

# Hemingway's Affiliation with Europe

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## Abstract

Europe in Hemingway's fiction offers an un-inhibited life with unlimited freedom for experiencing life one's own without any kind of social and moral constraints. Hemingway found a congenial environment in Europe than his own country for his development as man and artist. Although in terms of time span, his stay in Europe is rather limited, its impact on his growth as man and artist is more than the impact of any other milieu of his time. Italy, France, Spain were all at the same time his second home countries, lands whose culture, civilization and characteristic world-view helped him at least to appreciate his own. For Hemingway, Europe became not only the entity different and separate from America, but also a kind of touchstone, a yardstick with which to measure America. As a writer Hemingway has shown incredulous capabilities to immerse himself into the various experiences and bring forth all of these experiences into his fiction wholly alive. European settings, people and events constitute a large part of Hemingway's subject matter in his novels. The experience that Hemingway sought in the unspoiled landscape of Europe was precious to him as what he acquired in its social and political arena, enriched both his knowledge and understanding of life. The current paper is a study of influence of Europe on Hemingway's fiction.

**Keywords:** Europe, America, Experience, Culture, Country.

## Introduction

The American perspective of Europe has been changing from period to period and from writer to writer. The conditions of time have always influenced the writer's vision of the continent across the Atlantic. For some, it remained 'the old home,' for others it had the lure of the unknown, a strange and mysterious land, the source of their culture and civilization. While the characters of Hawthorne always feeling nostalgic for their old home in Europe, the perspective changes radically with Henry James. Whereas America becomes a kind of brave new world with the innocence and freedom of the Garden of Eden, Europe is portrayed as a land of old-civilization, which has lost its vitality of imagination as well as innocence of mind. As such, Europe in James's fiction emerges as a land of corruption, tyranny and poverty where the society is terribly divided in smaller units based on social and economic status.

## Objective of Study

By the time we come to Hemingway, the perspective of Europe has again undergone a further change. America is no longer the land of spiritual terrain of the Calvinist: rather, it has become a notorious society, backward-looking, characterized by moral smugness and hypocrisy. No longer the Jamesean Garden of Eden, it is a society which has become highly industrialized and commercialized and as such totally empty of imaginative and spiritual contents. Thus the objective of the study is to make an assessment of Hemingway's impression of Europe.

## Review of Literature

Hemingway is one of the most important as well as the influential writer of twentieth century. He exerted tremendous influence not only on both sides of the Atlantic, but also on writers like Khushwant Singh who was writing in far away India. Due to his influence he is one of the most widely read author and works on him have appeared in all the English reading nations. However, in the recent times two important works on Hemingway have appeared. These are Eugene Goodheart's *Critical Insights* (2009) and Verna Kale's *Critical Lives: Ernest Hemingway* (2016). The researcher worked on the author long back, but the interest in Hemingway has renewed due to increased frictions and alignments between the two continents. The important books on Hemingway include Malcolm Cowley's *A second Flowering: Wakes and Days of the Cost*

*Generator*(1973) and John Aldridge's *After The lost Generation: A Critical Study of Writer of Two Wars* (1951).

The new generation of the writers of the 20's, to which Hemingway belonged, found themselves born into the world deprived of all its spiritual recourses in the struggle for survival. The First World War vastly changed the tenor of American life. Like Hemingway, most writers of the time had participated in the war hoping for a better world after the war. When they went back to the states, they found that the world after the war was even worse for them than the world they had known before 1917. As Malcolm Cowley states, "Prohibition, Puritanism, Philistinism and salesmanship, there seemed to be the triumphant causes in America. Whoever had won the war, these young writers came to regard themselves as a defeated nation" (73). It seemed to them that life in America was tawdry, cheap, colorless, given over to the exclusive worship of wealth and machinery and that for a young writer to preserve his talent, he had to go Europe where the creative life was still possible. As Aldridge remarks, "Ahead of them laid Europe, with its promises of live excitement and freedom, the Europe they knew for its women, its paintings, its book, its Paris..."

Europe in Hemingway's fiction offers an uninhibited life with unlimited freedom for experiencing life one's own without any kind of social and moral constraints. Hemingway found a congenial environment in Europe than his own country for his development as man and artist. What distinguished him from his predecessors was his predominantly personal factor in his attitude to Europe. Perhaps no American writer was driven to private compulsion as was Hemingway, who felt concerned to discover not so much of Europe but his own self in the more advanced continent.

Hemingway lived most of his life in Europe. Most of his major fictional works have for their location the European settings. The reason why Hemingway wrote his major fiction about happenings in contemporary Europe is that the most crucial events of his life took place on the European continent. Although in terms of time span, his stay in Europe is rather limited, its impact on his growth as man and artist is more than the impact of any other milieu of his time. Beginning with his participation in the First World War, 1918, his association with Europe continued of singular significance, was during the early 20's in Paris. The rest of the time he only visited Europe for particular assignments, such as war-correspondent during the Spanish civil war and the world-war II.

Of the seven novels Hemingway published during his life-time, The major ones takes place in Europe. Of course, the central character in his fiction generally remains American, most other characters by and large are non-Americans, mostly Europeans. Hemingway's acquaintance with Europe began in 1918, when he joined as second lieutenant in the American red-cross Army unit for the Italian Front. Hemingway, unlike other young men, did not participate in war for fun, romance or adventure. He was ostensibly motivated by the political and humanitarian ideal of making the world safe for

democracy. Hemingway himself is stated to have declared his sense of dedication to the cause of democracy involved in the war: what are we fighting for anyway except to make the world safe for the democracy." But when exposed to dangers and hardships of war and its grim realities, his romantic ideals received a rude shock. He was severally wounded while distributing Red-cross supplies to the Italian troops. This mishap made him shed his illusion of immortality. As he himself pointed out: "when you go to war as a boy, you have great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed, not you..."<sup>(1)</sup> "Hemingway's view of the world underwent a radical change, so much so that he had to find a different perspective for evaluating the world.

Dissatisfied with American life and society, he felt an urgent need to go to Paris where he knew his life would be very different. In the end of 1921, he got the opportunity to live in the great European city by joining the Profession of Journalism as a roving European correspondent for the Toronto City Star. Hemingway's going to Europe was a great event, which provided him an atmosphere of complete freedom and also a proper literary atmosphere, which was just not there in America.

Hemingway really lived his life in Europe. He absorbed all that he experienced and brought out all of that in the form of fiction. "Throughout his stay in Europe," as Stewart Sanderson comments, "he was acquiring a stock of experiences which were to be material for short-stories or for incidents and background to the fabric of his novels. Italy, France, Spain, Perhaps not in that order, were all at the same time his second countries, lands whose culture, civilization and characteristic world-view helped him at least to appreciate his own. The experience that Hemingway sought in the unspoiled landscape of Europe was as precious to him as what he acquired in its social and political area, both enriching his knowledge and understanding of life. His experience in different countries of Europe went into the making of Hemingway the man as well as the artist. His participation in the first world war resulted into the writing of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929); his staying in Paris into the writing of *The Sun Also Rises* (1923) and also his posthumous novel *The Garden of Eden* (1986); his visits to Spain, his participation in the Spanish Civil-war and his keen interest in the Spanish bull-fighting into making of the, *The Fifth Column* and four short stories, *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and the non-fiction book, *Death in The Afternoon*; his participation in the second world war to the creation of another war novel *Across The River into The Trees*. Besides his intimate contact with Italy, France and Spain, Hemingway also came in contact with certain other European countries such as, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Greece and Turkey. Among all these only Switzerland and the events of the Greece-Turkish war would leave an evident trace in his fictional work. Switzerland makes an important component of *A Farewell to Arms*, as he was always enthusiastic about the Swiss-Landscape and Ski-

resorts. Europe, in other words stands in young Hemingway's mind for intensity, for a quality of living, for emotional freedom which it seems he never felt before then.

There is still another aspect, almost some kind of revelation; a kind of change in his would view. For Hemingway, Europe became not only an entity different and separate from America, but also a kind of touchstone, a yardstick with which to measure America. It provided Hemingway with a basis for comparative as well as objective analysis of the native way of life. It offered too, what it had offered the American artists from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Inexpensive living, relief from family and social pressure, the opportunity for privacy. Especially, the experience of war makes his characters aware of many things in America they were not able to see before. This aspect of the meaning of Europe for young Hemingway can be seen more explicitly in his earlier novels and short stories. His first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, describes the life of the America and other expatriates living in Paris in 1920s, where Hemingway himself had lived in the same decade. The hero, Jake Barnes, is a journalist like Hemingway, who was wounded like the writer in the First World War.

Again, in his second novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway's first hand experience of being wounded on the Italian-Australian front is sharply visualized through its hero Frederic Henry. Hemingway's participation in the Spanish Civil War and his experiences there in are brought before us in *The Fifth Column* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. War is covered in much greater complexities and unlike his predecessors, Frederick Henry, who is in Italy only as a non-combatant officer in ambulance service, Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is in active role of bridge blower and he takes risks and finally Sacrifices his life for the cause to which he dedicated himself. *Death in the Afternoon* is another of Hemingway's magnificent book about bull-fighting in Spain. Bull-fighting afforded him intense emotional delight. "I feel very fine while it is going on," he asserted, "have a feeling of life and death and mortality." *Across the River into the Trees* is another of Hemingway's works which portrays life in Italy in the post World War II period.

Hemingway had taught himself to write by writing. Both as a newspaper correspondent in the European capitals and as a serious imaginative writer, he had trained himself accurately and to express clearly a careful selection of what he saw, heard and felt in Europe. It was his love for action that prompted him to join the war despite his being declared unfit for the regular army and despite his potential opposition to his joining the military. In all the three wars, he was actively involved, which provided him with stores of material for fiction which he successfully exploited for producing great literary works. His having experienced the famous European Wars lends authenticity to his fiction. Not only the wars, but the famous European sports like bull-fighting, skiing and fishing are exploited by

Hemingway quite realistically. His pride as an artist allowed him to write only what he had actually felt and seen.

Hemingway explored Europe, its different countries, its people and places, its morals and manners, its social and political ideologies quite powerfully and successfully. Although the writers like James lived in Europe for a much longer time than did Hemingway, yet the extent of impact in the case of Hemingway is much stronger than it is in the case of writers like James. His involvement with certain parts of the European continent and certain happenings there upon was so strong that he was able to learn several European languages, such as, French, German, Spanish and Italian, which he could fluently speak and could as well read and write. He didn't go to Europe as a gentleman visitor or tourists. He went there as a soldier or a journalist. His knowledge of Europe is not confined to the places alone. He came to understand various nationalities quite intimately and he used this knowledge in drawing a large number of European characters in his novels and short-stories. His close contact and friendship with numerous Frenchman, Italian, and Spanish from all social classes and education levels; his learning of three foreign languages and his wide reading deeply influenced him and his work.

It was in Europe that he learned not only the art of writing but also the art of living a life different from the one in Oak Park. It was here the he learned to observe people, custom and behaviour, to appreciate different arts, language and cultures. His work related to France, Spain and Italy demonstrated his understanding of and identification with nation's not his own. It shaped his literary and artistic talent in a way it would not have shaped in America. It helped him discover hypocrisy in manners and morals, which was characteristic of the environment in which he grew up. As Carlos Baker rightly observes, "Ernest Hemingway's college was the continent of Europe. Besides the electives in art and literature, there were required courses in languages, people, state craftiness, power politics, peace conferences and war O-(7).

### **Conclusion**

As a writer Hemingway has shown incredulous capabilities to immerse himself into the various experiences and bring forth all of these experiences into his fiction wholly alive. European settings, people and events constitute a large part of Hemingway's subject-matter in his novels. His interest in places and people as well as the political events on the European continent would also reveal the nature of commitment the author had to the political ideology as well as to the moral and manners. An exploration of his European novels and short-stories also make clear the writer's preferences and prejudices with regard to the different nationalities on the European continent. Thus, Hemingway's affiliation with Europe makes him a great novelist. Like many of his contemporaries, such as Eliot and Ezra Pound, Hemingway enriched his art from his contact with Europe.

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