



ISSN: 2663-8118 (Online) | ISSN: 2074-9554 (Print)

Journal of Al-Frahedis Arts

Available Online: <http://www.jaa.tu.edu.iq>

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#### Keywords:

- Image
- Hero
- The Old Man
- The Sea

#### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 10/04/2019  
Accepted: 05/05/2019  
Available Online: 24/11/2019

## The Image of Hero in Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea"

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the image of hero in Hemingway's famous novel "The Old Man and the Sea".

It attempts to detect traces of perseverance and heroism in the legendary writer Hemingway, concerned on the main reasons for which the author wrote his masterpiece novella, these factors come as a personal need for resolving psychological issues related to his situation on that age, as it was the most suitable solution to express his personal experience with the sea. In addition to that the chief focus of the present study is on the main character —Santiago who was psychologically suffering throughout the events of the novel, he was really confronted between two choices; whether to challenge the marlin or to give up in fishing and go back home.

This study is based on an analytical thematic method based on extracting the main heroic events and analyzing them. On the whole, through this analytical study it has been deduced that Hemingway skillfully succeeded in portraying his parable character, which was incarnated by heroic features to the fullest.

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## **1. Introduction:**

The Old Man and the Sea is the master piece work of Ernest Hemingway, the short novel was published in 1952 and won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. It was a very well-known novella, published first in Life Magazine on September 1, 1952, this story helped Hemingway to gain the readers interest in his work in general. The books success made Hemingway a very famous man in the whole world. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. It was Hemingway's last major work of fiction.

The story, in sum, deals with an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who has not caught a single fish for eighty-four days. Even the parents of the Manolin, the boy who used to work with him, encourage their son to work with another fisherman, a luckier boat because Santiago now is definitely *salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky. However, Manolin, continuous to help Santiago and brings him food, coffee and papers about baseball and his favorite baseball player Joe DiMaggio. Santiago is a mentor and role model to the boy. He has been working with Santiago since he was five years old and has learned so much from him.

Santiago who was El Champion after he defeated the big black man and who was known to be a great, skillful and a wise fisherman now is unfortunate and has caught no fish for eighty-four days successively. He is underestimated and mocked by some other younger fishermen that his days are over. Santiago believes that his luck must change and desperately looks for a way to catch a fish and save his reputation. He takes his boat far out into the Gulf Stream, where the water is very deep, and catches a big marlin. The fish was so big that drove the boat to northwest for two days and to east for one day. Santiago admires the marlin for its dignity, strength and faithfulness to its identity. The way Santiago as a hunter is eager to catch a fish, the marlin as a prey is eager to rescue itself from the bait and fights for life just like Santiago. He couldn't tie the fish to the boat since it could destroy the skiff, but he used his hands and shoulders to pull the marlin close enough to the skiff and kill it. Since the marlin was wounded its blood attracted many sharks. The first Mako shark is killed by a harpoon. Then comes many others, Santiago fights them with everything he has on board and kills many of them, but the sharks are many and eat all the fish's meat and nothing is left rather than a huge skeleton of the marlin. He comes back after three days again defeated. Santiago mirrors Hemingway himself who was a successful writer, but being unlucky lately and his latest novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) was disapproved. The both struggles to redeem their reputations.

Hemingway was so much fascinated with ideas of men proving their powers and endurances by challenging and overcoming the difficulties and obstacles of life. When Santiago hooks the giant marlin, his worth is tested to the limits as he works the line with injured hands and brings it closer to kill it with a harpoon. By his struggle he shows the abilities of human spirits to endure pain and difficulties in order to win. Finally, in this story there is

more than one hero. However, a reader may admire and notice Santiago as a hero, but there are other heroes in the novel. Mandolin, is a hero as he doesn't give up on his master despite his being unsuccessful in catching fish for a long time. He still respects, helps and considers Santiago his master. The world-famous baseball player Joe DiMaggio is also a hero. He is a role model for Santiago. He had grown old yet plays very well, even with injuries. DiMaggio becomes a symbol for the right way of living, a man who defied pain to achieve greatness. Last, but not least, the author, Hemingway is also a hero who is growing old and who after being injured very badly during world wars and having many diseases such as hypertension, depression, anthrax infection, a cut eye ball, toothache and kidney trouble from fishing in Spain and many times his legs and arms are broken, he wrote a novel which was awarded the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes. He wrote a novel which will live thousands of years after his death (Smith, 2017).

## **2. Hero in Novel:**

The word hero belongs to heroic age of Greece, this era was between 1200- 800 BC. In Greek language the word hero contains doubled meaning. On one hand, it's used for denoting a divine being, who lived a mortal life, however ambition doing a huge deed due to become god. On the other hand, the hero stands for major and brave warrior who is prepared to present his life to achieve immortal glory, and still living the social sphere, in the memory of his descendants. The hero, in the Greek mythology and folklore, was originally a demigod, their worship being one of most distinctive features of ancient Greek religious, heroism in the ancient world demonstrates, heroic and heroes actions were fixed in ideas about personal honor or consideration of individual value and worth, which were enmeshed within social, political, economical, and cultural framework (Kendrick, 2010).

In the American Heritage Dictionary the term hero has been coined to mean: A man, in mythology and legend often of divine origin, who is gifted with great courageousness and strength, celebrated for his daring exploits, and favored by the gods, or an individual noted for feats of courageousness or nobility of purpose, particularly one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

## **3. Ernest Hemingway Biography:**

### **3.1. Ernest Hemingway Life:**

Ernest Hemingway was an American journalist, novelist, short-story writer, born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois to Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway and Grace Hall Hemingway. The second of six youngsters, Ernest enjoyed venturesome childhood, fishing and chasing together with his father in northern woods of Michigan. He attended Oak Park high school where he excelled from his classes, particularly English. He tried his hand at association football and swimming, emended the school paper (the Trapeze), and contributed some works to the school's literary magazine

(the Tabula). once he graduated high school, Ernest traveled to Kansas and worked as a young reporter for The Kansas City Star. In 1918, he worked as ambulance driver for the Italian army. On July 8, he was injured at Fossalta on the Italian Piave when delivering chocolates, cigarettes, and postcards to soldiers (Timeless Hemingway, 2009).

He got married with Elizabeth Hadley Richardson on 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1921. Then he joined the literary community of Paris, expatriate of Hadley's financial fund and Ernest's pay as an oversea correspondent for the Toronto Star. The 1920's were terribly productive writing years for Hemingway. three Stories and ten Poems were published in 1923. In 1926, The Torrents of Spring and vastly succeeded novel, The Sun Also Rises were printed. A collection of short stories entitled Men Without Women in 1927. This year also indicated the end of Hemingway's marriage to Hadley and got married with Pauline Pfeiffer on May 10, 1927. Ernest and Pauline would spend most of their years altogether at 907 Whitehead Street in Key West, Florida. On December 6<sup>th</sup> 1928, Hemingway was dealt a harmful emotional strike as his father, littered with severe diabetes and anxious relating to his financial future, shot himself (Timeless Hemingway, 2009).

Hemingway continued to write down what many critics still feel is that the most effective novel ever written relating to World War I. A Farewell to Arms was published in 1929 and firmed Hemingway's name jointly of the best writers of his generation. The 1930's was the publication of Hemingway's bible on bullfighting, Death in the Afternoon (1932), a narration of his African safari in Green Hills of Africa (1935) and two of far-famed short stories, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936) and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (1936) (Ibid).

In the late 1930's, Hemingway ventured to Spain to produce his prompting to the Loyalists fighting in the Spanish Civil War. His experiments as a war correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance would inspire his other masterpiece War novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls. Specifically, one month after the 1940 publication of For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway got married with his fellow author and news writer Martha Ellis Gellhorn. It had been a marriage that would last solely 5 years. He married fourth and final one Mary Welsh Monks on March 14, 1946. For the coming fourteen years, the couple would live Hemingway's Finca Vigía (Lookout Farm) in San Francisco de Paula, Cuba (Ibid).

After a dissatisfactory reception of his 1950 novel, Across the River and into the Trees, Hemingway created The Old Man and the Sea (1952), a brief work that earned him a 1953 Pulitzer Prize and ultimately the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Physically afraid from two plane crashes earlier that year, Hemingway was helpless to attend the prize ceremonies. He would live other seven years (Ibid).

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1961, in his residence in Ketchum, Idaho, Hemingway died of a self-inflicted firearm wound to the top. His wife Mary found him and relayed word of her husband's death to the world. Three sons and millions loyal readers would preserve his memory (Timeless Hemingway, 2009).

#### **4. Hero in Hemingway's Novels:**

##### **4.1. Hemingway Hero:**

The heroes in Hemingway's novels look like Hemingway himself very much. He reflects and mirrors himself in his novels' heroes. The Hemingway hero is distinguished by a number of qualities from other authors' heroes. These qualities keep significantly a similar altogether of Hemingway's works. His hero is usually brave, confident, and lonely. His hero fights his fears and doesn't let them get over him. Hemingway presented a different kind of hero which was appreciated by the readers. After World War I there was a retreat from religion as people realized that their Christian believes will not save them from any wars. They preferred a different type of hero which Hemingway introduced in his novels as a man who would drink, travel widely and makes lots of love affairs with different women each in a different place and enjoyed life amid many troubles. Hemingway sometimes represents his heroes in different ways. For instance, in "The Nick Adam's stories", Nick starts as a naive young boy who sets up camp, fishes, and cooks alone. Later, Nick improves his spirits by creating his own personal world. Then Nick becomes a real hero in the view of readers. Similarly, Hemingway as a young boy loved an adventurous life and he found nature to be the best escape for him from his terrible world. Hemingway was trying to gain fame, respect and reputation just like Nick Adam. However, in "Old Man and the Sea", the old man is already a hero. He is not trying to be a hero, but he is trying to rescue his reputation of being a hero. Likely, when Hemingway wrote "The Old Man and the Sea", he was already one of the best authors in his time. He was just trying to make the readers or his readers to believe that he has not lost his skills and taste in writing. Again, it shoes that his personal life is widely reflected in his works. This type of hero is not only demonstrated by Hemingway, but it is universal and has one key quality which is 'Grace Under Pressure' (Gillani).

##### **4.2. The Hemingway Code Hero:**

"Code Hero" is associate expression used to define the major character in most of Hemingway's novels additionally to the thought of endurance. Here, this word 'code' stands for a bunch of rules and standards by which Hemingway heroes are recognized and distinguished from different other authors' heroes. In Hemingway's code, the essential standards are bravery, honor and stoicism in a



very lifetime of bad luck, stress and pain. Usually, in Hemingway's stories, the hero's world is violent and disordered, that is influenced by the wars. Hemingway has witnessed by his own eyes, haplessly, this violent and disorder appear to win most of the times. The 'code' shows that the hero acts and behaves in a very sensible and right approach, does everything sincerely amidst all the difficulties and situations, he sticks to be honorable by which the hero finds achievements. The hero proves to be valuable and a true man. The phrase 'grace under pressure' defines the code hero (internet 1).

Hemingway defined the code hero as "a man who lives correctly, following the ideals of honor, courage and endurance in a world that is sometimes chaotic, often stressful, and always painful". The hero is measured by how he reacts to the disasters that he faces in his life. But finally, the hero loses because no one is immortal and we all die. The Hemingway hero had to face the obstacles and problems in his way more than one time till he would prove that he is a man's man and till the ultimate defeat. Hemingway's hero doesn't have a static life, but move from one place to the other, from one love to another and was involved in a great deal of drinking. He would attend wild animal game hunting, which enjoyed bullfights and participated in all manly activities. Simply, Hemingway's hero focuses on this only life very much and tries to enjoy every single moment of it because he doesn't believe in any other life (internet 1).

#### **4.3. The Nada Concept:**

Beside death being a part of the structure of the code hero, there are some images that are commonly patronized with this concept. His works are sometimes classified by definite movements or actions. He is known as a man with no resting, which means staying awake all night and sleeping throughout day time. Because for Ernest Hemingway, man sleep itself may be a quite obliteration of the consciousness. Night may be a trouble sometimes since it symbolizes the darkness that man faces after death. That's why the code hero can avoid night-time. This can be the time he will drink, celebrate or stay awoken (internet 2).

#### **4.4. The Discipline of the Code Hero:**

Hemingway is looking for absolute values which can serve human beings. He is doubtful about the old abstract values in serving humanity, values like, courage, or bravery. Because one person could be brave in one certain situation, but not in all situations. Someone could be courageous in war, but not courageous in having an affair with a woman. Hemingway seeks for values which are permanent, which are applicable to all situations and all times. According to him the sole worth that will serve man is an innate capability of self-refinement.

It's a worth which grows within a man. If a man has refinement to face one thing daily, he can still have a similar degree of refinement on another day and every situation. Hemingway hero does not present himself

in words, but in actions. he's not a thinker, he's a man of action ... He is also eager to enjoy life as much as he can (internet 3).

## **5. The Image of Hero in “*The Old Man and the Sea*”:**

### **5.1. The Hero as a Man:**

Almost all of Hemingway's novels focus on what men can or cannot do and define the world's limitations, brutalities or immoral. *The Old Man and the Sea* is unique for its emphasis on what men can do and on the world as a sphere where heroic actions are possible. The world that Santiago lives in, the old Cuban fisherman is not without tragedy and pain. However, these are lifted, and the positive tone is in sharp contrast with hopelessness spread through such books as “*The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*” (Gurko, 1955).

Throughout the *Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago has been given heroic qualities. he is a strange old man, still powerful and still smart in all parts of his career. Once he catches the big Marlin, he fights it with a gigantic ability and soberness, proving what a man can do and what a man bears, and once the sharks come back, he's convinced to fight them until he dies. For he's awake to that a man is not created for defeat. A man can be destroyed, but not defeated. Surely, Santiago is the most obvious representation of the hero since he is the only major character who has not been continuously hurt or disappointed. Even when he was a young man, once in Casablanca he beat a huge black man from Cienfuegos at the arm-wrestling match and was refereed to thereafter to El Champion. In addition, nowadays as he is an old man, he is a hero, and worshiped by his apprentice Manolin, who desires always to go fishing with him and when he cannot he enjoys spending time with him and serves him. He always brings Santiago papers about baseball and his favorite player Joe DiMaggio, coffee and food. Santiago's heroic characters and behaviors have influenced Manolin so much that he sees Santiago as his role model, and he desperately wishes to become like him (Burhans, 1960).

### **5.2. The Hero as a Challenger:**

Hemingway's novel “*The Old Man and the Sea*” is the story of a great challenge between an old experienced fisherman and a huge fish called Marlin. It tells how this desperate fisherman strives to gain his victory in a world that appears to wreck him. This could be the influence of the fishing experience. Santiago's symbol was a spirit of an impossible to defeat to life. His privation and challenges was undefeatable. The old man didn't rely on luck despite luck being inseparable (Shakury, 2017).

Santiago fought hard to bring back the great fish to prove his abilities. The biggest challenge of his life appears when Santiago has a significant run of bad luck. He has been remarkably unlucky and for eighty-four days he has not caught any fish. This has made other fishermen underestimate his ability as a fisherman. However, after forty days with no fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was currently undoubtedly and eventually *salao*, that is the worst shape

of unlucky. The old man himself is not really bothered because he doesn't have any faith in luck whether it is good or bad. For him luck is a part of life, he welcomes it, but putting his believe in his skill and finds it stupid to depend on something that is as irregular as luck or bad luck: "Only I have no luck anymore. But who knows? maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready" (Hemingway, 1952).

Moreover, the old man same as Hemingway despite facing bad luck he also has to challenge the unavoidable, getting old. Santiago doesn't only have endurance, but also lots of respect, especially for the sea and its creatures. When he catches the Marlin, he sympathizes with it and talks to it with admiration. Santiago notices noble features in the Marlin as it strives to survive and he wishes to confirm them in himself. His struggle doesn't only end by catching and killing the Marlin, but he is also forced to challenge the shovel-nosed sharks and kills many of them with everything he possesses on board. He manages to take the Marlin to the shore even if only a skeleton left of it to show his skill to the other fishermen and the villagers (Hemingway, 1952).

### **5.3. The Hero as an Alienated:**

Santiago was an old man who fished alone in a boat in the Gulf Stream. His house was made from powerful bud-shields of the palm tree which referred to guano and in it there was a bed, a table, one chair and an area on the dirt floor to cook with charcoal. The hero in "The Old man and the Sea" is alienated from the community and went fishing deep in the sea far from other fishermen for three days and nights. He felt alienated because Manolin's parents took the boy away from him and some of the young fishermen mocked him for not catching a fish for that long time. Despite refusing Manolin's offer to come back to him, but straight after he catches the giant fish, he regrets his refusal of the boy and frequently desires that the young boy were with him. once the sharks return, he starts thinking whether or not it had been a sin to kill the great Marlin. On the other hand, he thinks "everything kills everything in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive", however he realizes that it's not fishing, however the connection of another man that keeps him alive. "The boy keeps me alive", he thought I need not to deceive myself too much. From the mentioned passages we can understand that Santiago is a lonely old man with no family, even he goes fishing alone and has no one to accompany him (Burhans, 1960).

### **6. Conclusions:**

The modern era searches for the exposure of many different changes that drove the world to a distinctive scholarly point of view. The big war was the prime reason for these changes, as it was the new topic for many novelists and poets. Literature is the field of many different ideas. It explores the ideas of the author in the shape of writing and the ideas contain message for readers. Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*



is one of the famous literary works. It also has ideas which indicate us to a message. Certainly, it sends the message of man's existence and dignity. This message refers to an understanding of the real essence of human beings, in various ways of life such as social and economic. Man has the innate power and wisdom to survive any difficult situation he faces. Man can be destroyed, but cannot be defeated. This term becomes a philosophical idea which is known as human existence. Although the Old Man and the Sea is a story, but the message behind it is much wider than what we can comprehend. It has become a classic literature which has amazed the readers as it talks about the simplicity of a struggled fisherman's life in the sea. It illustrates how the old man agrees with his miserable life with pleasure, and enjoys his life until the very last minute. Throughout this research we come to the point that Santiago suffered badly in the novel. The old fisherman is thought by many readers to be a tragic hero. Without considering his past, he decided to change his luck and sail out further than any sailors have ever reached before where he caught the great Marlin and promised to himself to take it back to the shore safely to prove to the villagers that he is not unfortunate. In addition, it provides him to gain more respect of the village. Moreover, there are only two choices for him: surrender or stoicism. Obviously, Santiago chooses the second one. He saves his reputation and proves that life is not about luck, but about skill, trying hard and not giving up. In fact, his stoic determination is considered as mythic adventure and became a historic event that nobody in the village could ever forget.

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