

Symbolism In Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man And The Sea

Sandamali K. P. S.

Abstract: Hemingway's masterpiece, *The Old Man and the Sea*, has been widely analyzed and interpreted by scholars. This work is a critical study of the text. The objective of this work is to explore the symbols used in the novel to decode these symbols and identify the various interpretations that they stand for. This work divides into four chapters. The first chapter deals with aestheticism in general and tells about the common stylistic devices in literature such as simile, metaphor, irony and so on. The second chapter makes the connection with the concept of symbol and some theories that are related to symbols such as Langer's Theory, Whitehead Theory, Frye's Theory and Saussure's Theory. The third chapter gives the general overview about American literature and the major works of Ernest Hemingway focusing on his masterpiece *The Old Man and the Sea* and its literary analysis while the fourth chapter stands for the symbols used in the novel and their interpretations. This work aims at showing the interest of Hemingway for symbols and his intention to represent themes behind the use of symbols in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Key words: American Literature, Masterpiece, Aestheticism, Symbolism.

01. Introduction

Literature reflects the human lives and the society with its characteristics while gives the pleasure for the people. To tackle with different themes and subjects, writers use vivid styles, literary devices and language aspects. In American literature that has derived through its major eras such as Realism, Naturalism, Rationalism, and Romanticism, some authors tend to be used symbols to give an artistic beauty and a depth for their creations and for any other purposes such as criticizing society behind those symbols to avoid troubles and problems that may fall upon the writer. In this point of view, among the writers who belong to Romantic period, Ernest Hemingway is signified for his mastery of using symbols. Among the masterpieces of Hemingway including *In Our Time*, *The Torrents Of Spring* (1926), *The Sun Also Rises*, *Men Without Women*, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, only *The Old Man and The Sea* (1952) was an immediate success by selling 50, 000 copies from the first edition and the five million copies of the *Life* magazine within two days. In *Old Man and the sea*, the author uses number of symbols respectively to develop the themes of the novel.

02. Symbolism: A General Overview

Among the major literary devices, symbols grab the attention of the readers, because of its ability to broad the thinking capacity of the people. This chapter deals with the notion of symbolism as a movement and as a literary device and tries to introduce some theories of symbolism which are attributed to Whitehead, Langer, Frye and Saussure.

Symbolism: Symbol also a major figure of speech in which something [object, person, situation or action] means more than what it is. The term symbol has derived from Greek term "symballoin" that means "to throw together" and Latin term "Symbolon" means "token of sign".

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Writers use Symbols to grab a depth for the literary creations and to express the things ironically avoiding the problems that can come to them. Shaw (1881: 367) defines:

symbols as following. "(Symbol is) something used for, or regarded as, representing something else. More specifically, a symbol is a word, phrase, or other expression having a complex of associated meanings; in this sense, a symbol is viewed as having values different from those of whatever is being symbolized" And also Cuddon (1998) defines symbols as following. "The word symbol derive from the Greek verb "symballoin", "to throw together", and its noun "symbolon", "mark" or "sign". It is an object animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something else" Symbolism as a movement relates with an aesthetic movement originated in France in the 19th century. And also it calls as "decadent movement", because they use imagination as a reality. Symbolism started as a

reaction to the naturalism and realism movements. At the end of the nineteenth century, symbolism lost its popularity in France. Then the popularity increased and spread to the continental European countries such as England, Russian the United States, and South America. The symbolists experimental methods appealed to many English, Irish and American poets such as William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), and Wallace Stevens (1879- 1955). According to Perrine (1974) the meaning of the literary symbol should recognize from its context. That means the meaning of symbols should be identified inside the text, not in outside.

03. Theories of symbolism

Symbols stands for different interpretations and meanings. And also these meanings get different directions, because many theorists have given their contribution for the evolution of in various domains with their views and theories. Rapoport (in Royce 1965), for whom symbols are "products of the human abstracting process" (p.87) Hayakawa (ibid), for whom symbolism is "that which shapes the entire psychic life of man" (p.92), and Whitehead (1927), for whom symbolism "is inherent in the very texture of human life" (p.60)" (illustrated from, Hadjira 2013.). With reference to the above quote, it is obvious that symbolism has various definitions and they differ according to the theorist's ideas and views about the term symbolism.

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