

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEME OF ALIENATION
IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S NOVELS THE SUN ALSO RISES AND
A FAREWELL TO ARMS**

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Abstract

Alienation as a literary theme can be found much earlier. The theme of alienation has been also shifted and shaped according to problems connected with a certain literary context, thus the displaying the alienation has many forms. The usage of the theme of alienation was widely accepted by writers of the twentieth century. They naturally assumed the theme from the previous generation, mainly from the Romanticism movement, in which the development of alienation was eminent. Alienation appeared in works of significant twentieth-century writers; Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, also Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. The theme has been distributed over the large circle of writers of American and European literature. Ernest Hemingway had a strong influence on 20th century fiction, while his adventurous lifestyle and his public image brought him admiration from later generations. The paper will discuss and analyse the theme of alienation on two of Hemingway works: The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms.

Key Words: Alienation, Problems, Romanticism, Admiration

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899 – 1961) was an American writer who had an immense influence on 20th century literature. He worked as a journalist for a number of years before becoming a novelist. Hemingway is greatly treated with the moaning and values of human life. A review of the characters in his novels as they move in worlds of their own qualities should establish to what degree Hemingway's attitude toward life was shaped by his experiences as a youth, as a reporter, and as a soldier. The aim of the present study is to make a comprehensive analysis of alienation in the novels The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms of Ernest Hemingway. The causes of alienation are listed by extracting the influencing factors like anxiety, despair, loneliness etc. His first published novel The Sun Also Rises received mixed reviews but is now observed an iconic modernist work. Set against the backdrop of the First World War, A Farewell to Arms tells the tale of American lieutenant Frederic Henry. Written in first-person, it focuses on his love affair with Catherine Barkley amid the fighting during the war. The title of the novel is taken from a poem by 16th-century English dramatist George Peele. A Farewell to Arms

was the first bestseller of Ernest Hemingway which established him as a prominent modern American writer. It is considered one of his greatest works and has been described by his biographer Michael Reynolds as “the premier American war novel from that debacle World War I.”

The *Sun Also Rises*'s protagonist Jake Barnes is a man whose war wound has made him impotent while its heroine Brett Ashley is a twice-divorced debauched Englishwoman. Brett, a liberated modern woman, is regarded as one of the most gripping and influential female characters of 20th-century American literature. *The Sun Also Rises* has been in print continuously since its publication, and is said to be one of the most translated titles in the world. The influential American literary icon became known for his uncomplicated prose and use of understatement. Hemingway, who tackled topics such as bullfighting and war in his work, also became famous for his own manifest, hard-drinking persona. In *The Sun Also Rises*, death from World War I shadows the actions of most of the main characters; especially, death has robbed Brett Ashley of the man she loved before she met Jake, and that fact, though only alluded to in the novel, largely accounts for her membership in the lost generation. *A Farewell to Arms* begins and ends with death: Catherine Barkley's fiancé was killed before the main events of the novel begin, and her own death at the end will unfeignedly influence the rest of Frederic Henry's life.

In the novel *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway, the three main characters deal with some form of alienation. The characters who are alienated would be Jake, Brett, and Robert and each of them are dealing with a different type. Jake would be going through infirm where he doesn't have any control over his problem as well as cultural alienation. Brett is also dealing with feeble but Jake Barnes is not only one of the most important characters of the book but also the one who tells the story and tells the audience what is occurrence from his point of view. The fact that he is inadequate is the root of his alienation. He is unable to have a relationship with women but more specifically, Brett. The only woman he truly loves will not come into a relationship with him because he will not be able to persuade her sexual needs. Jake is also dealing with cultural hostility which means he is not one with his generation. Being an expatriate of World War I, Jake is part of what Hemingway calls the “lost generation”. His experiences have led to a dying of his confidence in his masculinity and love. He is alienated from ever being physically involved with women. Likewise, Brett is alienated from satisfying her love. Brett is a profligate woman and has to have her sexual desires fulfilled. The love of her life, Jake is impotent and helpless of giving her what she wants. Even if she were to try to pursue a relationship with him, it would not work because he would not be able to please her and she would cheat on him in order to try and feel the same love she has for him with another man. She would not be able to truly satisfy.

Ernest Hemingway in his novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, is often considered as his best artistic achievement. Hemingway describes all the feeling that soldiers of his time felt during and after the war. In *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway uses aching experiences of his own life and places them in the novel. The main character of the novel Henry is based on himself and his personal experiences. His personal pain enables him to describe him and his feeling to a great amount of detail. The characters' vision of the world changes with it. *A Farewell to Arms* is about the experiences of love and war and how one man, the main character Henry, deals with the profuse adversities of death and defeat in war and death in his own personal life. It deals with the predicament of a husband dreading his wife's verdict. His wife has delivered a stillborn child, and is fighting for her own life. The protagonist is anxious and escapes to a café to pacify his

frets. His anxiety has numbed him so, that he begins to take notice of insignificant details of the order of things. The author has employed a very idiosyncratic way to bring out the protagonist's state of mind. When Catherine and the child die, Henry does not know what to do but see Catherine again. He enters her room but seeing her does not help; he is completely alienated. Catherine's drawn out labor results in the delivery of a dead child. As time passes, it becomes obvious that she is dying. Henry has lost his love and his child, he has deserted the war, and the book ends with him alone in the rain, completely alienated. The themes of fear, suffering, courage and comradeship are prominent issues which are raised in this novel.

In the novel *The Sun Also Rises* Ernest Hemingway describes a couple, who share a very strange and distant kind of love for each other by possessing the idea of spiritual alienation and the feeling of disaffection. This story takes place immediately after World War I, a time of great hardship. This hardship results in a digression of values both morally and socially. Hemingway shows the aspect of disaffection and alienation in many different occasions in the novel. One occasion is when Jake starts to pray but he almost falls asleep so he prays for the Bullfighters. "He object and started to pray and prayed for everybody I thought of, Brett and Mike and Bill and Robert Cohn and myself, and all the bullfighters, separately for the ones I liked, and lumping all the rest, then I prayed for myself again, and while I was praying for myself I found I was getting sleepy, so I prayed that the bull-fights would be good, and that it would be a fine fiesta, and that we would get some fishing". (Hemingway 138-139). This quote shows that Jake has loose morals because he did not pray for anything really important, instead he prays for having fun and a good time in the fiesta. When he is praying for something important it bores him and he almost falls asleep. Furthermore he could not pray as well anymore because he has returned from the war where he has saw many terrible things. He is isolated and chambered in his own soul.

Brett is a beautiful woman who has never loved anybody yet her arbitrary love affairs satisfy her. She has also lost self-respect by randomly saying, "I'm a goner" (Hemingway 183) because she realizes that she does not really love anybody after all she has gone through and all she has done in her life. She shows disillusionment by searching for fulfillment as well as true love. Brett has a lot of trouble deciding

Hemingway's novel demonstrates the dissolution of loyalty to traditions and institutions that had been brought forward from the nineteenth century, a refocusing on the self often referred to as "individualism." His characters, especially Catherine Barkley, all have war disgust. Each of them are able to avoid becoming crazy by falling back on the self. In doing so, each person rejects the "higher callings" of tradition, society, or institution. For example, Rinaldi has the satisfaction of having become a better surgeon through practice. He is also better with women for the same reason. When prodded by Frederic's proposal that there may be more than these two egocentric items in life, Rinaldi acknowledge with a very existentialist statement, "We never get anything. We are born with all we have and we never learn. We never get anything new."

It is out of this effort to come to term with the horror of the Great War that the school of thought known as existentialism emerges, a movement which suggested that men and women should not accept society's or someone else's values, but rather examine the truth in him or herself. Hemingway was not an existentialist, but his characters clearly manifest a great deal of alienation from each other. They cope with their situation of doubt in society by developing a dreadful personal meaning. In *A Farewell to Arms* this is debated once by the priest and Frederic in the latter's hospital room. Not for the first time, the reader is forced to examine the discomfiting notions of love. The priest loves God and this comforts him during the war.

Frederic and Catherine, alternately, display another route to coping. This one is ironic and looms large over the novel—“I want you so much I want to be you too.”(AFA-49) This statement must be compared to their actions during the childbirth—Catherine is given hell by nature, while Frederic eats. The endeavour to be each other is an alienation from self and a failed method of coping. Thus, Frederic faces the tragedy of his love as well as the tragedy of himself—he did not listen to any of the tutors who warned him of this inevitability. Certainly, the inevitability is seen in wisdom since Catherine, as tradition and institution, died in the ghastly war leaving the “Everyman” tragically alone with himself.

Jake and Brett, then, come back full circle to their initial irritation and mark time with rituals to which they cling for not-so-dear life, looking in the meantime for physical pleasures that will get them through the night. However, if this seems a low yield for their whack, one should remember that Hemingway makes no pretence in *The Sun Also Rises* of finding a cure for “lostness.” In fact, he heightens the sense of it in his juxtaposition of two epigraphs of the novel: “You are all a lost generation”(TSAR-72) from Gertrude Stein, and the long quotation from Ecclesiastes that begins “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. . . . The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down. . . .”(TSAR-73) As Hemingway maintained, the hero of *The Sun Also Rises* is the abiding earth; the best one can hope for while living on that earth, isolated from one’s fellows and cut off from the procreative cycle, is a survival manual. Finally, that is what *The Sun Also Rises* is, and this is the prescription that it offers: One must accept the presence of death in life and face it stoically, one must learn to exhibit grace under pressure, and one must learn to get one’s money’s worth. In skeleton form, this is the foundation of the Hemingway code—the part of it, at least, that remains constant through all of his novels.

Conclusion

Hemingway’s writings should help the society because the books are used to represent the history. The themes are build in such way that it also serves as a source of symbols that often replace human feelings or emotions. Hemingway constantly uses symbols to completely omit feelings and emotions of his characters. For instance, snow means safety and peace. His use on themes also makes *A Farewell to Arms* a classic one. Hemingway uses themes to give away hidden messages. An example of this is his use of love and war to show that war can destroy anything, even one of the most beautiful things on earth, Love. *A Farewell to Arms* is truly one of the most influential piece of Literature when it comes to the effects of war on humanity. Hemingway maintained, the hero of *The Sun Also Rises* is the abiding earth; the best one can hope for while living on that earth, isolated from one’s fellows and cut off from the procreative cycle, is a survival manual. Finally, that is what *The Sun Also Rises* is, and this is the prescription that it offers: One must accept the presence of death in life and face it stoically, one must learn to exhibit grace under pressure, and one must learn to get one’s money’s worth. In skeleton form, this is the foundation of the Hemingway code the part of it, at least, that remains constant through all of his novels.

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