturbing. There are remarkable resemblances in the use of motif, symbol, irony and narrative strategies between Crane and Hemingway. However, Hemingway has ways of transforming the influence of Crane's style. In this chapter, I have discussed the use of language, irony, narrative techniques and structure.

## II

Stephen Crane who was born in 1871 had a very unhappy childhood. His father, a preacher, was known for his puritanical view of life. Stephen Crane had experienced insecurity and uncertainty as a child and could not respond favourably to the moral idealism of his father. Later, his acquaintance with the large number of immigrants in New York and his growing knowledge of their miserable existence had a lasting impact on his imagination and his literary works. Under the influence of Dean Howells' novel, A Hazard of New Fortunes,

Crane completed Maggie : A Girl of the Streets (1893), his story about a poor, helpless girl which he had begun at Syracuse? This was followed by George's Mother (1896) and The Third Violet (1897). George's Mother deals with the working class people while The Third Violet deals with the bohemian way of life.

The American Civil War had proved to be a source of inspiration to creative writers of generation preceding Crane's. Crane's perusal of works based on the Civil War and his dissatisfaction with them led him to the writing of The Red Badge of Courage (1895). Crane's avowed intention behind writing this novel was to emphasize the element of feelings rather than cold facts. His experiences as a journalist found expression in another of his war-novels, Active Service (1899). For the late 19th century and early 20th century writers, short story and the novel were not radically differentiated forms of writing. Maupassant, Balzac, Chekhov and other great writers practised both forms with equal mastery. Crane, like them, wrote novels as well as short stories. Among his short stories, 'The Open Boat', 'An Episode of War', 'A Mystery of Heroism', 'The Blue Hotel' have high literary merit.

Ernest Hemingway, born in 1899 at Oak Park, Illinois, had an unhappy childhood. As an adolescent boy, he was enthusiastic about joining the war but he could not do so

owing to his being a minor. He served as a correspondent on the Kansas City Star and reported from the Italian Front. After the war, he settled down in Paris where he came in contact with eminent literary figures of the period like Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Ford, Sherwood Anderson and others. With the publication of In Our Time (1925), a collection of short stories, he began his literary career. In our Time was followed by his first major war-novel, The Sun Also Rises (1926). Hemingway's stay in Paris after the war enabled him to study intimately the moods, attitudes and problems of the expatriates and war-casualties in Paris. The Sun Also Rises, a powerful critique of war, embodies the barrenness and bleakness underlying the life after war. Hemingway published his next novel, A Farewell to Arms in 1929. It shows, through a dramatic plot, the initial fervour and idealism of its hero, Henry Frederic, giving way to despair and disillusionment as a result of mindless violence. Hemingway, too, like Henry Frederic's 'Separate peace'<sup>3</sup> in A Farewell to Arms retired into lonely, remote places. During this period of withdrawal, he produced two novels, Death in the Afternoon (1932) and Green Hills of Africa (1935). The economic depression of 1929 led him to write To Have and Have Not (1937). It reflects on contemporary socio-economic realities. The Spanish Civil War engaged Hemingway's political sympathies and as a result, he wrote For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), ostensibly for the vindication of the republican

values. These last two novels represent Hemingway's literary response to the contemporary realities. His next novel, Across the River and Into the Trees (1950) tries to recreate the traumatic past of the hero, Col. Cantwell and its lasting impact on his life. This novel is followed by The Old Man and the Sea (1952) which dramatizes the heroic struggle of an old fisherman, Santiago, against enormous odds. The posthumously published novel, Islands in the Stream deals with the life of a totally dedicated artist whose life and dream are ruined by the developments outside his domain.)

Crane's fiction particularly The Red Badge of Courage has received much critical attention. Critics have responded to various aspects of his art : his approach to war, treatment of war as a metaphor for life, Naturalism and Impressionism, his colour-symbolism and style. Edwin H. Cady in his Stephen Crane<sup>4</sup> analyses the influence of Crane's personal experiences on his art, his Naturalism and the role of irony and psychology in his works. He also offers critical comments on Crane's point of view and his Christian imagery and the psychological realism in The Red Badge of Courage. R.W. Stallman, too, analyses Crane's colour-symbolism, psychological realism and draws our attention to the kinship between Crane's The Red Badge of Courage and Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms.<sup>5</sup> Eric Solomon maintains that Crane in The Red Badge of Courage defines the form of a war-novel. He finds that Crane uses war



as a metaphor of life. He draws our attention to Crane's singular practice of imparting human dimension to inanimate objects. He holds the view that The Red Badge of Courage is a symbolic representation of man's spiritual quest.<sup>6</sup> John Berryman in 'Crane's Art' finds Crane a true representative of American literature and states that his influence is noticeable in the writings of many authors including Hemingway.<sup>7</sup> Berryman analyses Crane's style meticulously, including Crane's use of irony and colour-symbolism. Another critic, Sergio Peresá examines Crane's Impressionism and subscribes to the view that Crane was basically an impressionist. He believes that The Red Badge of Courage is a triumph of impressionistic vision and impressionistic technique.<sup>8</sup> These representative critical observations on Crane's art may indicate that critics are mainly preoccupied with Crane's psychological approach to war, his use of symbolism, Impressionism, imagery and vision. Critics hold that Crane, in the beginning of his career, practises Naturalism as in a work like Maggie : A Girl of the Streets. The bulk of criticism on Crane's works seeks to establish the centrality of irony in Crane's art. It progresses from Naturalism to psychological realism.

Critical responses to Hemingway's art can be described as voluminous, enthusiastic or biased. It has been widely acclaimed as well as denounced. Critics have responded keenly

to his art of characterization, his fictional situations, his recurrent themes and his distinctive style. His use of irony and symbolism, too, have claimed considerable critical attention. Philip Young, in his critical observations on Hemingway's works, perceives close relationship between his life and art. He finds violence at the centre of Hemingway's life as well as his creative art. According to him, the recurrent wound which figures prominently in his novels represents both physical as well as psychological violence.<sup>9</sup> He interprets the predicament of his heroes in psychological terms. John Killinger, in his critical work, Hemingway and the Dead Gods, A Study in Existentialism establishes the centrality of death in Hemingway's vision and works and sees it as existential preoccupation on his part. He also analyses at length the categories of the simple and the complicated in connection with his characters.<sup>10</sup> Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner in the book, Ernest Hemingway analyse his style and observe that style and content fuse with each other completely in his works. They label his stylistic technique as "the irony of the unsaid".<sup>11</sup> This underlines the implicative quality of Hemingway's style. Eric Mottram too, perceives Existentialism in Hemingway's writings. He discusses Existential motifs like despair, nausea and death in Hemingway's fiction which show its kinship with Existentialism.<sup>12</sup> E.M. Halliday analyses the presence of symbolism and irony in Hemingway's works. He draws attention to his technique of 'objective epitome',<sup>13</sup> for

the effective and artistic expression of emotions. He affirms that Hemingway uses symbolism and irony as stylistic devices to express the ambiguities of life as he perceive them. As seen here, critics of Hemingway's art are largely preoccupied with his distinctive prose. Numerous attempts are made to analyse his style-its syntactical structures, its simplicity, and its 'unsaid', implicatory quality. Other critics have tried to establish correspondences between his dominant motifs and existentialism. Dr. Bhim S. Dahiya has done exhaustive work on the nature and development of the Hemingway hero. However, it is obvious that Hemingway had to compete with his major contemporaries like Faulkner in America and Sartre, Camus and Thomas Mann outside America to win critical attention. I tend to think that, in the process, Hemingway's art has not received the deserved attention.

I have tried to avail myself of this bulk of criticism on Crane and Hemingway in exploring the art of Crane and Hemingway. The critical insights shown by various critics in their art have proved to be immensely helpful to me in my work. However, the focus of my study is comparative, and I am interested in placing Hemingway in the context of the American tradition of war-fiction in which Crane was obviously his greatest predecessor.

The corpus of criticism on American fiction is very vast. The present study does not claim to make any radical re-arrange-

ments of established views on either Crane or Hemingway. At the most it can be read as a long and meticulous foot-note to the body of knowledge available in the field. However, it can lay a modest claim to being meticulous. Critics before have observed the striking similarities between the themes and style of Crane and Hemingway in general terms. In this study I have taken up these observations for a close and intensive examination. In the process, the works of Crane and Hemingway dealing with war and violence have been closely analysed in terms of the thematic structures and stylistic features. This dissertation, therefore, hopes to make a modest but necessary, contribution to the body of scholarly works on Crane and Hemingway. In any case, it is the first exhaustive study of the relationship between Crane and Hemingway. It is hoped that the study will add to our understanding of the American tradition of war-fiction.

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