

Women Ignorance in Short Stories of Hemingway

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Abstract. Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961) was the American great novelist and short story writer of the twentieth century. He has been applauded for her fresh approach to post war life. Biographical reading of his novels and short stories are usually possible. Despite his efforts to write invaluable pieces, it seems he was unable to cover his anti women attitudes in his works. In spite of four marriages and numerous affairs he never seemed to have stability or lasting satisfaction in his relationships with women. He is supposed to be a bias sexist as his short stories were wholly male-dominated. His being a sexist in his novels was proved by many critics and researchers but unfortunately little has been done on his wonderful short stories. The purpose of this study was to find the elements of sexism in some of the randomly selected short stories of Hemingway to show his view point toward female characters. Although the sexism is dominant in his works, Hemingway is supposed to ignore female characters rather than being a misogynist, or anti-women writer. This study also approaches his short stories following feministic theories.

Keywords: Hemingway; short stories; female characters; misogynist; ignore

1. Introduction

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) the great American novelist and short story writer has exerted an influence on the direction of American fiction which is perhaps greater than that of all other writers. Winner of both Noble and Pulitzer Prize for his works, Hemingway tells many interesting stories. Following what Shakespeare believed "Art should hold a mirror up to nature and confront us with harsh truths about ourselves" [2] or Hemingway says "A writer's job is to tell the truth"[2]. His "zero ending," against traditional "well-made" ending makes him more brilliant and influences the form of the modern short story. His reflecting the lost group of post-World-War I expatriates has influenced an entire generation of writers and artists of "The Lost Generation." He was present in world wars, both the first and the second. During his life he had so many travels to different parts of the world like Paris, Safari, Michigan, Cuba and etc so biographical reading of his stories is usually possible [3].

2. Women in Hemingway's Life

His mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, was a domineering type who dressed Ernest as a girl and called him Ernestine. She also had a habit of abusing his quiet father, who was suffering from diabetes, and this fact started to make Ernest feel a kind of hatred toward women even his mother. In Red Cross hospital in Milan Hemingway meets and falls in love with Agnes von Kurowsky, a Red Cross nurse seven years his senior [2].

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Agnes and Hemingway plan to marry, but she becomes engaged to an Italian officer in March 1919. In 1922, he marries Hadley Richardson, eight years his senior. In 1927 he divorces Hadley Richardson and marries Pauline Pfeiffer. They divorce after he returned from Spanish Civil War in 1940. Martha Gellhorn became his third wife consequently. They separate when he meets Mary Welsh in London during World War II and marries in 1946. In 1948 Hemingway falls in love with then 19-year-old Adriana Ivancich and the platonic love affair inspires the novel [3]. He never seemed to have stability or lasting satisfaction in his relationships with women and was known as a womanizer. [4]

3. His Short Stories

3.1. Hills Like White Elephants

The story is a conversation between an American man and a young woman waiting for a train in Spain. As they talk we come to know that the woman is pregnant and the man convinces her for the abortion. Throughout the story, the American presents Hemingway's rigid concept of masculinity. The American is portrayed as omniscient, knowledgeable, worldly, and always in control of himself and the situation at hand. He is cool and feigns indifference, such as when he tells the girl he doesn't care whether she has the abortion or not. He tries to convince the girl by oversimplifying the operation and relentlessly pushes her to have it. He lacks the sympathy and understanding she needs during the crisis. In contrast, the girl is less assertive and persuasive. She is nameless, helpless, confused, and indecisive.

3.2. Cat in the Rain

Only two Americans are in the hotel and it is raining. The American wife sees a cat under a table that is trying to keep dry she wants to get it but her husband ignores it. When she goes outside she does not find the cat. She says that she still wants a cat but the husband asks her to shut up. At the end the hotel operator sends the cat to her room. "Cat in the Rain" was based in part on the rainy day Ernest and Hadely spent at the hotel Splendid in Raphalo, Italy circa [2]. She is rather presented like an annoying child. Surely this childish behavior is a reaction to her husband's indifferent and uncaring behavior. The contrast between the husband's complacency about his wife and her desire for respect, admiration and emotional fulfillment is brilliant. She had the role of an object that was to be used by her husband whenever he preferred not the wife. He did not even need to show any respect to her. She all the time tried to improve their cold relationship but it was the man who was the real determiner. The lonely cat was her mirror image.

3.3. Soldier's Home

Krebs who went to the war in 1917 and now returns home but cannot reenter society. He lost feelings that he once had about people and things. He even lost his desire to go out and get a girl. He prefers to watch girls rather than getting girlfriends because of the consequences. For him, they talk and disturb men. His mother tries to get her son out of his post-war trauma. She asks him whether he loves her, but he is so rude that at the end she burst in to crying. He clearly talked about how he felt toward his mother and other females, he hated them. Post-war characters of Hemingway are either physically or mentally in trouble. Even the pure love of a mother is neglected.

3.4. In Another Country

The concept of post-war loss is clear. When the American soldier, Nick, says that he wants to go back to the States and get married, the major becomes vulnerable. He believes that by getting married one is putting himself in a position of eventual loss." He cannot marry, he cannot marry if he is to lose everything, and he should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose". As Hemingway himself got married four times and then got divorced, he was completely familiar with the concept of loss. For Hemingway having a wife and enjoying the pleasures of being together was temporary and one day all people had to experience the suffering of this loss. This male dominated story has nothing to do with the role of women in society except showing a brief and dark shadow of something like a dream or a nightmare. The only role which was given to women was that they are the indicators of concept of loss and made life more painful than it was. All women and their love would leave you one day, so he did not recommend getting married. Marriage is a reminder of loss.

3.5. The End of Some Thing

A young man Nick goes out with a young woman at night. They are in a boat on a lake catching fish. At the end while she brings out a basket full of food for supper, Nick seems to be picking up a quarrel with her and eventually tells her that their relationship is not fun anymore. Nick wanted to end the relationship but he could not do that so easily without trying to create a kind of quarrel. For Hemingway the only reason of having relationship with a woman was to have fun. For Nick neither her and nor her desire and emotion had importance.

3.6. The Snows of Kilimanjaro

In this story, Harry's dying relationship to his wife, Helen, and the end of his life is explained. Harry has a bad wound and during the story has pain but his relationship with his wife and other women and also his views about women are clear. Harry says "We quarrel and that makes time pass". Harry so many times calls his wife "You bitch, you rich bitch!" or "You are the destroyer of my talent" or he says "My lies have been more successful with women than when I have told them the truth" or "When I fall in love with another woman that woman should always have more money than the last one" .

3.7. Up To Michigan

"Up To Michigan" also was male dominated. Jim, a blacksmith, and Liz Coates, who has a crush on Jim, and Charley Wyman go on a deer-hunting trip. When the hunters return, they have a few drinks to celebrate their kill. After finding himself alone with Liz, Jim makes sexual advances on Liz despite her demands that he stops. Jim is not concerned with what Liz wants; in fact, Jim only stops after he falls asleep on top of her. She gets out from under him and tries to awaken him. Then she walks home to go to bed. Hemingway tried to disdain and belittle women by showing the male dominated life that paid no attention to the desires of women living at the same society.

3.8. The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber

Francis Macomber and his wife Margaret are on a big-game safari in Africa, guided by professional hunter Robert Wilson. Hemingway presents Margot as the one who marries him for his wealth and now belittles him by cheating on him to maintain control of their relationship. Her love affair with her husband's rival and some other events caused a great shift in the male protagonist. Wilson is strong because he is free of woman. Margot is not a passive woman rather she is the villain, a betrayer, a femme fatale and murderer. When his women are clever and not passive they are antagonists.

4. Hemingways Codes

Hemingway began his writing career as a journalist so he learnt to focus only on events being reported, and to omit repeated or unnecessary matters.

4.1. The Iceberg Theory

When he became a writer of short stories, he learned to write a surface story in which he hinted the deep meaning. Hemingway believed the true meaning of a piece of writing should not be evident from the surface story [5]. This iceberg theory plus his clear writing makes him distinctive. Baker explains that in iceberg theory the hard facts float above water, while the supporting structure, complete with symbolism, operates out-of-sight. In "Hills Like White Elephants", the man never utters the word abortion but we understand it from the very beginning of the story [5]. Trodd believes that Hemingway's iceberg theory "demanded that the reader feel the whole story" and that the reader is meant to "fill the gaps left by his omissions with their feelings"[6]. So his eyes are the lens of a camera through which we see what he aims us to.

4.2. Masculine Heroes (Patriarchy)

Generally speaking his short story protagonists are usually of two types:

- The first one is his code hero, who is an ideal man full of courage, chivalry, and knowledgeable, they usually drink too much. They are fond of sex, war, and sport [7]. For instance Wilson, in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber", or the American in "Hills Like White Elephants". His father used to hunt and fish. This patriarchal image never leaves his protagonists, when fed up with life they go to the nature and fish or hunt.
- The second are the coward men who follow no codes [8] and are coward but at the end remove their dominance of women around and become free men with defined codes of Hemingway like Macomber in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber".

4.3. Female Characters (Bitch Icon)

His stereotyped female characters as discussed in his short stories are of two types:

- First, they are nameless, passive, childish, and are considered as an "outsider" or an "other". These unidentified women, usually unmarried, are treated as objects that after being worn out or having less fun are replaced or removed from the life of the explained knowledgeable men. In the "Hills Like White Elephants" the woman is not even able to order a drink because her husband speaks Spanish not her. Or in The "Cat in the Rain", the woman cares for materialistic things like silver things or a cat living with an uncaring man who even ignores her hair. These women are easily called "bitch". This is the bitch icon that is almost present in all his works.
- The second type women are the clever active ones that represent the liberated New Woman of post-war America. Although they are active but they usually are villains like Brett Ashley, or Margot. They are betrayers who prefer life with wealthy men and accept the relaxing social values of the Jazz Age. "(9)

4.4. Boundaries of Life between Men and Women

In the short stories above we saw that nameless men and women live together and sex without marriage is usually dominant. The women trying to attract attention, trying to make them laugh, or please them are in contrary to uncaring, usually drunk, faithless men. Women are stereotyped [9] and are merely more ignored than presented. They often follow their men but are left alone without being asked about their personal or deep emotions. Hemingway is either belittling female characters or ignoring them. He sometimes equals marriage to loss and this is a reflection of his torrid and unsatisfying marriages. The relationships are failing and imperfect in his short stories.

5. Sexism in His Short Stories

Sexism means unfair treatment coming from the belief that one sex is better, cleverer etc than the other. In other words sexism was a set of attitudes and behaviors toward people that judges or belittles them on the basis of their gender or that perpetual stereotypical assumption about gender roles [10]. The term is most often used to refer to the men's attitudes toward women. His short stories and novels likewise reveal ambivalence toward and distrust of women-sentiments so intensely expressed in some of his works that they have long been considered proof of the author's sexism. His exploits of masculinity [11], battled with alcohol and tempestuous relationships with women helps to create and preserve his image of a sexist writer. In "Snows of Kilimanjaro" Harry so many times calls his wife "You bitch, you rich bitch!" or "You are the destroyer of my talent" or he says "My lies have been more successful with women than when I have told them the truth " or "When I fall in love with another woman that woman should always have more money than the last one". This may be a dominating fact in his stories.

6. Patriarchy vs. Woman

Hemingway most obviously focuses on issues related to masculinity. And gender issues are central in his short stories. He reflects a form of oppression suffered by his not very wise women. He also encounters the special difficulties men encounter dealing with women in the liberated post-war American society. Easy money, relaxing social values of the Jazz Age and also the prevalence of married couples cheating are significant. The prevailing stereotyping of masculinity seeking for potential solutions to the problems posed by women around proves his patriarchal attitudes. Marriage without sex is usually preferred but when there

is pregnancy it is a very big obstacle to be removed. In "Hills Like White Elephants", the man overly simplifies abortion as a painless operation. Women are better not to talk because when they talk they expect some thing a become barriers. The male gaze is also prevalent in his works, Krebs in "Soldier's Home" is a great example ignoring women and even hating his own mother. The reason for not getting a girlfriend for him is that women talk. For Hemingway women are valued for pleasure rather than reproductive capabilities. Pregnancy is rarely viewed as a positive feature that shows dehumanizing of a woman. He ignores the traditional view of women as a mother and the aim of creation of sex that is reproduction. Themes explored in feminist theory including discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, oppression, and patriarchy are excessively apparent [12].

7. Conclusion

A biographical reading of Hemingway's works is usually possible. His repressed feelings as a little boy by his mother, and unsatisfying numerous marriages influence his characters. His masculine characters are usually reasonable, knowledgeable, patriarchy reflecting the ideals of his father. Some times they are usually post-war veterans or some men seeking pleasure with relaxing social values. In contrast, his female characters are more feminine, passive and not convincing and most of his stories lack female characters. Most of his female characters are treated as unimportant fools merely regarded as objects by men. They represent the liberated New Women that are usually betrayers or cheaters. Sex without marriage is his favorite way. Feminist theories are resolved in his short stories. He might be called a hater of women, misogynist, sexist, or racist. The researcher believes that his excessive love in alcohol, women, hunting, sports, etc, are obvious but due to his unsatisfying experiences and torrid feelings after leaving each woman might lead him to be ignoring women rather than intentionally proving his hatred toward women. Although he had too many lovers around, his own ethical codes forced him to remain a married man rather than a widower. He seems to express his repressed attitudes or failures by repressing his female characters. Like Kertz that tells his mother about not loving her. It seems that ignoring women and belittling them provided a path toward achieving what he desired in his own life. In addition, he respects friendship between members of the same sex and provides the theme that that men and women have fundamentally different ways of seeing things that leads to change in the once-happy relationship of boys and girls.

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