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VEPRA “PLAKU DHE DETI” I ERNEST HEMINGWAY, AGONIA E AUTORIT APO NJË PËRSHKRIM I PËRDPJEKJEVE TË VAZHDUESHME TË NJERËZIMIT?

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Përmbledhje

Vepra *Plaku Dhe Deti*, nga Ernest Hemingway, u botua në vitin 1952 dhe iu dha Çmimi Pulitzer i vitit 1953 për letërsinë. Një vit më vonë, në 1954, Hemingway fitoi Çmimin Nobel në Letërsi “për mjeshtërinë e tij në artin e rrëfimit, demonstruar së fundmi në veprën *Plaku Dhe Deti ...*”

Pas një suksesi kaq të madh dhe një karriere të gjatë dhe të suksesshme, disa vjet më vonë, të Dielën në mëngjes, më 2 korrik 1961, Hemingway mbushi dy plumba në armën e tij Boss, pastaj uli fundin e armës me kujdes në dysheme, u përkul përpara dhe me tytën e armës në gojën e tij e shkrepri i shtyrë nga depressioni.

Ai kreu vetëvrasje.

Paradoksi i përfundimit të autorit me përfundimin e romanit të tij më të famshëm *Plaku Dhe Deti* është se Ernest Hemingway, autori, u dorëzua nga jeta, ndërsa personazhi i tij në roman, Santiago, nuk u dorëzua kurrë, nuk u mposht kurrë, duke dalë triumfues në luftën kundër forcave më të mëdha:

‘Por njeriu nuk është krijuar për humbje’, tha ai. ‘Një njeri mund të shkatërrohet, por jo të mposhet.’

Ky paradoks ngre pyetjen: A është *Plaku Dhe Deti* një pasqyrim i jetës personale dhe agonisë së autorit, siç besojnë pjesa më e madhe e kritikëve, apo është shumë më tepër se kaq? Një roman që përshkruan dhe përfaqëson luftën e vazhdueshme të njerëzimit në çdo epokë?

Pse Hemingway ishte në agoni?

Ernest Hemingway ishte një shkrimtar që i përkiste Brezit të Humbur. Një brez shkrimtarësh që kishte “humbur” kuptimin e vlerave të trashëguara të cilat për ta nuk ishin më të rëndësishme në botën e pasluftës.

Dikush mund të imagjinojë të jetojë tmerret e Luftës së Parë Botërore, e njohur si Lufta e Madhe, të jetë një dëshmitar personal në Luftën Civile Spanjolle, më pas Luftës së Dytë Botërore, duke jetuar tërë jetën në dhe midis luftërave. Njeriu e humb shpresën dhe qëndron vetëm në dëshpërimin e humbjes, duke agouar në çdo frymëmarrje.

Por, pavarësisht se sa e dhimbshme ishte jeta e tij, Hemingway shkroi veprën *Plaku Dhe Deti* jo vetëm si një reflektim i agonisë së tij, jo vetëm si një shprehje e zërit të tij, por më shumë se kaq, ai portretizoi luftën e vazhdueshme të njerëzimit gjatë shekujve, duke folur në zërin e gjithë njerëzimit, të kaluarës, të tashmes dhe të ardhmes.

Kjo qasje është çelësi që e bën romanin kaq madhështor.

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Dhe stili dhe simbolika e përdorur në të e bëjnë atë një kryevepër, prandaj leximi i kësaj vepre një përvojë shumë drithëruese.

Në këtë ese do të analizojmë simbolikën e përdorur në veprën *Plaku Dhe Deti* si dhe do të bëjmë një krahasim me një rrjedhë të kujtesës historike dhe letrare dhe ndërgjegjes së racës njerëzore, botës në përgjithësi dhe të autorit të kësaj vepre Ernest Hemingway.

Qëllimi i këtij studimi është të paraqesë një analizë se pse ky roman shkon përtej zërit të autorit. Është një veper universale që përfaqëson luftën dhe thirrjen e njerëzimit përgjatë epokave.

Fjalët çelës: *Hemingway, Plaku, deti, peshkaqenë, luanë, simbolizëm, përpjekje, njerëzimi, Marlin, peshku, Manolini, Santiago.*

ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA, THE AUTHOR'S AGONY OR A DEPICTION OF THE CONSTANT STRUGGLE OF HUMAN KIND?

Abstract

The Old Man And The Sea, by Ernest Hemingway, was published in 1952 and was awarded the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. A year later, in 1954, Hemingway was given the Nobel Prize in Literature "for his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea* ..."

After such a big success and a long and well accomplished career, a few years later, on a Sunday, the morning July 2nd 1961, Hemingway put two shells in the Boss shotgun then lowered the gun butt carefully to the floor, leaned forward and with the barrels of the gun in his mouth depressed the triggers.

He committed suicide.

The paradox of the author's ending with the ending of his most famous novel *The Old Man And The Sea* is that Ernest Hemingway, the man, gave up, whereas his character in the novel Santiago never gave up, was never defeated, emerging triumphant with the struggle against larger forces:

'But man is not made for defeat,' he said. 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.'

This paradox raises the question: is *The Old Man And The Sea* a reflection of the author's personal life and agony, as most commentators believe, or is it much more than that? A novel that depicts and represents the constant struggle of human kind in every era?

Why was Hemingway in agony?

Ernest Hemingway was a writer that belonged to the Lost Generation. A generation of writers that was "lost" in the sense that its inherited values were no longer relevant in the postwar world.

One can imagine living the horrors of WWI, known as the Great War, being a personal witness in the Civil Spanish War, then WWII, living the entire adult life in and between wars. One loses hope and only dwells in the despair of loss, and agonizing in every breath.

But as painful as his life was, Hemingway wrote *The Old Man And The Sea* not just like a reflection of his own agony, not just as an expression of his own voice, but more than that, he portrayed the constant human struggle throughout the centuries, speaking in the voice of all humanity, past, present and future.

This approach is the key what makes the novel so great.

And the style and symbolism used in it make it a masterpiece therefore reading it a very thrilling experience.

In this essay I will analyze the symbolism used in *The Old Man And The Sea* as well as make a comparison with a flow of historical and literary memory and conscience of the human kind, the world at large and of its author Ernest Hemingway.

The purpose of this study is to present an analysis on why *this novel* goes beyond the voice of the author. It is an universal work that represents the struggle and calling of humanity throughout the ages.

Key words: Hemingway, Old Man, sea, sharks, lions, symbolism, struggle, humanity, Marlin, fish, Manolin, Santiago.

Analysis of *The Old Man And The Sea*

I. The continuous struggle of humanity and the inherited knowledge of history.

The title *The Old Man And The Sea* was in fact the author's second choice. Hemingway had considered "The Dignity of Man" as a title, but thought it too pompous. (Harold Bloom, p.100)

The story of the book is set in Cuba. The main protagonist is Santiago, a fisherman who has not caught a fish in eighty-four days. Desperate and with his pride hurt he goes too far at sea to restore his reputation as a great fisherman, and his pride. He manages to catch a giant fish, an enormous marlin. For days the fish pulls Santiago's boat further at sea, until it is killed. The old fisherman ties the giant fish at the side of his boat and heads home, but the second part of his ordeal begins when he has to cope with shark attacks. The sharks eat all the marlin's flesh, and Santiago returns at bay only with the skeleton of the giant fish. He lost the fish, but triumphed in his battle, restoring his reputation and winning his personal battle.

The story of the book is the embodiment of the continuous struggle of humanity and a reflection of the inherited knowledge of history.

It is a modern representation of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*, the legendary Greek king of Ithaca, a hero of the Trojan War, who went through immense struggles and adventures to return home.

Hemingway was a modernist, and modernists turned simple people into heroes and ordinary things and events into great importance, therefore Santiago is the modern Odysseus.

Santiago is David facing Goliath, the small shepherd boy battling the philistine giant.

The story is parallel to Joshua's conquest of Jericho, Virgil's account of the Trojan Horse from the *Aeneid*, along with historical accounts of the Crusades. (Bloom, p. 96)

The serene acknowledgment of Santiago's responsibility inevitably recalls that of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, (Bloom, p. 33)

In the story one finds symbols of Christology but depicted from a human perspective and not in a religious approach. Santiago's ordeal, first in his struggle with the big fish, and then in fighting against the sharks, is associated by Hemingway with Christ's agony and triumph. (Bloom, p. 23). His ability to take punishment and the Christological references continue to the end. These references originate from his sense of identity with the marlin.

Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish....

But then everything is a sin. Do not think about sin....

You loved him when he was alive, and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more? (Hemingway, p. 52)

It is on the third day that Santiago finally stabs the Marlin with his harpoon, and this is not accidental, since it refers to the resurrection of Christ.

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“‘Ay,’ he said aloud. There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood” (Hemingway, p. 53).

This is a resonance of Christ’s crucifixion. At the end of the novel, bearing many injuries on his body, he falls asleep in the cruciform position.

He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and then over his back and legs and he slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up. (Hemingway, p. 61)

Also the symbol of baptism or purification is found in the novel, it is evident when Santiago lifts some sea water with his left hand and put it on his head (Sakshi Jain, p.4) as well as the apostolic parallelism with Santiago that is the Spanish form of St. James, the Galilean fisherman apostle of Jesus, and martyr.

In this collective memory of human kind and on the constant struggle against bigger forces we find a resemblance with earlier literature such as Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy* and Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*.

Hemingway dedicates much attention to the stars just as Dante did in the three books of the *Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise*.

“I saw the lovely things the heavens hold, and we came out to see once more the stars,” writes Dante at the end of Canto XXXIV. The stars are present in the three parts of the *Divine Comedy* representing deity and universal justice, therefore Santiago looks at them throughout his journey of suffering and redemption.

I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars ...

But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers. (Hemingway, p.36)

Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, is a novel published a century earlier than *The Old Man And The Sea* but very similar in plot, in which we read about Captain Ahab’s obsession with killing the whale, Moby Dick.

At the center of both novels is the big fish. In his pursuit Ahab brings about his own death and almost all of his crew, different from Santiago who returns alive, however at the end of the novel Santiago admits to himself as well as to the boy that he is beaten.

“They beat me, Manolin,” he said. “They truly beat me.” (Hemingway, p.6)

Hemingway’s depiction of human struggle with death and the battle with bigger forces in this novel appears to also be an homage of the American romantic poet Robert Frost, who in his famous poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* describes the conflict of the author with death:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep. (Norton Anthology, p.1133)

Here the woods symbolize death, and Frost, was a man marked by huge personal tragedies, such as the deaths of many of his children, the suicidal of his son, and other tragedies. And “the miles to go” of Frost, resemble in Santiago’s determination to go further at sea, to winning the battle.

But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures. (Hemingway, 31)

Despite parallelisms of perseverance from the past, Hemingway includes in his novel a figure from his present, and in the spirit of modernism, that figure is Joe DiMaggio, a fisherman's son, the baseball hero who played the game despite the pain he endured due to a physical handicap. (Britannica)

But I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel. (Hemingway, p.32)

His bone spur on his heel made him comparable to Achilles. (Michael Hollister, p.4) And here is another name that adds to the stream of the human collective memory, who was offered the choice to stay at home, live a long life and die nobody, or go to Troy where he would die and be remembered for thousands of years.

Santiago, David, Joshua, Oedipus, Odysseus, Achilles, Christ, James, Virgil, Dante, Ahab and Moby Dick, Frost and Joe DiMaggio, they all represent human aspiration, struggle, and transcendence.

To enforce his universal message Hemingway used his unique style and a rich symbolism.

II. Symbolism as a tool to depict human aspiration, struggle, and transcendence.

The use of symbolism in *The Old Man and The Sea* gives the novel a deeper and universal meaning. The whole book is filled with major symbols and Hemingway's iceberg style of writing makes the reader think at every sentence.

The Sea:

The setting of the novel is at sea. It is a symbol of Universe, Nature and Life.

The sea is the beginning of life on earth. Life originates from the sea. Santiago refers to the sea as a woman.

He always thought of the sea as la mar which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman ...

She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel.... (Hemingway, p.12)

The sea is the mother of life and Hemingway uses it as a symbol of life itself, not only his own but that of human kind throughout the ages. The sea is life and all human beings in it.

And the great sea with our friends and our enemies. (Hemingway, p. 60)

Hemingway depicts it as a desert, as a path of human journey, and the emphasis on the number eighty-four, reminds us of the tests of history and the personal drought of each of us,

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. (Hemingway, p.1)

Santiago:

Santiago is the main character of the novel. The name is the Spanish version of Saint James, the apostle of Christ, called a "fisher of men." The choice of such a name is not accidental. It gives the man a mission.

Santiago bears the mark of a divine mission, the mission of winning the battle of life, but in fact he is any man, any tired and vulnerable man, who has to bear his/her burden all alone in the path of life.

He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. (Hemingway, p.28)

"You're tired, old man," he said. "You're tired inside." (Hemingway, p. 56)

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This is the reason why Hemingway gave Santiago a saint's name but based this character on a real fisherman, Gregorio Fuentes, who inspired Hemingway for this character and novel.

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles on the back of his neck. He had many injuries on his body and hands. Most of all he was alone and desperate.

No one should be alone in their old age, he thought. But it is unavoidable. (Hemingway, p. 22)

But Santiago is not only Saint James, Saint Francis, Hemingway himself, or Fuentes, he is every human in all our history, struggling in the battles of life, with the perseverance to triumph over any difficulty. He is old and poor, a failure in the eyes of others, but he has dignity and pride. He is the symbol of determination and dignity of human kind.

"Fish," he said softly, aloud, "I'll stay with you until I am dead." (Hemingway, p. 24)

"Fish," he said, "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends." (Hemingway, p.25)

I wish I could feed the fish, he thought. He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it. (Hemingway, p. 28)

Manolin:

Manolin is the young protégé of Santiago. He represents the future and symbolizes hope and continuation, just like the new generations bring hope and continuation to human race.

Santiago's triumph is indeed moral: he loses the marlin but not his belief in the worth of his task. The lesson is clear; if Manolin inherits his master's pride and tenacity, he will also become a well-armed warrior in the struggle that is life. (Harold Bloom, pp, 78-79)

Manolin is not only the old man's future life. He is the future of all of us.

That is why Santiago repeats several times in his journey: "I wish I had the boy. I wish I had the boy with me. Next time I will bring the boy with me." (Hemingway, p.20)

Lions:

Lions appear in many passages. The novel begins with the words old man, sea, fish and ends with lions. In fact the very last word of the novel is "the lions."

The old man was dreaming about the lions. (Hemingway, p. 64)

Why such a surreal combination of words and symbols?

The lion is a symbol of power and strength. Santiago thinks and dreams of lions. They remind him of youth, (Sandamali K. P. S, p. 4) courage, energy and dignity, the spirit of the entire human race:

After that he began to dream of the long yellow beach and he saw the first of the lions come down onto it in the early dark and then the other lions came and he rested his chin on the wood of the

bows where the ship lay anchored with the evening off-shore breeze and he waited to see if there would be more lions and he was happy. (Hemingway, p.40)

The old man's dreams of lions are symbolic. The dream gives us an idea of how Santiago sees his part in life. After his long voyage fighting, struggling and defense his only one fish for which spends his all strength, the old man arrives in his shack and rests. He never stops from hoping and dreaming to get his strength to rise again. Rising again just like the humans have done throughout the ages and through the most difficult times of history. Humanity is brave and courageous and overcomes any struggle. This is the message that Hemingway transmits in this novel.

Marlin:

Marlin, the big fish, is the worthy adversary of Santiago. He calls it “my friend and my brother.” 36 Marlin is used as the symbol of redemption, purification and transcendence.

The killing of the marlin marks the climax of the novel. The end of the marlin’s life is the most vital of moments. The fish seems to surpass his own death, because it invests him with a new life.

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty 46

This notion of transcendence is important, for it resounds within Santiago’s story. Like the fish, the old man suffers something of a death on his way back to the village. He is exposed of his twist and, given his age, will likely never have the opportunity to land such a magnificent fish

again. (Khan, and Bhuiyan, p. 110)

He did not like to look at the fish anymore since he had been mutilated. When the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were hit. (Hemingway, p. 51)

But Marlin serves not only as a symbol of redemption for Santiago he is used also as a symbol of natural order, facts of life, the battles and struggles of all of us.

Besides, he thought, everything kills everything else in some way. (Hemingway, p. 53)

“I shouldn’t have gone out so far, fish,” he said. “Neither for you nor for me. I’m sorry, fish.” (Hemingway, p.55)

Sharks:

Sharks are used as a symbol for the destructive forces in life. If Marlin was Santiago’s brother they are his enemies. They are described as the enemies of any human attempt and endurance:

Inside the closed double lip of his jaws all of his eight rows of teeth were slanted inwards. They were not the ordinary pyramid shaped teeth of most sharks. They were shaped like a man’s fingers when they are crisped like claws.... This was a fish built to feed on all the fishes in the sea, that were so fast and strong and well armed that they had no other enemy ...

The old man knew that he was dead but the shark would not accept it. (Hemingway, p.50)

“Fight them,” he said. “I’ll fight them until I die.” (Hemingway, p. 58)

In the story they are also used to play an important role in separating the material from the moral outcome of the events. The sharks eat the whole Marlin’s flesh but not the skeleton. They deprived Santiago from food and material gain, but not from his moral victory and triumph. Hemingway has clearly made a distinction on this issue and has given the readers a clear universal message on the importance of moral and human dignity over materialism. And to further emphasize this message Hemingway uses the voice of people in the Terrace before and after Santiago goes fishing. At the very beginning of the novel he writes how people made fun of him:

They sat on the Terrace and many of the fishermen made fun of the old man and he was not angry. (Hemingway, p. 2)

And at the last page he again uses people on the terrace, but this time as a means to emphasize the moral triumph of the old fisherman, who was still poor and weary, but victorious.

That afternoon there was a party of tourists at the Terrace and looking down in the water among the empty beer cans and dead barracudas a woman saw a great long white spine with a huge tail at the end that lifted and swung with the tide while the east wind blew a heavy steady sea outside

the entrance to the harbor. (Hemingway, p. 63)

III. Conclusion

In conclusion *The Old Man And The Sea* is not a merely a reflection of the author's personal life and agony but a novel that depicts and represents the constant struggle of human kind in every era.

This novel goes beyond the expression of the author's own voice but portrays the continuous human struggle throughout the centuries, speaking in the voice of all humanity, past, present and future.

Combined with a distinguished style and symbolism this novel is a modern summary of the human journey in which we find ancient traces of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*, character of the Bible, such as David, Joshua, Christ and his disciple James, but not as religious figures but example of human endurance. We find the traces of Dante, parallelism of Ahab and Moby Dick, Frost and the baseball player Joe DiMaggio, all representing human aspiration, struggle, and transcendence.

It is not a personal novel. It is a universal work written in a unique style and filled with a rich symbolism that serves as a tool to depict a universal message and the endurance of human race.

In this novel the sea symbolizes universe, nature and life. The main character Santiago represents any man from the past, present and future. He represents the human nature and the journey of life.

Manolin, the young protégé of Santiago represents the future and symbolizes hope and continuation of life and of the new generations. He is present only in the beginning and at the end of the story, symbolizing the circle of life.

The lions are the courage of every one of us. They represent power and strength. They remind the author as well as every reader of youth, courage, energy and dignity, the spirit of the entire human race.

Marlin, the big fish, is the worthy adversary of Santiago, but also his friend and his brother. Marlin is the brotherhood of men. A symbol of redemption, purification and transcendence.

Sharks are depicted as the destructive forces in life. The enemies in everyone's lives. The hindrance of any human attempt and endurance.

The Old Man And The Sea is a universal work that embodies the human journey throughout the ages.

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