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Trauma in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*

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Abstract

The Sun Also Rises (1926) is a war novel and the debut novel of the American acclaimed novelist and the Nobel Prize winner, Ernest Hemingway that provides readers a window to the post war effects or impacts of trauma on the individual. Through the personal or individual trauma of the narrator Jake Barnes and the other main characters in the novel Hemingway portrays the post war trauma and its impacts of alienation, aimlessness, directionless of the Lost-Generation, as well as the loss of moral and traditional values. Therefore, the qualitative method is used in this study to critically analyze the novel under the framework of the trauma theory, in order to analyze and identify the trauma and its impact on the characters.

Keywords: Trauma impacts, war trauma, individual trauma, lost-generation

Introductions

Ernest Hemingway is an American acclaimed novelist of early twenties and a Nobel Prize winner who is known as a Lost- Generation writer, as he experienced expatriation in Paris in the early 1920s. He was born in Cicero city of Chicago in a well-educated family. He first started his career as a journalist and later on he becomes a novelist. His novels are considered as the war novels as they generally discuss the themes of war and the immediate traumatic impacts of war on the individual. On the other hand, Hemingway himself was a member of the army or veteran of the WWI, and an ambulance driver in the Italian army whose own experiences of the war foregrounds the basis and themes of his novels. He wrote many novels and short stories, in which among his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *Old Man and the Sea* (1952) give him the reputation of a great novelist of 20th century American literature.

The novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) is also a war novel and the debut novel of Ernest Hemingway which it depicts the desperate, directionless, and aimlessness of the post war generation of America who are expatriated in Europe, particularly in Paris. The novel is narrated through the narration of the protagonist Jake Barnes, a World War I veteran and an American expatriate who works as a journalist in Paris. Throughout the course of novel Jake Barnes introduces the other American and English expatriates in Paris who are all aimless to their lives. He begins his narration by giving a brief sketch of his sport and literary friend Robert Cohn who is also a Jewish American expatriate in Paris, though he was not a war veteran, but he too is an expatriate. And then he introduces the character of Lady Brett Ashly a divorced English socialite and his (Jake) love. One after another he keeps on introducing new characters who are all expatriates from America and England. The novel sets first in Paris, France and then in Pamplona and Madrid in Spain. The entire plot is about the dissipated life of Jake, his friends and acquaintances as they make the rounds of bars in Paris and resorts in Spain, and spend their time in excessive drinking, because they are aimless and lost, and they just want to live their lives and pass their times. Therefore, this novel is the best example of the Lost-Generation which shows how the life really was after the WWI or being as the expatriates. Because the war survivors have lost a large chunk of something which is called hope. Lacking of hope and love, loneliness, disillusionment and alienation were common after the WWI, and people were physically and mentally destructed as a result of the war. Similarly, the main character in the novel Jake Barnes is affected physically and mentally as he loses his masculinity or masculine potency during the war. Although none of the characters are telling that they are not happy or they are suffering, but everything appears through their actions, attitudes and desires.

Thus, the war trauma or psychological trauma is the main discussion of this paper as the papers aims to analyze and identify the elements of trauma on the characters who are the survivors of the WWI.

The word trauma is originated from a Greek word "traumatize" which means wound or injury of a part of the body (Garland 9). According to Sigmund Freud in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1990), trauma is mental disturbance of the survivor of a devastating events or incidences which involves the risk of life such accidents or a war which has just ended (104). Or in Freud's texts, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body, but upon the mind, or it is the min's experience of time, self and world (Cruth 3,4).

Cathy Cruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and after intrusive phenomenon" (11). The novel *The Sun Also Rises* brings up the important issue of trauma that how it affects people and how people cope up with it throughout their lives. Therefore, trauma is shown in the novel through the traumatic experiences of different characters that how they become traumatized, what kinds of trauma they have experienced, what the effects of their trauma were and how they tried to heal from it. So the characters, particularly the protagonist Jake Barnes are suffering from post-war trauma that is psychological trauma as they become restless, sleepless, aimless, directionless, and disillusioned from the world. They are not only affected physically but mentally as well.

According to Giller, in his article "What is Psychological Trauma?" (1999), there are many different elements that cause trauma, or cause a person to become psychologically traumatized. Those elements are including a serious illness or injury, separation, verbal or emotional abuse, physical and sexual abuse, loss or abandonment, war or political violence, terrorism, being refugee and many other factors (2). Therefore, an individual or people who experienced or suffering trauma they usually smoke, drink heavily, use drugs, experience depression, and even commit suicide. The main character of the novel, Jake Barnes also suffers from post-war trauma both physically and mentally, as the war affected him and left him physically impotent and mentally frustrated and hopeless. Therefore, he excessively drinks, smokes, he spends most of his times in the bars just to cure his trauma and pass the live, or to relieve the stress from the World War I, because he is frustrated, and has no purpose of life. Although Jake and his friends travel a lot, they smoke, they drink, and they try to maintain female company, yet they are never happy and satisfied, and they are always aimless and nothing brings them joy. As a result, Jake realizes that whatever they do to be happy, yet they cannot change the reality of their live. For instance, when Robert Cohn tells to Jake that he wants to go to South America, Jake tells him that he cannot skip from his present situation, "Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn't make any difference. I have tried all that. You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There is nothing to that" (10).

On the other hand, Jake himself always has a desire for female company particularly with Lady Brett Ashly, but his physical condition or impotency causes him to physically

disconnect with her, however mentally he is always thinking about her, being with her, he even dreams of her. But the fact that he lost his masculinity and he cannot maintain sexual affair with women breaks him time and again. At the first part of the novel before he meets Lady Brett Ashly for the second time, Jake hangs out with a street walker or a female prostitute Georgette; they have dinner, they drink, they walk the streets, and they roam around the city. Eventually, Georgette wants Jake to sleep with her, but Jake refuses it.

She looked up to be kissed. She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away. Never mind. What is the matter? You sick? Said Georgette. Yes. Everybody is sick, I'm sick too. I said." (12). "what is the matter with you anyways? Asked Georgette, I got hurt in the war, I said. Oh, that dirty war. She said (14).

Similarly, Jake loves Brett, she loves Jake but they can never live together, as Brett is a sexually desirous woman who cannot stand without sex, and Jake is too impotent that cannot fulfil her sexual desires. Although Jake really loves her, as he all the time think of her, dream of her but his physical condition does not allow him to keep on his relationship with her. When Jake meets Brett for the second time in a night bar in Paris, they leave the company of friends and the two run to another bar, they drink, and they walk out the street and eventually roaming around by the taxi. When Jake kisses her, Brett refuses as she is aware of his impotency and she knows that Jake can do nothing, and she too cannot stand without sex, as she says:

Don't touch me. Please don't touch me. What is the matter? Don't you love me? Jake asks. Love you? Says Brett. I simply turn all to jelly when you touch me. Isn't there anything we ca do about it? Asks Brett. And there is not a damn thing we could do, says Jake. I don't want to go through that hell again, she said (23).

Consequently, Jake is always frustrated and hopeless as the war took his masculinity and left him impotent, and this situation causes him to suffer throughout his life. However, he sees his love of live Brett hanging with the other men including his friend Robert Cohn, but he can do nothing, and just enduring his suffering, at the same time he is feeling jealous and frustrated. Therefore, Jake is always suffering from trauma of war and psychological trauma as he become sleepless, restless, and aimless towards his life. "Couldn't we just live together Brett? I don't know I just tromper you with everybody, and you cannot stand it. I can stand it. I said. You know I love you. She said let's not talk. I'm going away from you, and them Michael is coming back" (49).

So these characters as the Lost-Generation travel a lot, they spend most of their time in night-clubs, resorts and heavily drink, they go or enter into a relationship, but all aimlessly. Jake maintain a relation with Georgette at the beginning of the novel, but only for a night drink and dine out, not as if he loves her or wants to stay with her. Similar like the other characters, Brett is a woman who married twice, her first husband died very early in the war, and she's been divorced by the second husband too. Therefore, she also becomes aimless, disillusioned and thus she involves herself into relationship with many and any man of her choice and desire. She prefers men with sexual desires, money, and their attractiveness. Although she used to love Jake, as she was taking care of Jake in the hospital in England when Jake was wounded in WWI in England. But when she realizes

that she can't fulfil her sexual desires through Jake, she moves to another men like Mike Campbell a Scottish war veteran, then to Robert Cohn and an old Greek Count Mippipopulous, and then to Pedro Romero a nineteen year old bullfighter in Pamplona Spain. So, the relationships are formed, broken and left off. Eventually she too like her generation lives a very aimless and unfulfilling life.

Robert Cohn is also a Jewish American Expatriate in Paris, who is also aimless, directionless and disillusioned like his friend Jake and other lost generation. Robert spends his entire life feeling like an outsider because of being a Jewish. At the first paragraph of the first book in the novel *Jake Barnes*, the narrator gives a brief description of Robert Cohn who is a "Middleweight boxing Champion". However, he says that Cohn doesn't like boxing, but "he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton" (3). Since he is the only Jew among the other friends or characters, he always feel lonely, alienated and inferior, even in an attempt to achieve Brett attention he tries his best, meanwhile he is ready to accept if he is not confirmed by Brett, because he knows that being a Jew he cannot be simply accepted and he feels himself as the "other" among the other characters. Despite of being Jew and discriminated by the others, he is also an aimless character however he tries to maintain happy live, but he never gain happiness, even he ends up with a cry when he realizes that Brett loves Romero and Robert's love had no emotional value for her. Therefore he has been traumatized by the feeling of alienation, separation and emotional abuse. To this end, all the characters are completely alienated from their own cultural values and they are living a very fast live. They try to have relationship, fun, drink, dance, smoke, and travel, but they are not really happy as they ought to be. Because they are disillusioned with themselves, with their surroundings therefore they are lost.

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