

# Different Phases of Nature and Development of Short Story of Ernest Hemingway

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## **Abstract**

Since the present research paper is related to the short stories of a great American writer, Ernest Hemingway, it would be appropriate to discuss briefly the nature of short story and the development of short story. In spite of the fact that the beginnings of the early prototypes of short story can be traced back to prehistoric times, the fact remains that it emerged as an independent literary genre only in the nineteenth century. The emergence of the short story in the nineteenth century was neither sudden nor dramatic. It was rather the culmination of a process which had started when man had begun to use the medium of the spoken word as a means of communication. Over a vast period of time the short story gradually developed not only in technique but in truth and insight.

**Key Words:** Culmination, Communication, Potentiality

## **INTRODUCTION**

The short stories received recognition as a literary genre only after Edgar Allan Poe tried to define and delimit it. But no critic of Henry James' stature has given serious thought to the theoretical aspects of short story writing, or paid the kind of attention that he bestowed on the novel to eliviate it to an artistic form of great potentiality. Short story nevertheless comes to occupy an important place in the twentieth century literature on account of its extreme flexibility, its ability to deal with the complexities of life in a relatively smaller space, at the same time lending to the subject matter an intensity of imaginative perception combined with clever creative manipulation within the well-defined limits.

Edgar Allan Poe, who has been justifiably called by many the father of the modern short story, tries to theorize on the short story as a genre. Frank O'Connor defines the short story in terms of subject matter and holds that a short story deals with lonely individuals and submerged population groups. But the fact of the matter is that it can not be defined solely in terms of closeness of texture, unity of effect and compactness. The statement that a short story is a glimpse through, though satisfactory, does not really take the reader very far. Although it is possible that it may aim to provide a glimpse into the mastery of life, a short story may also describe an event, portray some aspect of character, capture a mood, develop an idea, present a scene, or offer a picture at some length.

Before 1850 Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe and Hawthorne had firmly established the short story as a type in American literature. The term 'modern short story' has a precise meaning. It refers to fictional stories written primarily as works of art and usually published

in journals, newspapers and magazines over the last two hundred years. The modern short story is more than just a story that is short. Usually short stories can be digested in a single sitting. Inevitably, the short story is compared, favourably or otherwise, with the novel. The first important step towards the understanding of the exclusive nature of the short story will be to differentiate it from other prose narratives, particularly the novel and the novella with which it may often be confused. For instance, it is very difficult to say that Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness is a short story, a novel or a novella. Same is the case with Henry James' The Turn of the Screw and Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea. The main difference between a short story and a novel in the words of Henry James is that a novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. It aims at presenting life in all its totality and complexity. On the other hand, a short story captures the intensity of a passing moment's experience and tries to make an integral part of our feeling and thinking processes. Whereas in a novel one may find many moods, moments and various shades of life experience, and one may move from "epiphany to epiphany, in a short story one frequently sees only one such privileged moment. It is not possible for a short story to have many themes, many complex issues, many pivots of interest, many sub-plots and parallel narratives. It has to have generally one theme, one situation, receiving one-pointed concentration and adherence to the main line of development and exploration of that theme. On the other hand, a novelist is always free to raise an extremely complicated superstructure on human experience.

The career of Ernest Hemingway as a short story writer falls into six distinct phases and it is necessary to relate them to understand Hemingway's views about individual human being and its relation with society. The first phase started with the publication of In Our Time (1925). It is a phase that seeks to define the problem of individual in the post war years. In most of the stories and vignettes the protagonist is a young man and in a number of stories he is called Nick Adams. Some stories deal with the experience of a young boy in the American Midwest, intended to give comprehensiveness to the portrayal of the hero. Hemingway projects a part of his own personality into his protagonists and tries to view the world very much as he himself saw it. Some stories deal with war and other with a young man coming back after participating in the war. After returning from war this young man becomes an antagonist to society because of his tormented experiences of war. Then there arises a conflict between his individual thinking or perception and society. He finds himself unable to follow the norms of society. He wants to remain alienate from society. He finds himself lonely among crowd. Thus he is not able to cope with the traditions and customs of society. The stories, dealing with this torment situation caused by war, depict the destruction and suffering in modern mechanized warfare and its inhuman nature, leading to the loss of faith in the established values and one find the wounded protagonist making his "separate peace." Stories like Soldier's Home and Big Two-Hearted River depict the alienated protagonist, trying desperately to recover from the traumatic experience of war. Some miniatures deal with bullfighting which plays an important part in Hemingway's value determination. A few stories also deal with man-woman relationship. Thus, in his earliest stories Hemingway started shaping his hero, whom he further developed in subsequent stories and in his novels.

The second phase of his short fiction falls between 1926 and 1927 when Hemingway wrote fourteen short stories which he collected under the title Men Without Women (1927). These stories indicate that Hemingway's world was a male-dominated world. Man-woman relationship in a strife-ridden world appeared to be uppermost in Hemingway's mind during the period he wrote Men Without Women. He portrays the failure of love and the failure of relationship in these short stories. The stories like "Hills Like White Elephants" and "Cat in the Rain" concentrate attention on man in a state of alienation, a state in which there is constant tension between his emotions and his manly inspirations. Some stories like "The Undefeated", "Fifty Grand", "In Another Country" and "The Killers" deal with Hemingway's ethos. In the first two of these, the protagonists are ageing professionals, a bullfighter and a boxer respectively. In all these stories, Hemingway puts his protagonists in situations when they have to rely completely on their own inner resources and in this way brings out their character.

During the third phase Hemingway wrote fourteen stories, collected in Winner Take Nothing (1933). The dominant mood of these stories is one of despair and alienation especially reflected in stories like "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" and "The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio". The bullfight, like hunting, boxing and deep sea fishing is important as an avenue where the Hemingway protagonist can put to test his courage and heroism after being disillusioned by modern mechanized warfare which denied him this opportunity. It is through these sports that Hemingway dramatizes the cherished values of courage and endurance with dignity.

The fourth phase of his short fiction begins and ends in 1936, in which Hemingway published three longer stories, "The Capital of the World", "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber". In these stories, He depicts some cherished human values. The last two of these are stories of redemption. Harry, a writer in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", who had wasted his talent as a writer by giving himself up to an easy life, struggles to redeem himself moments before his death. In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber", the protagonist, Francis Macomber, who has lived a life of cowardice and female domination, redeems himself in Africa while hunting buffalo by conquering his fear and cowardice. In short, Hemingway, in these stories, brings out his concept of man and the values that should inspire him.

The dominant theme of the stories of the fifth phase was war, and they were all set in Spain during the Civil War, which Hemingway had then recently covered as a journalist. These Spanish Civil War Stories, like the stories resulting from his experience in the First World War, again reflect Hemingway's anti-war sentiments. Here, the Hemingway protagonist rises to the call of duty and has a passionate commitment to the cause of liberty, but the artists in him almost always recoils at the horrors and sufferings of war.

The sixth phase consists of a novella The Old Man and the Sea (1952) and some insignificant short stories. It represents Hemingway's quest for dignity, values and relationships in human life. It illustrates the beauty of courage and forbearance in man. It has been rightly pointed out that the story of the novella represents universal emblems of the 'Story of Man'.

It would be relevant to point out here that one of the factors which determined Hemingway's themes and techniques in his short stories was his strong reaction to the excessively mental attitude towards human existence. The supremacy of mind, intellect and reason over feelings, the domination of blood by mind was anathema to Hemingway.

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