

## **The Stoic Dimension in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea: Santiago as a Sample**

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### **Abstract**

Ernest Hemingway is one the American notable twentieth century novelists and short story writers. His novella Old Man and the Sea in 1952 was his last major work of fiction that published during his lifetime. It is considered a mark of distinction in fictional literature. It possesses the qualities of a great piece of arts. It's a noble prize-winning of Hemingway. It tells the story of human beings' inclinations for the dilemma of skepticism and faith in the same critical attitudes. So, this paper hypothesizes the existence of some crucial factors that created a stoic protagonist, Santiago, in the novel. It is also focuses on the features of Santiago; his persistent strength and patience in the struggle against nature.

**Keywords:** stoicism, stoic hero, Santiago. strength, struggle against nature.

### **Introduction**

The novel shows Hemingway visions of philosophy of life through his style which is made up of simplicity and he belongs to those writers who believe in the cult of the simple without any ambiguity and disqualification. His philosophy reached its climax since he advanced from utter pessimism to a noble stoicism depicted in the novel where he affirms his faith in life and the destiny of mankind, he also showed that the hope of a poor man lies in the struggle and suffering (Reynolds, 1991).

Primarily it is a wonderful story of man's struggle against nature, but it is also a thrilling and a tragic adventurous story since it has almost all the main elements of being so. The leading character performs some incredible situations that appear to be humanly impossible. Also, the

unconquerable spirit of man defies the hostile forces of nature. Accepting the challenges of nature, man surmounts the impassable mountains, endures hazard and disasters and ultimately comes out as a triumphant. Hemingway's imagination wore a story with a pattern of struggle, triumph and loss. The heroic memory of the past kept the old man to continue his epic fight. The old man derives his courage by recalling DiMaggio and Manolin. His dreaming of lions is a symbol of enlivened courage in him. The past memory encourages him to surpass his earlier achievement as well (Kumar, 1998).

### **Hemingway**

Ernest Hemingway was the son of Dr. Clarence E. Hemingway. He was born on 21 July 1899 in Oak park, Illinois (Nayar, 2003). His first famous story Fifty Grand was immediately accepted for publication by the famous and widely circulated Atlantic monthly journal. It was a violence story. Soon the story became very popular that many magazines asked him to write short stories; some of them offered him contracts. Best seller was not his aim; instead he was always inspired to be a serious writer. Hemingway had written his first big novel *The Sun Also Rises* which was welcomed in the critical; he joined the best seller list (Holt et al, 1996).

Bode (2011), mentioned that in 1942 when the United States entered the war, he volunteered himself as a "one-man suicide squadron". He somehow managed to go to England as a war correspondent there, he did not confine himself to answer-coverage only (p. 117).

In 1952, he came with the old *Man and the Sea* responding for the fascination he exercised. It is greatly admitted that it was his genius creativity that paved away to other writes. Mastering the modern narration of art formulated a very powerful style (Neill, 2004). He was a great writer with modest skills to pint a word in its right place to create a picture with minimum number of words by his sufficient talent as a narrator. He discussed the dilemma of modern life in a harsh way to provoke readers view about life (Barnet et al, 1992).

He was rightly called a leading figure of 'the lost generation' It is rather difficult to generalize Hemingway's characters. Hemingway committed suicide in 1961 (Nayar, 2003).

### **His Style and Techniques**

His narrative techniques high-lighted the role of literary embellishment as disillusionments that has been followed (White, 1968). He produced beauty by intrigues. Emotions, in Hemingway's writing

have no place. His brief and simple language gives the reader a moment to discover his personality and may be lost in it. His attractive prose style gives his writing the power to stand exactly what he aims to. The old Man and the Sea shows his colorful personality as a novelist (Trogdon, 1999).

Thus, his greatness as a novelist lies in his technical achievement in the art of English prose. He occupies a unique place among the twentieth century writers. His last 'great masterpiece' The old man and the sea has finally established his reputation as a great modern writer in prose fiction (ibid).

### **The Old Man and the Sea**

The old man and the sea, Hemingway's last novel before his death in 1961, shows an advance on Hemingway's vision or philosophy of life. He advanced from utter pessimism to noble stoicism depicted in this short novel. In his earlier novels there was a gradual passage from negation to affirmation. His philosophy reached its climax in this short novel where he affirms his faith in life and in the duty and the destiny of mankind. Hope for man lies in the struggle and suffering. Man can fulfill his destiny on the earth if he is determined to fight unceasingly. Defeat and victory do not matter; right and wrong do not matter. What matters most is the struggle itself (Baker, 1972).

The title of the novel is very significant, symbolic and appropriate. A good title of a story is a telling comment on the essential conflict that is presented by the author. It is a miniature statement of the underlying theme and it enables the reader to form an impression about the subject-matter treated in the tale. The type of the present novel satisfies these requirements. It evokes an impression not only about the conflict and theme but also about the background against which the story is set. Moreover, it rouses expectations which are fully fulfilled when we have read it.

The novel is all about the sea and the old man's adventure into it. The sea forms the background in which the leading character moves and acts. The sea is a symbol of natural – nature that is both kind and cruel. The old man is a symbol of mankind, both of its weakness and strength. Against the sea, he represents frail humanity against powerful nature. Thus, the title symbolically depicts the essential conflict or theme of the novel – Man pitted against Nature. Sustained by the pride of his calling, an old broken fisherman fighting the sea to convert his eighty – four luckless days into lucky ones. Confident of his physical power and more

of his skill and tricks, he rows out his small boat in search of a big catch. Fate seems to relent and relax for a while. The aged and solitary fisherman struggles hard, suffers plentifully and remains pitted against the gain fish for two days and two nights (High, 2003).

The old man's struggle against the creature of the sea stands for the universal and eternal struggle of man for survival amidst the friend and hostile powers of nature. The old man regards the sea as a woman that gave or withheld great favors. The sea granted him the favor of a big marlin and then took it away through the sharks. That is how nature behaves with man. Considering all these aspects of the conflict and background of the novel, we can say that the title is the most appropriate (ibid).

### **Stoicism**

The term "stoic" refers to someone incurious to pain or happiness. Stoicism denoted to the idea that said, "Religious people should be powerful and determined in case of disasters and they ought to avoid complaining during miseries (Peck & Coyle, 2002).

Stoicism means suffering without complaining, which refers to the feeling of patience while facing the cruel and severe conditions. It is a school that prospered during the Greek and Roman world till the 3rd century AD. Zeno of Cilium, a Phoenician, based stoicism in Athens in the 3rd century BC. It was greatly inspired by schoolings of Socrates that was drawn from Heraclitus philosophy (Irvine, 2009). It is a theory of personal morals knowing by its logical system and its sights on the worldly life. According to its views, as human beings, human happiness is found in consenting every moment due to its own offers, by not being desire seekers for any aim whether for enjoyment or pain, by using our reasons to comprehend the world and to do our role in the plan of nature.

### **Stoic Hero**

Santiago had a strong sprite that gave him a great power to enrich his resolution and much confidence in his skill as a fisherman. Taken by his pride, he went to the sea looking for a big marlin. There he was chased by a giant fish that towed his boat for two days and two nights. But Santiago's strength did not fail. At the end, he defeated the fish, lashed it to his boat and on his way home wards; he was forced to fight again for his dead marlin. This time the fight was not fair because he was exhausted after killing the fish, discovering that he must fight the sharks that came for his fish. There were times when his struggle tried to shatter his courage and confidence. But despite exhaustion and weakened

physical strength, he endured. During his struggle he managed to find an inexhaustible source for strength (Albert, 2010).

**Stoicism analysis:**

***“He had found a way .....almost comfortable” (44).***

He changed his way of sitting in the boat and leaned forward against the bow of the boat. It made him less uncomfortable whereas he felt as if he were almost comfortable. A little bit of comfort goes a long way to make him feel oblivious of all discomfort. The old man had fastened the line to his neck rather than to the back to prevent its being snapped.

***“But I must have confidence ..... bone spur in his heel” (57).***

He wished to come up to the standard of DiMaggio who was his ideal. In spite of his defective heel he was the best player of his team. So, to be his equal, the old man must not feel nervous in the face of difficulties. His hand was cramped, he was tired, darkness was approaching, and the fish was as strong as ever. Still, he thought that he must have confidence in himself.

The first source for his strength was his dreams about the lions of the African coast that he had once seen during his boyhood. The lion became Santiago's symbol of power. The lion left unforgettable impression in the mind of young Santiago. His dreams about the lion became part of his nights. They enriched his courage and self-confidence to shape a proud old man.

The second major great source of strength for the old man was a great baseball player called Di Maggio. Di Maggio was Santiago's ideal as a great hero. For him he was always “the great Di Maggio”. He saw his hero as a symbol of resolution. He was haunted by his hero who he thought him able to have everything done perfectly. Thus, he wanted to be like him; Di Maggio was, an endless spiritual source of strength for Santiago. When he killed the marlin after two days of struggle; he kept thinking about his hero and how proud he could be.

Santiago's third source of strength was his youth strength. While he was fighting the fish, he had gone back to his youth days. He remembered the times when he was playing the hard docks; when his elbow was on the table (negro's elbow). Each one was trying to force the other one's hand down on the table. Blood was coming from under his nails until he managed to defeat the negro's hand. All these memories gave him strength while he was fighting the fish (Scribner,1952).

***“In must, be very strange .....bring them out” (61).***

Here we have an example of the association of ideas. With one thing the other is associated and when the old man thinks of one, the other comes to his mind automatically as if they were linked in a chain.

Santiago was a source of spiritual power. His faith in God, in Christ and in Virgin Mary represented his spiritual power. Even though, he was not a religious man, he promised to visit Virgin de Cobre if he fetched the fish. "Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen." He kept praying during his struggle. He also asked Virgin Mary to pray for the death of the fish "Blessed Virgin, pray for the death of this fish" (Cross, 2002).

Santiago justifies his existence through his persistent struggle with the fish of the deep. He is born to fight. He seeks significance and meaning in life only by continuing his struggle with the marlin and killing it at last. If it is to maintain the true trait of his heroic – self, he must kill the marlin which is the biggest fish ever caught or killed. He invokes all his courage, skill and nautical knowledge to prove himself Santiago. Though his hands get lacerated and his back and shoulder are almost broken, he gives a fatal blow to the fish by driving the harpoon deep into its heart. Therefore, he faints and looks sickly due to extreme fatigue (ibid).

The journey of the old man started in the morning of the eighty-fifth day, and he got his baits before the coming of morning light. One of his baits was forty fathoms down, the other one was seventy – five, the third and fourth were one hundred and twenty – five fathoms down in the blue waters. By the noon, the old man had gone quite far from the Havana harbor. Now, no land was visible to him (Baker, 1972).

The old man and the sea is a symbolic story about a man's struggle against nature. Santiago's fight with the sharks represents man's fight against the destructive forces of nature. In his struggle for survival, man has to wage war against the hostile world of nature throughout the centuries. He has struggles and suffers endlessly because nature has always put hindrances in the way of man. Often man has attained glorious achievement and felt proud of them. But the hostile powers of nature have always laughed at man's success and destroyed his achievements. Though man has often been beaten, yet his spirit has remained unconquerable (ibid).

***"It was difficult in the dark ..... against the wood" (79).***

The work of collecting the line and then cutting it with one hand in the dark was a difficult one too. That disturbed the fish and he rushed

onward making the old man fall, his face downward. He struck against the boat and received a wound blow his eye. The blood flowed on his cheek, but it stopped before reaching his chin. The old man against set up the same position and rested, taking the support of the boat.

He knew that there would be more sharks because the scent of the mutilated fish would spread. His only effective weapon, the harpoon, had been lost. But he was still determined to fight. "But man is not made for defeated" he said. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (93).

### **Conclusion**

The story of the novel is suggestive and symbolic. It is not simple as it appears on the surface. It is a story of man's struggle against the odds that come of life. As Santiago triumphs over marlin in his epic struggle with it, he rises in our estimation but the very next moment, the futility of such a struggle comes to our mind when we know that his trophy has been ravaged by the sharks.

The story proves that all the human wishes, gains and losses are useless. It displays a naturally tragic pattern of life. In this story, as in man life, the battle starts, grows and subsides. Though Santiago is extremely exhausted in his fight with the marlin, he is inspirited by the boy to dream of the lions. So, the story ends on a note of a calm courage and unruffled fortitude. It is the spiritual victory of the unconquerable spirit of the old man; his victory defeats the circumstances of material and disaster. It may also be interpreted to mean that even when a man may grow old and it still down in luck, he can still dare and accept the challenge of relentless fate.

Thus, the novel is much more than an interesting story of a fisherman, a fish and a few sharks. It is an epic of life and it dramatizes man's constant struggle to fight and unfold the mysteries of the unknown. It expresses basic faith in man's capacity to suffer, endure and finally triumph.

### **مخلص البحث:**

يعتبر إرنست همنغواي واحد من أبرز الروائيين وكتاب القصة القصيرة في القرن العشرين. تعد روايته القصيرة الشيخ والبحر آخر عمل قصصي بارز ينشر خلال حياته. كذلك تعتبر هذه الرواية علامة فارقة في الأدب القصصي كونها تتمتع بصفات أدبية بارزة مكنت كاتبها (همنغواي) من الحصول على جائزة نوبل. وهي تحكي قصة ميل البشر إلى معضلة التشكيك والإيمان في نفس المواقف الحرجة. لذا تفترض الدراسة

وجود بعض العوامل الحاسمة التي خلقت بطل الرواية سانتياغو كأحد الشخصيات التي تمثل الاتجاه الفلسفي الرواقي. كذلك تركز الدراسة على صفات سانتياغو كالمثابرة في القوة والصبر في صراعه ضد الطبيعة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المذهب الرواقي، البطل الرواقي، سانتياغو، القوة، الصراع ضد الطبيعة.

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