

**HEMINGWAY: ‘THE SUN ALSO RISES’
AN AMALGAMATION OF ANTITHESIS, IRONY AND AMBIGUITY**

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Abstract

This paper will discuss plot construction in Hemingway’s novel ‘The Sun Also Rises’. The novel presents Paris as a citadel of lost generation where people desperately cling to life but fail to live it meaningfully. To give an honest portrayal of theme i.e. how the Sun also rises for lost generation, how new hopes and directions are paved for lost people, Hemingway accommodates poetic devices of irony, antithesis and contrast as chief architectonic of novel. Scenes and characters are juxtaposed to symbolize their respective significance and vitality. Growth of characters escalates, through journey motif, from Paris to Pampalona. Difference in culture, value and mindset of people at these two different places add to novel the importance of exposure of people to different places thus shaping up the theme of novel – from degeneration to regeneration; devolution to evolution of values and stability.

Inevitable corollary of psycho biographical approach to ‘The Sun Also Rises’ has been to accept it as based on dominant mood of central character, autobiographical and lyrical; unfortunately, it is conveniently ignored that all its incidents and characters; scenes and settings; symbols and speeches are deliberately patterned in dramatic juxtaposition to heighten the contrast and brighten the main character .

Introduction

This piece of writing puts in meticulous efforts to dispel long continuance of confusion about plot and pattern of Hemingway’s novel. Pursuing with extreme diligence the doctrines laid down by *Baker and Young* in their respective studies –¹ *Carlos Baker’s Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (1952) and *Philip Young’s Ernest Hemingway* (1952), scholars have ignored some obvious but solemn facts about Hemingway’s work. In novel, presently for discussion, ‘*The Sun Also Rises*’ Hemingway has erected an edifice of irony and juxtaposition for building the structure of novel. Novel finds its centre on cultural situation and writer tirelessly shapes up his hero contrasting him against all others in values, culture, virtues and individuality capabilities. Values are assigned not only to the characters but also to the places.

All characters except Jake Barnes are static but undergo development and move on their chosen way. Each character is contrasted with other to show different shades, merits and demerits of characters. Culture and situation in Paris and Spain are also studies in contrast; undoubtedly all contrast, irony and antithesis not only propel the development of novel but also enrich characters in experience and learning.

Journey motif – moving of characters from one situation to another shapes up the hero of novel, revealing insight, mindset and individuality of all characters.

Jake, by his dynamic personality, his growth in understanding relations and getting over his fear and weakness, emerges as hero of novel; in contrast with other characters, he is the brightest one, purged by naturalness of Spain contrasted against artificiality of Paris.

Here, we will ponder over how Hemingway sustains his plot by poetic device of contrast and antithesis. Antithesis, irony and ambiguity are basic architectonics of patterning in Hemingway, used for manipulation of incidents as well as characters scenes, settings, symbols and speeches. R.S. Crane has mentioned three kinds of plot: plot of character, plot of action, plot of thought. Considering Crane's elaboration on plot, the plot of 'The Sun also Rises' can be established as the plot of character because character is assigned priority over action and thought and employed as its synthesizing principle.

As Crane formulates and elaborates it, this "principle is a completed process of change in moral character of the protagonist, precipitated or molded by action, and made manifest both in it and in thought and feeling". (67)

In this novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway registers growth and development of all the characters right from Jake to Mike, Cohn and Romero. They all start from meaninglessness of life and end up in making life meaningful tossing aside the diversion which kept them tied to futility of life. The level of their awareness increases gradually and realization of truth dawns upon them, all these development of self are well-reported in novel, rather we can say that all these transformations and journey from futility of life to utility of life, push forth the plot and captivate the readers by creating interest in the lives of characters. Jake Barnes, around whom the story revolves, gains experience and attains maturity in his relationship with Brett. He gets over his handicap suffered during war and also successfully overcomes his chaotic passion for Brett; moreover, he achieves an equanimity and poise in that passion. His association stimulates moral changes even in Brett with his purity of spirit. His love for Brett, on spiritual plane, strengthens Brett to decide 'not to be a bitch'. (*The Sun Also Rises* 245)

Antithesis, irony and ambiguity lie in the fact that all kinds of characters Jake and Brett; Mike and Romero are juxtaposed and consequently paradox of their nature, habit and lifestyle is exposed. Irony becomes steeper and steeper when Brett desires Jake most and yet gets away from him having so many affairs with variety of men. Ambiguity also sounds clear when all the characters fail to find any crisp solution to their situation and grope in darkness to get some light of truth at the end, through maturity earned in experience. They speak out their mind confidently, diluting ambiguity in the end, they realize, after experimenting with life that mistake of life, value of life cannot be overlooked or ignored in name of merry-making or romancing with life. Since the entire journey of character is from futility to utility so irony and ambiguity along with anti thesis are used as wheels to carry on this journey.

The undercurrent of the novel is basically transformation through love. Love is truly, the main agenda. Love of Jake drives Brett to go in his folds; hollow and infertile love of other characters Mike, Cohn & Romero also guides them for a principled or meaningful life. Hemingway's novel poses dramatic juxtaposition in various attitudes to love giving pivotal

position to Brett.

Benson observation about Brett: “In response to her negative challenge, Jake, Mike and Cohn (also Romero) all come to measure their manhood against her as a kind of catalyst ... the strength to see themselves clearly and the strength to bind themselves to an ideal worth living by”.(37) The dramatic juxtaposition positioned in love is not on horizontal scale but also on a linear track of a journey where only the lasting love of Jake reaches the end point. So this dramatic device of antithesis and journey device of epic or picaresque novel lay down foundation of ‘The Sun Also Rises’. Strong antithesis arises in sketching out of characters e.g. Robert Cohn is too egotistical to adapt to ever-changing scenario of Paris life whereas Jake can tolerate all kinds of people but adheres to permanent values of duty and love. Cohn is naive romantic, on the other hand, Jake though seasoned in expression of love, yet unable to make love, in perfect terms, with Brett, he lives in perpetual agony. He, unlike other confines his suffering to himself, never spew the venom of his suffering on other and never lowers his morale to abysmal depth. Jake’s superiority to Cohn lies in his eagerness to learn through experience. He is not an escapist but one who encounters suffering and attains maturity by allowing pain run its course.

Hemingway, by this contrast initiates a kind of race of suitors not for Brett but for maturity and sincerity; Jake wins the race as he proves his commitment to work, his maturity not only in his profession but also in his relationship with his beloved, Brett. Jake runs race not for any definite goal but to learn from life and enriches himself with experience.

Count also features in contrast with Jake. In case of Jake, war wound is a continuous source of agony as it jeopardized not only his ego, esteem but rendered him loveless, Vulnerable and a laughing stock in silence. On the contrary, Count considers scars of war as only a matter of joke. Jake has strong moral sense and priority for values but Count has no sense of moral discrimination or priorities, he attaches no special significance to any one, all are replaceable, disposable items for him. He clears his bent of mind. In his conversation with Brett :

Brett : “Never fall in love”?

‘Always’, said the count. “I am always in love”.

.....

Brett : “You haven’t any values. You are dead, that’s all.” (The Sun... 60-61)

Brett respects Jake for his values and some (concrete) in his personality despite his handicap. Whereas Count loses respect as a figure of ‘death-in-life’, he is the hollowman, the ‘waste lander’. Brett is chosen by Hemingway as a litmus test for the sincerity and the quality of love of all gentlemen in novel.

In humorous vein, the writer apart from the dichotomy also envisages analogy as happens in case of Cohn. When the party enters natural surroundings of Spain, Jake reports that ‘Robert Cohn was asleep’, this comes immediately after narrator’s description of two donkeys that ‘*were sleeping on the road*’. (The Sun... 95) Cohn’s materialistic and hedonistic attitude towards life becomes clear with his indifference to natural beauty into the heart of nature. Readers cannot avoid smiling when they find Jake suggest Cohn to venture at night into company of nature, Cohn’s reply is funny :

“Nothing happened except a bicycle cop stopped me and asked to see my papers.” (The Sun... 12)

Juxtaposition appears in clearest shade during the visit to Pamplona. Here all major characters Jake, Bill and Wilson Harris are brought together into antithetical situation.

Jake finds deeper meaning in nature with its all therapeutic properties of health properties, pleasure, beauty and orders which help to wipe out the damage of his troubled life in

Pairs. Wilson-Harris response to nature is superficial whereas Bill remains a detached satirist and parodist.

Irony also lies in Jake's visit to Pamplona. He feels: "therapeutic effect of nature on his temper but the 'damage' is not really 'wiped out' not at least at any stage of his symbolic journey"(86). Nature offers him relief but only on temporary basis as his troubles are softened and submerged but not resolved.

Jake loves Brett and confirms his love towards Brett but he covers and hides his love towards Brett and very mention of her reveals the limited extent to which he has been able to forget his troubles.

Jake's consciousness does not let him harbour any spiritual or transcendental illusion about nature, he appreciates the silent nature of nature promising peace and poise, but he never loses balance of mind and leaves Burguete on receiving Brett's message – an affirmation of his commitment to love. Here is also confirmed contrast and dissimilarities in his own nature.

Jake's dynamic character, his multi-dimensional role is also antithesis to other characters who unilaterally commissioned themselves to hedonism (eat, drink and be merry). If we scrutinize characters of novel closely, we find each character an antithesis to other e.g. Jake, the most adjustable person, who tries to accommodate person from various spectra of society and also makes efforts to normalize his own life. Brett, the most unstable character is posed in sharp contrast to Jake. She is indecisive, impractical holding, no ground, clings to everyone who charms her fancy, to be ditched later on, whereas, her lover Jake is down-to-earth, grounded in realities of life, practical, decisive and above all, contrary to her, accepts life as it comes to him despite his biggest handicap suffered in war.

Cohn is unstable unlike Jake and Brett. He is not sure of himself, lacks practical approach, possesses bookish knowledge, his ego centrality, in contrast to social demeanor of Jake, restraints him from exposure to life or assimilate any experience of it. He is alien to world of Pamplona and on the same plane to modernistic outlook of Paris. He can also not be compared to Brett as he is not that fickle minded in his approach; unlike Brett he carries fond memories of experiences and nurses some dreams and imagination. Mike sets contrast with Cohn and remains tolerant and composed unlike the latter who thrashed Romero who being preferred by Brett becomes an eyesore for him.

Strangely, if Cohn is impulsive and aggressive; Mike is unsociable and creates embarrassing situation, by caustic remarks or gestures dissolving all fun and frolic for his friends, especially Brett.

Mike, having learnt the shocking truth of Brett's flirtatious nature drowns himself in intoxication of wine; on the other side, Jake accepts Brett despite all her weaknesses and romantic escapades.

Romero, a cynosure in Pamplona also poses antithesis to Mike and Cohn – wastelanders, as he possesses the spirit of semi-pastoral. He belongs to his narrow world of rituals and conventions having great strength of commitment. To make the matter clearer we can say – Romero has commitment but no modern consciousness whereas Cohn possesses modern consciousness but lack commitment. Romero stands out as a solid figure of authentic life appears brighter in crowd of pale and artificial character of Cohn, Mike and Brett. He shines as an embodiment of life guided by rituals and conventions and exposes the weakness of closed world of 'wastelanders'. His conventional attitude to life looks outdated and inadequate to Brett and he fails to adjust to larger world of Paris.

So all these dramatic juxtapositions between simple, rustic Romero, modern and

fashionable Brett; temperate Jake and intemperate Cohn; socially immature Mike and sociable Jake; closed Romero and exposed wastelanders find extension into bigger juxtapositions respectively between pseudo–romantic tourists from America and exposed ‘gang’ of expatriates; dichotomy between groomed, exposed Jake and exposed but lost Mike; between protected peasants and exposed expatriates.

Thematic irony erupts when within the structure of novel two values systems i.e. one represented and practised in Paris and other in Pamplona are put together in sharp contrast.

French and pre-industrial Spanish setting offer contrast to each other; the comparative assessment and analysis of two sets of values narrated by Jake, the hero of novel, especially during his stay in Hotel Panier Fleuri, for instance, the behaviour of waiter gives clear impression of difference of values. Very plainly, in a composed manner Jake deliberates upon the culture of France:

... No ones makes things complicated by becoming your friend for any obscure reason. If you want people to like you, you have only to spend a little money ... (The Sun... 233).

This artificial show of love and gratitude, coldly narrated by Jake, unveils the hypocrisy of life in Paris and confirm its habitant’s link with lost generation.

Highly acclaimed commercial values and obscure emotional values are cardinal features of France and effectively pitted against values and naturalness of Spain.

Delbert Wylder makes observation:

France has meaningless exchange of values. ... France is the country of statues men in stone & most of them in some act of waving flags of them in some act of waving flags or raising swords. In contrast, Spain is the country of live animals – of bulls, of horses, of fish in the streams. And the men who posture with baton or sword are alive.(Qtd in Dahiya 110)

This brilliant observation using landscape imagery highlights the juxtaposition between setting of two parts of novel.

The difference in the life attitude of the people of France and Spain is illustrated at great length and writer concludes that if the French are guided by crass materialism, the Spaniards uphold human rather than financial values, Spaniards rather feel guilty about materialism if somehow, it creeps into their lives.

Belying above statement, there are some incidents e.g. female inn-keeper who charges exorbitant rates and that too, with more indifference (looks away from Jake and wipes her glasses on her apron) than guilt. Unreasonable charges for the room stupefy Jake but he ignores such inconvenient facts as ‘*The prices being doubled for the fiesta*’. (The Sun... 159).

This streak of materialism also surfaces itself when Romero has to face a bull that was partially blind but the President refused to allow its replacement because ‘*they don’t want to lose their money*’. (The Sun... 217)

Here, Hemingway shows no inclination to portray France bleak and Spain swan-white rather his setting of Spain is not idealized into a pure pastoral; it is an honest picture of virtues of an older way of life but with signs of corrosion by money and materialistic outlook. Hemingway here compare and contrast, not in point to point contrast between two kinds of lives rather his point of comparison or contrast is related to either a specified common point or their pre-dominant antithetical trait.

Wylder perception about sharp contrast of values in France and Spain loses itself into

faulty schematics and leads to misinterpretation because close scrutiny of novel reveals that plot and setting in two countries is neither in linear progression nor in uni-dimensional with tradition less France is on an X-axis or tradition bound Spain is on Y-axis rather, it presents a dramatic juxtaposition of the two in which progression of characters is showcased; their strength and weakness, power and inhibitions are projected to reveal all complexities of characters.

The multidimensional approach is disclosed in dynamic personality of Jake, now he grows in experience of tension and utter change. Opposite climes of two places expose two changed selves of Jake. Jake brings ‘imaginative pastoralism’ where a modern civilization with all its flavours and flaws is adjusted in a proper perspective with natural world of Spain.

Jon Eric Nelson suggests that “Jake leaves Pamplona because he has proved himself unworthy of the elite of aficionados but, on the contrary, he convinces himself that he can’t shut his ears and eyes to complexities of life like ‘elite of aficionados’ who choose to enjoy the privilege of such life.”(161)

The two settings, that too, in juxtaposition were also necessary to serve journey motif and also transformation or consequent development of main character Jake with movement from Paris to Pamplona.

The dramatic Juxtaposition serves here to expose virtue and vices of two different ways of life opening new corridors for new possibilities in the regeneration and reintegration in central figure who alone sails the boat to stable shore wading through turbulent currents of life.

Both central characters control their warring emotions – Jake starts loving Brett on spiritual plane and Brett decides to settle down. Thus, we can form opinion on decided terms that antithesis, irony and juxtaposition propel and push forward the incidents in novel and showcase ‘romance & reality; nature and modern culture; traditions and chaos; complacency and nihilism; discipline and disorderliness’ enlightening the mind of readers.

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