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## A PARADIGMATIC SHIFT IN HEMINGWAY HERO FROM ALIENATION TO INTEGRATION IN THE NOVEL *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*

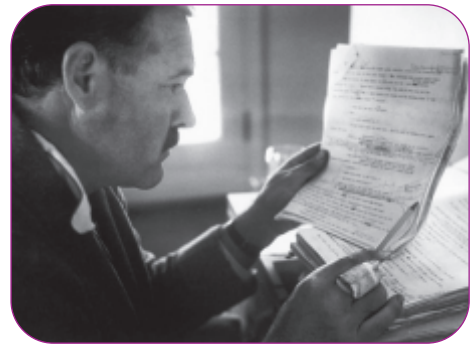
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### ABSTRACT

**E**rnest Hemingway's novel, *To Have and Have Not*, published in 1937 is a critique of capitalist economy during the period of the Depression. Unlike the earlier heroes of Hemingway, Harry Morgan, the protagonist in *To Have and Have Not* is rugged, individualistic, and has a strong belief in his muscular power. He catches fish with his boat, operating mainly from Havana and also hires his boat to the tourists. For most of the time, he is alone, does not trust anyone and highly critical of government officials. Though he has a family, his attachment to it is restricted to just a responsibility. Initially, he is a law abiding citizen, but he is cheated by a tourist due to which he loses his boat. For a living and to feed his family, he is involved in smuggling liquor. He is completely alienated and isolated by the society in which he lives. In the end, he is forced to smuggle Revolutionaries from Cuba to Florida, after they rob a bank. During this intense struggle, he tactfully kills them but he too succumbs to bullet injury. Before he dies, Harry Morgan realizes that alone man has no chance in the world for survival. This change in the philosophy of Hemingway protagonist from alienation to integration with society is remarkable in the development of Hemingway hero, which is further unfolded in his subsequent novels.



**KEYWORDS :** Hemingway hero, Depression, Alienation, Individualism, Integration.

### INTRODUCTION :

The term alienation often presents various connotations, ranging from positive to negative which can be very broad as well as inconsistent. The term 'alienation' is used in the fields as diverse as Psychiatry, Sociology, Philosophy, and literature and accordingly several exponents have tried to define the term from their point of view. According to David Oken, "It is possible to derive a useful working definition that alienation represents a sense of estrangement from other human beings, from society and its values, and from the self." (Johnson, Frank, ed. *Alienation* 84) An alienated person rejects every organized social institution and tries to find comfort in isolation. It affects the psyche of a person drastically, resulting in severe consequences in life.

In fact, alienation has been a dominant theme for a long time in literature, especially since late nineteenth century. With specific reference to American Literature, Blanche Gelfantstates, "Alienation is the inextricable theme of modern American fiction." (Johnson 95) In particular it is observed that fictional works of Ernest Hemingway, certainly one of the earliest and most influential twentieth century writers associated with modernism in literature, take note of the various characters present in those works from Nick Adams in 'Big Two-Hearted River', Harold Krebs in 'Soldier's Home', Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*, Frederick Henry in *A Farewell To Arms*, all of whom experience a sense of estrangement and alienation as a result of war, to

the iconoclastic rebel Harry Morgan in *To Have and Have Not*, it can be seen how intensely the theme of alienation permeates throughout.

In *To Have and Have Not*, the central character, Harry Morgan is the epitome of the loner or the rugged individual who needs no one and trusts no one but himself. Unlike Jake Barnes, who at least may have at times found consolation in his group of bohemian friends, or Frederick Henry, who at least found temporary joy and comfort in his love for Catherine Barkley, but Harry Morgan aside from the fact that he has a wife and family, has no one with whom to share his sense of isolation and alienation. To be sure, Harry Morgan is concerned with economic survival on day-to-day basis. There are no grand schemes or plans or fiestas or great love affairs in Harry Morgan's existence. Unlike Hemingway's later hero Roberto Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Harry is not committed to any idealism but of his own. If anything, from time to time in the novel, Harry is world-weary, distrustful of politicians and other high government officials, and weary of the rich. As Earl Rovit suggests, the novel "marks a clear recantation of the 'separate peace'". (71)

Harry's individualism clearly places him on the outside of society, whether established or revolutionary. He can relate to neither world, as is evident in the opening scene of the novel during which he refuses to help the Cuban revolutionaries because of his own self-interest. As Harry says to one of them, "I may like living with the boat. If I lose her I lose my living" (Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not*, 1937, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Rpt 1966, p.4) (All subsequent references from the novel are from this edition only).

As Delbert Wylder notes, "Harry sees everyone through his own selfishly individualistic views of the world. He has no awareness of others and their feelings". (100) Of course, it must be stated at the outset that Harry takes care of his wife Marie and their daughters but he considers it as a responsibility rather than love and affection. Yet for the most part, both his outer life and his actions in the novel do not include them. They remain on the edge of peripheral story throughout. Only at the end the narrative focuses on his wife Marie and that too only after the death of Harry. Only occasionally Harry is depicted as staying at home. Most of the times, he is either at sea or in a bar or involved in some shady business deals, however reluctant on his part. In fact, at one point in the novel Harry says, "What chances have I to enjoy my home?" (127)

Perhaps one way clearly to understand the nature of Harry Morgan's alienation from anyone and anything is, to focus on his world and the people who inhabit in it. For one thing, of all the people he knows, it is at least expected that Harry expresses some kind of warmth and affection for his loyal, albeit constantly drunken friend Eddy. Yet, towards Eddy, Harry is abusive, insulting, nasty, and contemptuous. It would appear that Harry is totally incapable of feeling the most common human emotions. In fact, Harry seems estranged and alienated from emotions as a whole, as in the instance when his plans do not succeed during an illegal liquor smuggling escapade. During that incident, Harry's indifference to suffering is revealed when his wounded mate angrily exclaims, "You ain't human ... You ain't got human feelings." (86) The same view of him is also expressed by one of Harry's associates, Albert, when he says, "... since he was a boy he never had no pity for nobody. But he never had pity for himself either." (98)

In Delbert Wylder's view, Harry's callous disregard is equal to that of Captain Ahab. Wylder says, "In his most intense moments, Harry reminds us of a modern Captain Ahab... Harry Morgan has no wish to understand. He wishes merely to act, and to think that he acts independently of those around him. Nor is he concerned with the laws or for the rights of others... The self-pride he feels is foundation of his loneliness." (102-103) Indeed, Harry's preference to be alone is also expressed when he considers illegally transporting the Cubans. "It would be better alone, anything is better alone, but I don't think I can handle it alone. It would be much better alone." (105) It shows that Harry is not a part of any group in society. Rather, he is a man alone, an outsider, despising others and even despised by them also.

To understand his complete alienation, it is critical to analyze Harry's relationship with the people who he contacts regularly for his profession and otherwise. To begin with, there are the Cuban revolutionaries, who are politically alienated from the established form of government, and seek to overthrow it. As such, they will resort to any measure, including murder in order to affect a revolution. As one of the young revolutionaries tells Harry: "We are the true revolutionary party ... We want to do away with all the old politicians, with all the American imperialism that strangled us, with the tyranny of the army. We want to start clean and give every man

a chance". (166) Strangely enough, the revolutionary is not only alienated from his country but from the very means that can possibly bring about the necessary change he dreams worth fighting for.

Then there are the people that Harry has a somewhat personal connection with, such as Eddy, Bee-Lips, and Albert. With respect to Eddy, he is a drunkard with no visible means of support other than helping others boats, in fact mostly Harry's and has no visible connection with anyone or any aspect of society. Eddy's world is one of bars and endless days and nights of drunken reverie. No one seems to have much regard for him except for Harry.

As for Bee-Lips, he is a lawyer who operates outside of conventional justice and legalities. If anything, Bee-Lips, who at various times arranges illegal documents for Harry through profitable exploits? But Harry, in turn, despises him for his lack of respect to law of the land. Indeed, he is the outcast lawyer, trying to make a living at anything but practicing honestly as per law. In a sense, then, Bee-Lips is estranged from pursuing his profession of law since he spends most of the time trying to manage various deals that are out outside the law, rather than within. As Albert says of him, "I saw Bee-Lips, the lawyer, look at him, but he is so crooked with himself that he's always more pleased if people aren't telling the truth." (102)

Albert represents the honest working men of the Depression period. He cannot support himself and his family, even though he has a job as a ditch-digger. So, he too is on the outside of society. Further, he is disenchanted with the way things are going in his country. Unlike the revolutionaries and others, Albert is a victim in the battle between the Haves and Have-Nots, which is the title of the book and of society in general. In the novel, alienation operates on both the individual and social plane. As the title clearly indicates, the world is composed of the Haves and Have-Nots, and clearly the characters in the novel fall into either one of the two groups of the people. Economic distress and expediency as well as political resentment and disenchantment are present at every point throughout the novel.

If viewed from the context of a typical proletarian novel prominent in 1930's, Harry Morgan is a critic of society who isolates himself from it, is conscious and both scornful of powerful government officials who are insensitive to the needs of the average working men, as indicated by the confiscation of Harry's boat, his only source of income, and also of unscrupulous businessmen who use their political and economic strength for various exploitative purposes. The wealthy, be they fishermen or businessmen, are not presented in romantic terms at all, possibly because a man who is on the outside, or a Have-Not, like Harry, would hardly view the Haves in admirable terms.

Though Harry Morgan is aware of the fact that something is desperately wrong with a society in which millions are unemployed and on the verge of starving, while a select few enjoy life as if nothing of dire concern is happening to nearly everyone else. It is apparent in his discussion with Albert, during which Harry reaffirms his need to look out for himself. Harry says, "Look at me, I used to make thirty-five dollars a day right through the season taking people out fishing. Now I got shot and lost an arm, and my boat ... But let me tell you, my kids ain't going to have their bellies hurt and I ain't going to dig fewer for the government for less money than will feed them. I don't know who makes the laws but I know there ain't no law that you got to go hungry." (96-97) Harry is truly disgusted with the callous and exploitative attitude of government machinery. This in turn makes him drive towards violent behavior.

At this point, in order to obtain a clear and accurate understanding of the relationship of Harry Morgan to the earlier Hemingway protagonists, and of *To Have and Have Not*, to both earlier and later works, it is helpful to glance at what was going on in Hemingway's own life in the late 1930's, and how circumstances were going to affect both his theme and nature of the protagonists, whether he be designated hero or anti-hero.

Like Harry, Hemingway too was sore at certain abuses in the Depression era society of America. In fact, in 1935 he wrote an article for *The New Masses*, angrily denouncing what appeared to be governmental bureaucratic negligence as the cause for the deaths of untold numbers of war veterans in a hurricane while working on government projects on the Florida peninsula. The title of the article was, "Who Murdered the Vets?" It clearly shows that there was a shift in Hemingway's philosophy where he believed that individual code of a man can make or break him. He was under the impression that everyman is alone. However, soon he realizes that the commitment of an individual is nothing but commitment to society. As Anthony Burgess suggests, "The

big theme of early Hemingway was the possibility of man working out his salvation alone, concluding in a 'separate peace', but the Hemingway of the late thirties seems now not to be too sure of this philosophy". (72)

Indeed, Philip Young also expresses the same opinion when he says, "What had happened was a revolution in Hemingway of equal importance to the one Nick undergone when he renounced society which was responsible for the pious slaughter of the First World War. By 1937 Ernest Hemingway had re-embraced society he had quit some twenty years before." (99) Another reason why Hemingway tried to mingle with society may be that the criticism leveled against him. Some contemporaries of him opined that he was much indulged in alienation rather than writing something on society. The last words uttered by Harry Morgan before his death give strength to the above opinion. After Harry was shot in his belly by one of the revolutionaries, he fights courageously and kills all the revolutionaries. He succumbs to the wounds but realizes the most important lesson he has learnt when he says, "No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance." (155)

However, some critics tend to disagree, either because they believe, like Delbert Wylder that "in the final analysis, Harry is not alone nor has he even been. He is a man who chooses to think he is operating alone and who refuses to recognize that he is dependent on others," (104) or like Sheridan Baker who thinks that the words and the man are incongruous, "Morgan's dying words do not fit. Probable enough, moving enough, Morgan's death nevertheless gives us a message... Instead of 'a man alone has no chance,' we want the uselessness of Morgan's single-handed and single-minded integrity to illuminate its glory. We want another little bull-fighter in another sorry context, beaten but undefeated." (104) Another critic, Robert Weeks argues that though the novel has many defects, Hemingway's portrayal of the hero and the sudden change in his style of presentation coupled with the change in philosophy dawns the new era in the evolution of his hero. He observes, "For more than ten years Hemingway had worked at perfecting a detached ironical style that would dramatize man's isolation in a blind universe and would convey through its terseness the belief that there is no remedy for man's condition but fortitude. As one might expect it was no easy matter suddenly to enlist that style in the service of collective action for social justice." (122-123)

Nevertheless, despite the critical reaction to the possible inconsistency between Harry Morgan's actions and his dying words, the next Hemingway hero, Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), will be actively working for a social cause. As Wylder hints, "It is hardly any distance at all from 'a man alone ain't got no ... chance' to 'No man is an island, intireof itselfe'." (103) If that is so, there is hardly any distance from alienation to re-integration with his fellow men and the world for the Hemingway hero in the later period after *To Have and Have Not*. It seems Carlos Baker has provided a sound and sensible answer for the sudden shift in the Hemingway protagonists from alienation to integration. As Baker writes, "... it was summarized in the dying words of Harry Morgan, who like Ernest has tried to stand by himself but was now less than certain that 'one man alone' could survive in such a world as this. May be strength or renewal of strength, could be gained only through some kind of group action." (246) To be sure, Hemingway's next novel has its hero a man working for the united Loyalist front in the Spanish Civil War.

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