

Realistic Treatment of War in the Novels of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway

Dr Gulnaz Fatma, Ms Sameena Begum, Ms Saba Tariq, Ms Swati Chauhan, Ms Nahid Awad Kheri

English Language Center, University College Al Arda, Jazan University, Jazan, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

From the very beginning, war has been depicted in the pages of literature romantically as heroic, adventurous, glorious, and good for peace and development. Until the twentieth century, this trend of romantically portraying war was quite prevalent. In the twentieth century, especially after WWI, there was a demand to perform battle realistically. There was a demand for such type of literature that could depict the harsh reality of war with all its devastating effects, torture, massacre bloodshed, suffering and mental trauma, which until now had been kept under the lustre of romanticism. Ernest Hemingway was a writer who, in his war novels, dealt with the issue of war realistically as he participated in WWI and the Spanish Civil War. Here in this study, we will be dealing with the realistic portrayal of war in the war novels of Ernest Hemingway.

Keywords: Romanticism, Realism, Portrayal, Depiction, War

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I. INTRODUCTION

What theories do we need to comprehend the various dimensions of a phenomenon so far? This human being explores essential aspects of the human mind and understanding. The complex pattern of the human mind has given birth to several ISM and etymologies. Waste functioning of the human mind, from the theory of introspection to psychoanalysis and from romanticism to realism, enables us to understand the complex thinking pattern. It opens up its fantastic value to our understanding in entirely unexpected ways. The necessary process of psychological shift from one notion to another leads human beings from Infinite to nature and from nature to human beings and from human beings to the endless intrusion of mind in the past, the present and the future. The shift in the paradigm of a common language for the

commoner to the depiction of the everyday life of a man who faces turbulent phases, dilemmas, sufferings, pain, agony, anxiety and war in his life.

Romanticism always perceived war as glorified, ideal and heroic, But Ernest Hemingway's work finds no scope for any escape from reality. One cannot take refuge from fact in the works of Ernest Hemingway. He makes you feel the intensity of the disturbance of human life and how a man thinks and faces challenges if he faces war. The depiction and reflection of the commoner's life in the 20th century and the depiction of World War I Compelled Ernest Hemingway to write *Farewell to Arms* with new realistic perspectives. He writes what he feels. The power of expression was his unparalleled gift, shattered all the notions of romanticism and opened before us the brutal and ugly face of War refusing its Valour and glory.

The Red Badge of Courage: In his war novels, it is the strategy of Stephen Crane to display the early life of his characters as naïve, inexperienced or romantic but as the story moves forward, they get more and more and more acquainted with reality, futility, devastation and repercussion of war. Sense of the futility of war dawns upon them, and the genuine enthusiasm and euphoria about heroism and courage fade in the air at the very moment these naïve soldiers come face to face on the battlefield. By putting both the early romantic life and later real life of characters within the framework of a novel, Stephen Crane makes reality and truth about war more distinct and more easily noticeable.

In the early part of his life, Henry was very romantic and enthusiastic about war and had great expectations. The situation on the front brings a change in his attitude towards war. It is their strategy of Crane to put his characters in a position where they are compelled to change their earlier formed conception. Hemingway and Remarque took the lead in portraying his feelings in their war novels. Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Hemingway and Paul in *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Remarque undergo the same transformation.

It has been established in detail that Henry Fleming was romantic, zealous, and quite unaware of the reality of war, and attempts will be made to show that the complex reality of war transforms Henry's viewpoint about war and eventually turns them into a realist. On the battlefield, he finds everything just opposite to his expectation. While Henry is on the front, it is announced by Jim Conklin that war is imminent. He becomes astonished at the mere announcement of it. There can be no more considerable irony than this: he has long been waiting to be among the enemy and to show his valour and courage, but now, when it is announced that the regiment will fight the next day, he becomes astonished. "The youth was in a little trance of astonishment. So they were, at last, going to fight. Perhaps there would be a battle on the morrow, and he would be in it" [Crane 03]¹.

Furthermore, his whole body becomes wet with perspiration. It is worth to be noticed that it is the same Henry Fleming who took leave in an excellent classical manner to participate in the war, thinking he was going on an extraordinary mission like the great heroes of ancient Greece and Rome, and disregarding the entreaties of his mother against joining the war. Now his whole body is perspiring. "Perspiration streamed down the youth's face, which was soiled like that of a weeping urchin. With a nervous movement, he frequently wiped his eyes with his coat sleeve. His mouth was still a little ways open" [Crane 36].¹

The fear of war grips him wholly, and he is panic-stricken, unable to think clearly about what he is doing. It is not the imagination of his home where he thought of doing mighty deeds. The harsh reality of war is that even the bravest of the brave start to tremble, and their minds stop functioning correctly. When the fierce fighting and firing is going on at the front, Henry cannot even recollect whether he has loaded his gun or not- the weapon in his hands and with which he has to confront the enemy. Those romantic visions of heroism and adventure seem to have gotten lost now on the front where he craved to orchestrate his valour in his imagination. "As he caught sight of them, the youth was momentarily startled by a thought that perhaps his gun was not loaded. He stood trying to rally his faltering intellect so that he might recollect the moment he had loaded, but he could not" [Crane 35].¹ Whenever the image of a soldier comes into mind, naïve and romantic people tend to bring to their mind the idea of a soldier fighting among the enemy and the blood dripping from his deep wounds profuse. But it is not the reality of war.

Henry, too, had a vision of doing great deeds. But real confrontation on the front has changed his thinking and attitude about war. Now the thing that is of paramount importance for him is self-preservation. He found no shame in self-preservation or fleeing from the battlefield. Self-preservation is quite contrary to his earlier-formed conception of courage and heroism. It is one of the most challenging realities of war that

before any responsibility for a soldier, self-preservation is the most significant responsibility. When the fierce fighting ensues, Henry, too, flees from the battlefield without any shame in doing this.

“He, too, threw down his gun and fled. There was no shame on his face. He ran like a rabbit. He ran like a blind man. Two or three times, he fell. Once he knocked his shoulder so heavily against a tree that he went headlong” [Crane 44]¹. Bloom described the cowardice and the fearful condition Henry in his words. “The youth ran like a madman to reach the woods before a bullet could discover him” [Bloom 4]². Such reaction of Henry was because of the expectation and the concept he had formed about war. His situation on the battlefield was quite the opposite of what he had dreamed.

Whatever he witnessed was quite shocking and bloodcurdling for him. “Henry Fleming has been lulled by a sense of his invulnerability and apparent victory and bodily fatigue, so he is taken by surprise and flees from the battle. He has surrendered to panic” [Bloom 21]². The instinct of self-preservation is displayed in the characters of Hemingway, who was greatly influenced by Crane’s war novel. Pablo and several other characters in the book *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Hemingway hide on the hill for self-preservation.

Before being on the front, Henry had no idea about the workings of the army. In his imagination, he thought the military must always be engaged in face-to-face confrontations and fierce gun battles. “A series of death struggles with a short time in between for sleep and meals” [Crane 07]¹ but real experience on the front was quite the opposite of his expectation. “But since his regiment had come to the field, the army had done little but sit still and try to keep warm. He was brought” [Crane 07]¹ on the battlefield for quite some he comes to believe that there is a significant lack of heroism on the battlefield. His experience is just opposite to his romantic visions. He realises, “singular absence of heroic poses. The men bending and surging in their haste and rage were in every impossible attitude [Crane 38]¹. Cody has this to say about Henry’s

experience, “Early in the morning of his first battle day, Fleming dashes, wild with curiosity, upon the scene of what he expects will be close combat. He is disappointed when he sees that nothing is happening. As the regiment presses on into a silently ominous landscape, his courage oozes away” [Cody 127-128]³. Till the end of the novel, there comes a great change in his personality and his attitude towards war. He has himself witnessed the hard reality of war. This personal experience on the front changes his attitude toward war. He no more thinks about war in the same romantic fashion as he used to. Now, like any other soldier in any part of the world, he has realised the universal truth about war. “And I don’t see any sense in fighting and fighting and fighting” [Crane 101]¹ the visions of heroism and hero worship, too, seem to have gone in the air. The experience on the battlefield has turned into a realist who has a message for all soldiers who enter the war with the dream of heroism. The following words of Henry Fleming reveal the universal truth about the fate of a soldier on the front. This is the bitter truth he has come to accept through personal experience on the battlefield. “We’re always being chased around like rats! It makes me sick. Nobody seems to know where we go or why we go. We just get fired around from pillar to post and get licked here and get licked there, and nobody knows what it’s done for” [Crane 102]¹.

This is also the bitter truth about the war that none recognises or appreciates the sacrifice made by the soldiers for the cause of the country. This bitter truth he comes to realise about war. Let alone the general public; even the senior officers and lieutenant cannot appreciate the sacrifices and efforts of the soldiers. “It was useless to expect appreciation of his profound and fine senses from such men as the lieutenant. He must look to the grave for comprehension” [Crane 27]¹.

Realistic Treatment of War in a Farewell to Arms:

Realism is essentially the dark reality of life with its language and thoughts. It is the direct refusal of

romanticism. Realism regards romanticism as the concept of illusion that is far away from reality. Realist brings the essence of real experiences of life. Furious aspect also thinks about something real in life. The concept of imagination is the direct rejection of real life and escape from the turbulent, terrible phases of life. *A Farewell to arms* is a novel based on the experiences of the War of Ernest Hemingway, unlike the Glory adventure heroism of soldiers. It deals with the real pictures of brutality and resentment among the masses. It portrays the gruesome and horrible experiences of War. It deals with the shattered romantic notions of War, the interest of common people in life and their forced involvement in war skillfully. Hemingway manifested the effect of War on the life of common people's social and physical environment- how war demolishes the pattern of society, the human mind, understanding and behaviour. To proceed the discourse of realism further, the first thing that strikes is to analyse Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to arms*, which precisely projects the manner used by Hemingway that resemble with realism as the narrator of WWE. The simplicity of the language is the main characteristic of realism in how narration is portrayed. Language is one of the keys to determining realism. Religion is the way of narrative and writing that explores the avenues of describing each character, usually understandable, clear and simple. It affords real experiences in Literature and expresses human life-associated autobiographical elements. We do not have to probe hard to comprehend the meaning. The simplicity of the narration and common events is the main principle of this concept. Usually, realistic fiction is the mirror of the author's experience. Because of this, the author wants to make his reader understand deeper and wider regarding the fact of time and age. After the First World War, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is a scathing rebuttal of romantic ideas associated with war. His sheer execution of War is that it is destructive and inhuman opposition to the common perspective that war is something moral and heroic, a struggle between good and evil. His realism emerges

from his experiences as an ambulance driver in the Italian Army. He closely embraces the shattered image of humanity. It gives us a glimpse of his experiences and life's more brutal and harsh realities. Unsaid desires, unspoken words, and oppressed minds have left masses disturbed morally and psychologically. Fredrick Henry, the lead character and Catherine Barkley have no direction in their life during the war. They are not rejecting the realities and taking refuge in any imagination that war inflicted on them. Spiritual loss is more severe than physical loss. After the escape to Switzerland, Fredrick unveiled the truth of the harsh reality of war, saying, "You never get away with anything" [Hemingway].⁴ Hemingway shows his detest and hatred by keeping his words in his character's mouth. Fredrick for war "Killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you Syphilis like Rinaldi" [Hemingway].⁴ The Romantic and real purpose of war can never stand at one point. Realistically, war has a brutal and ugly face for winning. Romantically war is a matter of victory between good and Evil. The novel projects the contempt of the author for war through his character Fredrick's interaction with Italian Pasini; Hemingway writes: "We must finish it . . . , everybody hates it" [Hemingway].⁴ This dialogue presents the argument that the war should not be considered as the battle of good and evil if people want to end it. History unfolds the fact; the war the Italian army is fighting for is for nothing but for land with romantic notions to be victorious. Hemingway states reality through his character Fredrick and Catherine and the Italian soldiers. They are least bothered about the purpose of fighting, seem destined to be part of the war, and feel helpless to stop this vicious circle of false heroism. For them, war is the risk of their lives. The war soon becomes a pointless affair that goes on to the point of worthlessness when people see nothing so heroic and ideal despite bloodshed and loss of lives. The frontline of the war has no romantic idealism as the government they obey for honour and dignity. Moreover, the realistic hero Fredrick has no comparison with the romantic hero who sings for the battle under the

impression of ideal and good reason; he believes he fights for justice. Still, on the contrary, Hemingway's hero has merely shattered notions of the battle that is fighting a war for his survival, which has nothing to do with morality, dignity and glory. War has only one aspect, and that is the loss of life. He knows that in war, no one can be saved by anyone. Fredrick is injured and deeply hurt. He feels helpless to save an Italian native from injury, either. He is not able to save even the reason of his life, the love of his life Catherine. He finds nothing glorious, sacred or heroic, but he perceives utter shallowness of the war slogans, horrible murders, and dismay. What he spotted there was a massive loss of humanity in war. This encounter with the real face of war results in disgust and disillusionment. Hemingway's utmost concern is to open the reading public to a possible rethinking of war and its disastrous consequences. It is widely acknowledged that all human beings want peace and peaceful co-existence. But, we have destructive wars between nations, and their mechanism has become a billion times more harmful. Time is introducing more destructive and harmful weapons into use. The use of such weapons makes war an impossible enemy to fight with.

Fredrick's breakdown in war is more appealing. As he becomes increasingly acquainted with the harsh realities of war, he begins to shatter. All his notions of what made him into the purposeful war are no more than a false imagination. The bitter reality here is that no matter how much Fredrick tries to escape from the horrors of the war, the limitless haunt of the spirit of war is beyond any hero's control. This is like a gale to his face when his baby dies: The baby was dead...He had never been alive...You never had time to learn...But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around, and they will kill you. [Hemingway].⁴ Fredrick quest for peace and survival is nothing, merely a dream. He is shattered now, surrounded by the haunted madness of war. He is not a man who is facing life bravely. Here, he is a man cracked in spirit, crying out in a desperate effort to

appeal to deities." Oh, God, please don't let her die ...you took the baby, don't let her die" Fredrick all efforts to escape from the war resulted in chaos only. Fredric has to bear the debilitating aftermath of war, and even if the war ends, he will carry with him this lifelong trauma as long as he lives. Fredrick is placed in the clutches of war. The result is horrible. He is now frustrated and cynical with the so-called glories of the world. Only death and destruction foreword as the abiding reality against which all ideas and longings seem hollow. Love turns out to be a deceptive diversion.

Fredric Henry and Catherine Berkley are always encompassed by the haunting presence of war, its madness, agony, anxiety, horrible show, and futility. This novel is the picture of an individual consciousness of violence, which is meaningless. The lovers are destined for the shattering disillusionment of the war. The artist in Hemingway was deeply influenced by happening witnessed in the war both as the participant and the correspondent. The artistic quality of Hemingway's work is that he introduced realism through symbols. Hemingway repeatedly highlights the destruction brought by the war. Throughout the novel, he uses symbolism to foreshadow events and lead readers to create an accurate image of the desolate situation of those involved in the war [Bloom 19].² Rain, or water for that matter, is usually taken as something that supports life, but Hemingway effectively utilises this as an ironic representation of despair, sorrow and pain. The rain symbolises disaster as it brings disease and death to the army.

Catherine not only sees herself dead in the rain, but she dies in the rain. Rain is the recurring symbol in the novel. The couple tried to escape Switzerland across the lake in a boat. Their journey is stroked by rain. They stand in danger, losing their sense of direction: What time is it? Catherine asked. 'It's only eleven o'clock, I said. 'If you row all the time y, you ought to be there by seven o'clock in the morning.' 'Is it that far?' 'It's thirty-five kilometres.'

'How should we go? In this rain, we need a compass.' [A Farewell to Arms] ⁵And5, And it is in the rain that Henry walks back to the hotel, leaving Catherine behind in the hospital, lifeless and dead. Thus, in A Farewell to Arms,' showers' stands for sickness and disease, doubts and fear, misfortune and misery, dismay and depression, and darkness and fractured notions. In the first few pages of the n, novel Hemincapturesvated the picture of permanent r. He writes:" At the start of the winter cameendlessanent rainBut it was checked in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army ". The tone is dry. To speak for the actual meaning of gloom associated with war, H Hemingway chooses to eliminate reference to emotions and allows the "permanent rain" as it brings disaster and death to the army. This symbol is also used for perpetual doubts and fear, the fear of losing one's own life and of the life of a loved one to war. Rain is also associated with Catherine's sense of dread. She finds no comfort even in Fredrick's words and keeps crying because of her fear of rain. "It's all nonsense. It's only nonsense. I'm not afraid of the shower; oh, God, I wish I wasn't. She was crying. [A Farwell to Arms] ⁵ This is either physical or emotional death. Romantics may probably explore self-sacrifice as prestigious; this line emphasizes the realistic viewpoint that war non shaded blood and threatens a person with the eternal agony of coming death.

II. CONCLUSION

The above discussion establishes that Crane and Hemingway have dealt with the theme of war realistically in a similar way exposing the devastation of war, bloodshed, murder and killing. By reselling realistically and telling its dark side before the people, they gave a new dimension to the treatment of war, which up until now has been sold within the romantic lustre, praising the glory of war and the adventure of soldiers. Thus, Crane and Hemingway have succeeded in their attempt to present realism and eventually

display authenticity victorious over idealism and romanticism.

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