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*Corresponding author:

Dr. Abdullah Jassim

Muhammed Banimansour

Imam Al-Kadhum College

for Islamic Sciences (IKC)

Department of English

Email:

abdullahjssm@alkadhum-col.edu.iq

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From Materialism to Spirituality Examining Hemingway shifting Philosophy

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to analyze and understand Hemingway's shifting from Materialism to Spirituality. The study tackles two of Hemingway's great masterpieces, *To Have and Have Not* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. The former two novels are analyzed from a psychological point of view; they tackle the status of modern man during the time of political, social and economic crises. They show how repression, desire, conflict and unconsciousness affect the writer's literary work.

The article aims to discuss the conduct of characters through the novels and the reasons, which push the writer to abandon the materialistic world that portrayed in his previous works and refuges in to the spiritual world, especially in *The Old Man and the Sea*. It also discusses the status of the protagonists at the end of the novels, whether the writer desisted his endeavors for reformation through material means in favor of spiritual means? That can be achieved by bringing the head and the skeleton of the Marlin a shore. Finally, the paper ends up with a recommendation for further studies.

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دراسة فلسفة انتقال همنغواي من المادية الى الروحانية

د. عبدالله جاسم محمد بني منصور
كلية الامام الكاظم (ع) للعلوم الاسلامية الجامعة
قسم اللغة الانجليزية

الخلاصة:

تُحاول هذه الدراسة تحليل وفهم انتقال همنغواي من المادية إلى الروحانية. تتناول الدراسة روايتين من روائعه العظيمة، "أن تملك ولا تملك" و"الشيخ والبحر". تُحلّل الروايتان من منظور نفسي؛ إذ تتناولان وضع الإنسان المعاصر في زمن الأزمات السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية. وتُظهران كيف يؤثر الكبت والرغبة والصراع واللاوعي على العمل الأدبي للكاتب.

يهدف المقال إلى مناقشة سلوك الشخصيات في الروايات، والأسباب التي دفعت الكاتب إلى التخلي عن العالم المادي الذي صوّره في أعماله السابقة، واللجوء إلى العالم الروحي، وخاصةً في رواية "الشيخ والبحر". كما يناقش وضع الأبطال في نهاية الروايات، وهل تخلى الكاتب عن مساعيه للإصلاح بالوسائل المادية، مُفضّلاً الوسائل الروحية؟ يُمكن تحقيق ذلك من خلال نقل رأس وهيكلم سمكة المارلن إلى الشاطئ، ويختتم المقال بتوصيات لإجراء المزيد من الدراسات المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: همنغواي، الروحانية، المادية، النهج التحليلي النفسي.

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway is one of the most controversial writers in American literature. His innate acumen and sharp intelligence helped him translate and depict the political, economic and social fluctuations that occurred in his time through his literary writings. Most of his protagonists are ordinary people who suffer much to survive and cope with their harsh lives such as Jake Barnes, Robert Jordan, Harry Morgan, Santiago and others. The aim of this study is to shed lights the harsh conditions which drove Hemingway to shift through his writing from Materialism to spirituality.

In order to accomplish this aim, the study will tackle two great novels of Hemingway's writing, *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). The current study will try to answer the question of why the writer shifted from Materialism to spirituality, especially through his last novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. The researcher will draw the analysis of this study from the psychological point of view. The novels of Ernest Hemingway deliver deep narrative events that can be analyzed according to Freud's theories and concepts, such as repression, desire, conflict and unconsciousness. According to modernism, man should think critically and participate in all movements of social justice to support opportunities and equal rights for people. Moreover, modernism urges individuals to question authority and violate outdated conventions and values. Fe Lorraine, in his paper, states that "Ernest Hemingway is regarded as one of the most famous and influential modernist writers of twentieth-century fiction." (Reyes 2021: 1)

Indeed, The First World War added much to Hemingway's experiences. However, after the Spanish Civil War and The Second World War, he became another man, a professional writer, who could totally understand human suffering and subsequently

made his characters bear the terror and cruelty of life. The world in which Hemingway lived is a world of disillusionment, loneliness and horror; he tries to reflect that horror and futility of the world through his characters' conduct. Joy Louisa Spaugh writes a thesis entitled *To Have and Have Not: World without a Hero* (1975) in this thesis, Spaugh analyzes the character of the protagonist Harry Morgan and the era in which he lives; he assures that Harry Morgan and the world in which he lives both are corrupted. He states that although Morgan considered a hero of the novel, he lacks the ethical and the moral standers of a real hero. He also emphasizes the artistic purpose in the novel as well as the writer's craftsmanship in fulfilling that purpose. At the end of this study, Spaugh concludes that *To Have and Have Not* is not the kind of hastily assembled work that critics criticize; it is a carefully constructed literary creation. Frank L. Ryan in writes a book entitled *The Immediate Critical Reception of Ernest Hemingway* (1980) in this book, Ryan seems to agree with Spaugh, he declares that critics misjudged Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*, as they thought the novel was a reflection of deterioration. They mock some features of the novel such as the style, dialogue, and some narrative events such as the portrayal of the bar room scenes and the bedroom scene that shared by Marie and her husband Harry. Critics have focused on two features in the novel, the structure and the social theme, the main flaw in this criticism was associated to critics' stress on social values, they seemed to be seeking reflections of contemporary events, they viewed Morgan as a symbolic figure, and they judged him in terms of tangible social issues.

Hemingway's characters embodied a tormented individualism enthusiastically yearning for human companionship, but yet they are still scornful of it. According to Hemingway, society is a parasite that uses man as a prey; he could only announce his courage as he holds to his identity through his endurance and willpower.

Men are victims of injustice in *To Have and Have Not*

To Have and Have Not is an artistic scenario in which Hemingway reflects the harsh truth of human suffering. The title of the novel is significant and suitable; the first part, “To Have”, represents those rich people who victimize poor people, while the other part “Have Not”, represents poor people who suffer much to survive under the mercy of rich people. Sigmund Freud theorized that human behavior is affected by unconscious drives and desires. (As cited in Bargh 2014:7) The protagonist, Harry Morgan, in *To Have and Have Not* embodies a character trapped between his inner desires and his conscious actions. Morgan’s suffering and demand for survival in complicated social and economic circumstances is a reflection of his unconscious motives to accomplish freedom, secure survival and dominance. According to Fe Lorraine Reyes, “Hemingway was drawn to the conflicts of the Spanish Civil War and wrote stories such as *To Have and Have Not*, which illustrated working-class citizens as protagonists and contrasted them to their idly rich counterparts.” (Reyes 2021:2)

Sadness and sorrow which mixed with realism, permeates almost all of the events of the novel. Hemingway deliberately starts his novel with a portrayal of poor people sleeping against the walls in Havana; he writes that “You know how it is there early in the morning in Havana with the bums still asleep against the walls of the buildings; before even the ice wagons come by with ice for the bars? Well, we came across the square from the dock to the Pearl of San Francisco Café to get coffee and there was only one beggar awake in the square and he was getting a drink out of the fountain. (Hemingway 1994:3) Through this novel, Hemingway makes it clear that all social strata, men, women, and even children, paid the price of social injustice and social fluctuations, they are trapped between harsh reality and their ambitions to live a respectful life.

Morgan is an ordinary man working hard to support his family despite his disability as he got shot in his hand; he does not give up, but he manly and bravely faces his harsh circumstances. He has a wife and two girls and he tries his best to meet all their needs through his working by his boat. At the beginning of the novel, as some smugglers tried to seduce him with money, he refuses to do illegal work by his boat: "I make my living with the boat. If I lose her I lose my living." (Hemingway 1994:4) Therefore, although of temptations, Morgan proves his moral principles as a good social individual and copes with social order, as he knows that reforming society results from the individual's reform of himself and that corrupting society results from the corruption of its individuals.

Morgan went above and beyond to keep himself as well as his family in right track, but the hardship of living and additional demands of his daughters forced him to accept illegal work and deal with the murderers and killers. "All right, what was I going to do now? ...But I was damned if I was going home broke and starve a summer in that town. Besides I've got a family...Hell, I didn't even have enough money to put in gas." (Hemingway 1994:20) Thus, Morgan's acceptance of illegal works harmonizes with Pearl S. Buck's maxim that a hungry man can't see right or wrong. He sees food. The difficulty of material life and the urgent need for money made Morgan legalize his acceptance of illegal acts and abandon his morals in life. Spaugh, in his M.A, thesis theorizes that "Some individuals find themselves denying the relevance of moral or ethical standards as the general malaise of society affects their actions; but others who have no such standards to corrupt and whose moral worth already register in the debit column of a social balance sheet will move through this world with no real awareness that they themselves are debased or corrupt." (Spaugh 1975:2)

Women are victims of duplication and multiple responsibilities.

While he was writing *To Have and Have Not*, Hemingway gives a great deal to the suffering of women and how women were in a situation where they bite off more than they can chew. Most of the women in the novel became victims due to the poor economic conditions suffered by their husbands and their inability to provide the necessities of life for their families. What made matters worse was the loss of their husbands, so they found themselves between the devil and the deep blue sea. They had to work like men to feed their children and like women to raise them. Therefore, they exhibit “defense mechanisms” to cope with their harsh realities. The wife of the protagonist, Marie Morgan, For example, suffered more than she could bear; she participated in her husband's suffering and was his assistant and adviser during his life; she was a wise and reliable woman whom Harry depended on to accomplish his mission. “Listen, Marie. Go on up to the upstairs trap and bring me the Thompson gun and look in that wooden box with the shells and see all the clips are filled.” “Don’t take that.” “I got to.” “Do you want any boxes of shells?” “No. I can’t load any clips. I got four clips.”... “Go on and get it and bring it down here. Get me some coffee.” “O.K.,” said Marie. She leaned over the table and kissed him on the mouth.”(Hemingway1994: 87)

Marie suffered more than her husband himself; she shared the hardships of life that her husband suffered from, as well as her suffering continued after his death. Her life became worse and more complicated, as she is an older woman with two daughters, and she does not find anyone to support her to raise them and meet their needs.

Marie suppresses her emotions and fears concerning failure as she tries to achieve her part as a provider, which results in an inner struggle; her actions show a conflict between her fear of loss due to losing her husband and her act of self-interest, which

chimes with Freudian concepts of "repression and defence mechanisms". However, Marie can be called a foil character to the protagonist (her husband). She serves as a contrast to Harry Morgan; as he was brave, she was a timid woman; as he was cruel, she was a kind woman, and as he was precipitate, she was a wise woman. "Honey, you aren't going on that kind of a trip?" "I'm going on a bad trip." "Oh, God," she said. "Oh, God, I wish you didn't have to do these things." (Hemingway 1994: 87) So, with this contrast in their characters, Hemingway reveals the vivid personality of the protagonist. When she lost her husband, despite the pain, she did not surrender to the harsh circumstances of life but rather faced them with determination and will.

I've got to get started on something. Maybe you get over being dead inside. I guess it don't make any difference. I got to start to do something anyway. It's been a week today. I'm afraid if I think about him on purpose I'll get so I can't remember how he looks. That was when I got that awful panic when I couldn't remember his face. I got to get started doing something no matter how I feel. If he'd have left some money or if there'd been rewards it would have been better but I wouldn't feel no better. First thing I've got to do is try to sell the house. (Hemingway 1994: 175)

Hemingway gives Marie a distinctive feature that makes her the Iron Woman. Despite her inner brokenness, she did not show this brokenness in front of her children. She acts like a strong father whose children emulate him; at the same time, she is a caring mother whose concern is to be kind to her children. As a wise woman and a decision-maker, she was able to pull herself together and control herself because she knew that her brokenness meant the loss of her children; she was able to make the right decision at the right time. "If I cared about those girls it would be different. But I don't care about those girls. I've got to do something about them

though.” In addition, she was a loyal woman to her husband even after his death, she wished that she was died instead of him “I wouldn’t mind if it was me got killed... I wish to Christ it was me was dead.” (Hemingway1994:175) Marie’s relationship with her husband suggests a tough exploration of loyalty and intimacy, which are deeply charged emotional parts that chime with Freudian explanation of aggression and love.

Hemingway wanted to popularize the suffering of women in an unfair world. In addition to Mary, other women who have shared the same suffering and borne the burdens of an unfair life, Alber’s wife, Mrs. Tracy for example, also bite off more than she could chew, she lost her husband in the same boat with Morgan, when she comes to the dockside she was mourning and grieving for the loss of her husband. She was about to commit a suicide when she threw herself in the sea as she knew that losing her husband would increase her suffering and make her life more miserable in such a horrendous world.

Thus, women became the victims of instable economic situation, which indirectly affected the way people think and behave, men became eager to collect money at any cost, even at the expense of their moral values and principles. Henry Carpenter, for example, uses his wife as a means to become a rich man and gain more money. He started with her money, and when he became richer than her, he completely neglected her. “He had started with her money... He had treated her well until the money he had made was double her original capital and then he could afford to take no notice of her. After his money had reached that point he had never been annoyed by her sick headaches, by her complaints, or by her plans. He had ignored them.” (Hemingway 1994: 161) Therefore, Hemingway mocks the deteriorating, heterogeneous society in which human values fade away in front of money and material gains.

Liquor as a means to escape harshness of sorrowful life.

In his letter to Ivan Kashkin, 1935 Hemingway writes, “When you work hard all day with your head and know you must work again the next day what else can change your ideas and make them run on a different plane like whisky?”(as qtd. In Kumar2017:75)

The above quote reflects the bitter nature of life and its impact on the lives of individuals in the period that followed World War I. It shows the role of alcohol in alleviating internal psychological conflict and the harshness of life. Through most of his literary works, Hemingway draws a kaleidoscopic view of liquor. For Hemingway, liquor was a trustworthy escape from a sorrowful life.

Hemingway’s characters, such as Robert Jordan, Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry and others, used liquor to cope with their emotional and physical distress due to their inability to bear the horrors of life after the world war, which drove them into anxiety and depression. In his book entitled *To Have and Have Another: A Hemingway Cocktail Companion* Philip J. Greene states that “Hemingway was no teetotaler, but perhaps more than any other writer, he engaged his characters in the act of eating and drinking”(Greene2015:13) It is true that Hemingway portrays alcohol in most of his works but in his novel *To Have and Have Not* wildly concentrates on this matter; the novel highlights how alcohol contributes to strengthening the sense of helplessness, preventing the characters from reaching effective solutions to their problems, which hinders their path to healing and development.

Most of the characters are addicted to liquor; they drink whenever they feel stressed, they are moving between states of weakness and despair, finding alcohol a temporary escape from their disturbing reality. Some of them consume alcohol not only to escape from their problems but also to avoid facing feelings of loneliness, loss, and helplessness. Therefore, alcohol is considered a refuge that gives a false

sense of inner peace through states of insomnia and inability to cope with a sorrowful life.

Characters, such as Johnson and Eddy, for instance, often rush to alcohol as a quick solution to relieve the psychological pain resulting from failed relationships or personal disappointment “I knew he woke up dead for a drink. “You’d better drink a bottle of beer,” I told him. He took one out of the box and drank it.”(Hemingway1994:14) However, after some time, liquor becomes more than just a temporary painkiller, it turns into a daily habit that deepens isolation and increases feelings of loss “Eddy was a good man on a boat once, before he got to be rummy, but he isn’t any good now.”(Hemingway1994:14) Although liquor gives these characters a temporary tranquility, its influence does not last long, they will have to face their true feelings and inner crises.

Thus, in the end, it turns out that liquor is not a real solution, but rather a false outlet that deepens people’s suffering and makes life more complicated. Individuals who used alcohol as a means of escape found themselves in a deep cycle of continuous pain, they became unable to overcome their internal conflicts. Therefore, Hemingway ends Morgan’s story with a feeling of futility, which reflects the dullness of his inharmonious and horrendous world. William Ryan, in his work, states that “Harry's dying words are indeed ironic: “Certainly it is comfortable to believe that after all his mistakes, Morgan discovers in the moment before death a truth of life. ‘But this is unlikely in the world of Ernest Hemingway.” (Ryan 1968:5)

Spiritual fulfillment in *The Old Man and the Sea*

Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of the most prominent literary works which tackles themes of life, death, and the struggle for survival. The

novel can be read from different points of view and levels; spirituality is one of the most important dimensions to read. The novel exposes the sea voyage of an older man named Santiago and his struggle to catch a huge Marlin to accomplish his spiritual fulfillment.

Santiago lives in extreme isolation, he is physically isolated himself from people of his village as well as spiritually from material life. Through his isolation in the ocean, Santiago finds a chance to think about the meaning of life, in his work entitled "Modernism and Tradition, and the Traditions of Modernism." Cross writes that "Modernism has been told in terms of a catastrophic break with the past and the search for entirely new techniques and modes of expression suitable to a new age." (Cross 2006: 1) Therefore, Santiago turned the dreadful ocean into a spiritual space, which enabled him to think about the philosophy of life.

Santiago's ordeal to catch the Marlin symbolizes not only a physical struggle but it is also a spiritual struggle to prove his dignity as a man and his invincible spirit. Through his battle with the fish, the older man faces the natural violence that a man might face; his struggle is with the Marlin as well as with life principles. For Santiago, the deep Ocean is an older woman that symbolizes material life; it is also an embodiment of spiritual essences which can be realized through suffering and determination. According to Sigmund Freud, symbols are expressions of the unconscious. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the Ocean symbolizes freedom of form and a chaotic environment, representing Santiago's interior struggle between the two elements of agency and submission.

The older man's spiritual fulfillment lies in his strong faith in his potential powers; he remains committed to his spiritual vision of existence despite his physical weakness, which makes his mission more complicated. Whenever he engages in a struggle with the Marlin, he refuges to his spiritual strength to support him in

defeating the huge fish. In the same way, Harper in Kemmerer's novel *A Curse So Dark and Lonely*, despite her suffering, she relies on her spiritual vision to continue her life; she compensates her body weakness by her spiritual will. Dhemed & Alrikabi in their article entitled A Portrayal of Physical Disability in Brigid Kemmerer's Novel *A Curse So Dark and Lonely* open that "Harper refuses to show any hint of weakness before Rhen ... "she must be stiff and sore, because her limp is more pronounced now than it was earlier, and she moves slowly, grasping the railing to climb the stairs" Despite she is exhausted and can move hardly, she refuses the help of Prince Rhen because she dislikes showing any hint of submission. She prefers to limp and cling to the rails of the stairs to get his help." (as qtd. in Dhemed & Alrikabi 2025: 1142). Therefore, Santiago utilizes his physical and spiritual strength through his fight with the fish because he finds spiritual comfort and faith in his inner will and potential. Hemingway reinforces Santiago's Character with special characteristics to enable him to cope with nature and interact with the universe. Santiago feels a deep connection with all the creatures around him. He was a part of the natural cycle of life; such spiritual interaction represented his sympathy for the Marlin and his respect for the sea. Therefore, Santiago symbolizes a human being who is trying to harmonize with nature, which enforces his spiritual fulfillment.

Santiago sailed deep in the ocean, and he spiritually exchanged himself with its objects. Hemingway used this technique as a means to free himself from the burdens that he faced during his life. *The old man and the Sea* spans a long period of compressed time; it is a scenario of growth from childhood to adulthood. Santiago has a spiritual relation with Manolin; he sees his childhood through the eyes of the boy, while the boy sees his future through the eyes of his master. "Each has part of other inside himself- the wise child and the ancient youth."(Sylvester1966-1967:473)

In his fictional world, Santiago built a spiritual relationship with all animals that formed his imaginary world; he developed a robust spiritual relation with the Marlin, he considered the fish as his friend, he loved her, he felt the pain in her body, he felt sorry for the Marlin, and finally, the fish became part of him. "He admires its great strength as it pulls his skiff out to sea, and becomes conscious of its nobility as the two grow closer and closer together, in spirit as well as in space, during their long interlude on the Gulf Stream." (Gurko 1955:11)

Santiago also identified himself with the turtles; he considered himself one of them; both of them have similar hearts; his heart is the same as a turtle's heart, will beat for four hours if it is cut up, and his hands and feet also look like theirs. "I have such a heart too, and my feet and hands are like theirs." (Hemingway 1952:26) Santiago indulged in his spiritual world, such a world that Hemingway could not find during his lifetime; he could find it only through his imagination because his material world was deformed by the wars and the depression of his family.

Some critics theorized that Hemingway identified himself with Jesus; William E. Cain, for example, declared that "we know that Hemingway was captivated by the representation of Jesus on the cross and pondered them often." (Cain 2006:122) Such a reading can be logical. Santiago, like Jesus, experienced too much pain in his life, during his ordeal with the Marlin, the nail penetrated his hand the same way Jesus's hands been nailed. Santiago faced and struggled with the furious waves of the sea as Jesus faced and struggled with many of unbelievers in his time.

Santiago's shoulders were loaded with the heavy sacks which caused his pain, as the weight of the cross wounded Jesus's shoulders; when the old man reached his shack, he laid down on his bed, his face down on the newspapers "his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up" (Hemingway 1952:95). In this way Santiago resembled Jesus crucifixion. Thus, Santiago's identification with Jesus is nothing but

the outcome of the gloomy atmosphere that Hemingway lived in during his childhood. The necessity for his identification with Jesus is to express Hemingway's experiences about human life, which is loaded with burdens and pain.

During the novel Santiago dreamed many times, in his earlier dream. He saw Africa when he was a boy: the long Golden beaches, the white beach, the high capes, the great brown mountains; he heard the surf roar, he saw the native boats come riding through it, and he smelled the tar and oakum of the deck. While in his later dreams he dreamed only of places and lions. "He no longer dreamed of storms, or of women, or of great occurrences, or of great fish, or of fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach." (Hemingway 1952:16) In his book, *The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming* (1908), Freud theorizes, "Unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind fantasies" (Freud 1908:37)

Santiago's dreams reflect Hemingway's break up with the material world, with which he hopelessly tried hard to find peace and happiness, moving from one place to another. It is the world which was deformed by the wars and political regimes, which was the main reason for his unhappiness and bitterness, the world with which he couldn't mingle in spite of his many adventures. At the end of his journey, although Santiago could not achieve material victory over the fish, he could win a spiritual victory that reflects his inner strength and determination, which symbolizes spiritual satisfaction that goes beyond material victory. In the same way, as Hemingway could not achieve his inner peace within his material world, he refuges to an imagined spiritual world to achieve happiness and inner peace.

Conclusion

To conclude, the shift in the concern of Hemmingway's texts from Materialism to spiritual raises questions about the development of history. Like Faulkner,

Hemmingway also expresses the agony of the human spirit. However, within that overall agony and bleakness thrust upon humanity lies a desire for salvation. This salvation can be attained through various ways. However, what finally uplifts humanity is the spiritual fulfillment that comes at the end of that struggle.

The question remains whether this fulfillment is permanent or whether it brings humanity closer to salvation. Morgan, having lost his boat and money, finally died alone in the Ocean. At the same time, the older man catches the Marlin but is unable to bring it ashore whole. Through Santiago's struggle with the sea, the values of determination, dignity, contemplation, and self-belief are revealed, all of which form the essence of spiritual fulfillment that gives life its meaning in the face of challenges. It leaves readers with the question of whether Hemmingway, having lost faith in modern ideologies, was returning to a primordial world and ultimate spiritual self-sufficiency. For further studies, the novels can be analyzed from a Marxist point of view by analyzing the conduct of their characters.

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