

HEMINGWAY'S EXPATRIATE NATIONALISM IN HIS NOVELS

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Abstract

Ernest Hemingway rendered a true portrayal of the inter-war period in the angle of disillusionment and disintegration. Hemingway presented the confusion of a modern man in the world where he is reduced to a mechanism. His style was simple and unconventional on the problems of war and death. His novels had themes which presented an interpretation of life symbolically. Hemingway was more of a lost generation writer. The writers portrayed the loss caused by First World War in all spheres of human life'. The portrayals also reveal the horror, fear and the uselessness of human existence. Hemingway echoed the frustrations like others writers but with a distinctly different philosophy of life in terms of metaphysical relationship of man and nature

Key words: Hemingway, war period, American writer, First World War, National Identity

Perspectives Of Place, Exile, And Identity

Places nourish writers. For Hemingway, the stimulation of cultural displacement and the rich inter contextual of expatriation were creative wells from which he drew plots, characters, and narrative structure. As places only fully exist in the mind's eye, we might begin this discussion of place, exile, and identity through a study of the structures that define a home-nation or collectivity – factors integral to the formation of patriotism – and through these foundations, we might better perceive the consequences of separation from origins as portrayed in Hemingway's novels (and his life). In some sense, in order for a person to be an expatriate he or she must first be a patriot – and this point leads to a series of questions: what social frameworks guide our collective sentiments? What did it mean, for instance, for Hemingway to be “an American”? Moreover, as foreignness defined the man's adult life, we might inquire further about what transpires psychologically, culturally, and socio-linguistically when a person moves away from their native community. What if this absence is permanent, a brief one-time venture, or a series of absences connected by trips home? What if the exile lives among compatriots? Or resides in isolation?

The place of self

Our sense of self is bound to the places where we have important experiences. Thus the schematics of place – how we organize the image of a space in our minds – is a fitting point to begin, as how we interpret these experiences is foundational to the constructs that encompass our notions of “home” or “abroad”. It seems there are both individual and collective influences that shape how we perceive surroundings. From an individual perspective (in addition to physical exposure to

geographic and climate conditions), social encounters might drive our perceptions of a space. Moreover, the place-perceptions of others, communicated to us through images and narratives of their opinions, also help form our mental organization of a given space. An image of a city, town, or country, then, derives “from a fusion of perceptions occurring on several levels”, explains J. Gerald Kennedy, so that an “existential relation to place ... may be formed by a form of ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’”. [J. Gerald Kennedy, *Imagining Paris: Writing, Exile, and American Identity*, New Haven: CT, 1993, 6]. Insideness is a sense of orientation, familiarity, or social identification, while outsideness might include a feeling of exclusion. In this way private experience and external projections converge, shaping our notions of a place – though these images at times may contradict one another.

“This association seems to constitute”, observes Edward Relph, “cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world”. [Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, London, 1976, 43]. Similarly, Kennedy adds, “we know ourselves principally through the attachments we form to a place”. [Kennedy, *Imagining Paris*, 8] These associations in a sense become our notions of being, constructing our self-awareness. In this way, our perceptions of existence are inextricably linked to the places where we realize our lives. These interlaces form the metaphoric maps of identity: “The mind converts perceptions of place into images that are symbolic, schematic and functional.” [Ibid., 22] Ultimately, as Yi Fu Tuan notes, we are oriented to a place, a time, a background, and a foundation of value by our birth and upbringing – important to note that these are events beyond our control – the implications of which affect our notions of every place we go. [Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: MN, 1977, 6-12]

Constructing National Identity

In a letter from Oak Park, Illinois, to James Gamble in 1919, just after returning home from wartime Italy, Ernest Hemingway noted that he was “patriotic and willing to die for this great and glorious nation. But I hate like the deuce to live in it”. [Hemingway, *Selected Letters*, 21] Hemingway’s relationship with the conservative environment of his youth became more complicated following his first experience in Europe, eventually leading to a semi-permanent separation from America that began in 1921. Despite that, throughout his life – when speaking in English⁹ – Hemingway understood himself as “an American above anything else”. [10 Quoted in Aaron E. Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway: A Personal Memoir*, New York, 1966, 243] Even decades after the author had abandoned his nation of origin as a resident, some of his roots and expressions of self remained there, suggesting cultural ties to a native community are indeed powerful even when one is separated from them. To this end, it seems a predisposition to associate oneself with a collectivity, a safety-in-numbers concept, is an instinctive human trait. However, as I will discuss, in the print-capitalist period the makeup of these groups is often constructed through paradigms of social and cultural markers – boundaries that prescribe characteristics of group members.

As these cultural frontiers are at times fabricated and often disseminated without regard to the actual characteristics of a populace, we might closely examine the composition of constructs that converge as the idea of an “American” (and other such groupings) in order to perceive how such an external directive might have shaped Ernest Hemingway’s sense of collective identity. This subsection, then, examines the composition of nations and other collectivities, in order to discern their

influence on individuals that exist isolated within their limits. While this discussion is directed toward expressions

Hemingway uttered about his own collective identity – in particular, to the manner in which he employed the word “American” (as adjective or noun) – the parameters of collectivities themselves indeed appear more complex than what linguistic and cultural inquiry on “nations” may offer. Supra and subnational identity paradigms, which have received close critical attention in recent years, are also inherent to this discussion. Many scholars have noted [11 Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State*, Salt Lake City: UT, 2007, and Paul T. Kennedy and Victor Roudometof’s *Communities Across Borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures*, New York, 2002] that the nation-state is not always an accurate modus of inquiry on the boundaries of collective groups (as they exist in cultural, political, linguistic, and other forum-projections). Nonetheless, both the terms “nation” and “American” in themselves apply here, because Hemingway often employed them to describe himself. The seed of this dialogue, then, is to flesh out the socio-cultural influences that compose the markers of Hemingway’s collective identity of origin, which is one that he shares with many of his protagonists.

Cultural space and Constructing Settler-American identity

Which culture is that? Boston? New York? Savannah? New Orleans? Denver? Los Angeles? I grew up on the Mexican border (on the Texas side). My culture was eating tacos and enchiladas, listening to both Mexican and American music, and speaking Tex-Mex (a combination of English and Spanish). [23 Jacob Hornberger, “Immigration Should not be Restricted”, in Mary Williams, *Immigration: Opposing Viewpoints*, Farmington Hills: MI, 2004, 164]. In order to appropriately discuss the dimensions of what it meant to be an American in the Oak Park of Ernest Hemingway’s youth and indeed throughout his life (1899-1961), we might first historicize the political developments of the diverse communities within the Midwestern American continental space, as they relate to governance, cultural control, political rights, and self-determination of the (non)controlling population demographics. Upon Hemingway’s birth in 1899, much of the continent, including Illinois, was being populated by migrants who were often in search of land from the Homestead Act (1862-1986). This legislation offered free tracts in exchange for metropolitan settlement and was accompanied by a robust propaganda campaign, one that used state means, such as postage stamps, images on currency, national hymns and seals, to systematize the somewhat new concept of an “American”.

In the decades following the Guadalupe Hidalgo seizure, colonists implemented their language, political systems, holidays and sports, and created the image of a Southwestern citizen in the likeness of a settler. The “Great Seal” of Arizona, for instance, has George Warren, a man from Massachusetts, holding a shovel and pickaxe; the “territory seal” is Warren with a hoe. The metropolitan colonization included repeated legislative attempts to implement English; nonetheless, the results were (and continue to be) mixed. In 1911 fewer than 10% of New Mexicans could speak English (today 43% of residents – excluding undocumented members of the community – prefer English). [29 Jonathan Arac, “Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and Huckleberry Finn”, in Donald

Pease, *National Identity and Post American Narratives*, Durham: NC, 1998, 17] In “Crossing National and Creating Cultural Borders”, Thomas Weaver points out that prior to becoming a state in 1912, Arizona’s political affiliation with the US was delayed due to “the high ‘Mexican population,’ which was considered not capable of citizenship”.

Ernest Hemingway was born into a society dominated by these settler-American images – visual, textual, and narrative – fictions that framed and, to a certain extent, organized the products of his imagination. Hemingway’s home life and community in Oak Park would have reinforced the historiographic framework presenting primordial settler narratives as fact, a process which defined rights for certain settler-peoples and expelled, ignored, or otherwise eliminated others. (“Others” might not recognize settler-American cultural and political claims in spite of residing in the same geographic area prior to, during, or after the acquisition of the space.) Within these narratives, settler-Americans are often considered indigenous to any region of the continent, responsible to none for invasion, conquest, or cultural cleansing. Such a providential presence of settlers in the continental space is prominent in Hemingway’s short stories with Native American characters.

In “Indian Camp”, “Fathers and Sons”, and “Ten Indians”, for instance, Native Americans are paradoxically treated as cultural others in Michigan, while the settler-Americans act in superior roles, free to practice medicine, to hunt, and to pass judgment (concerning suicide, sex, and alcohol) on Native American behavior. This process isolates the citizenry, to a certain extent, within spaces that lack extra-systemic perspectives of the same historical track. Notably, Noam Chomsky has remarked that “Our system isolates ... it’s very difficult to have ideas”.^[31] Ernest Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa*, New York, 1935, 22] In the literature and visual art from a populace within such isolation, we might expect to encounter settler-norms (expressed through language, behavior, and morality) enunciated, reshaped, and reinterpreted through creative work. In this vein, we might also take a more cultural perspective on the projections of American nationality in Hemingway’s era, in order to orient the discussion toward the novels he would eventually write. Some critics have discussed the role of literary texts in the nation-building process of the United States. Jonathan Arac’s essay, “Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and Huckleberry Finn”, for instance, notes how we might read Twain’s famous novelistic effort as an artistic achievement in the nationalist mode.

We might argue that the distinctness of Hillerman’s experience as a boy and young man – when compared to Hemingway – demonstrates that exposure to institutional definitions are indeed influential in collective sentiment, as expressed through art later in life. Moreover, in a 1958 letter to his son Patrick, Hemingway notes that his great grandfather had settled in Iowa when it was “still over run [sic] with Indians”.³⁶ Possible negative connotations in the verb “over run” together with a temporal clarifier (“still”), imply that Hemingway likely understood Native American presence in the Midwest as a phase in European dominance of the continent, not a fraternal bond, as did Hillerman. In this sense, one’s communal associations can be somewhat plastic – if the actor experiences other spheres of value first-hand, before physiological maturity.

Exile- Immigration, separation, distance

All of us in Montparnasse, we knew in our hearts we would soon have to go home. No, not Ernest. Could he ever really go home? Or for him, committed as he was to the romantic enlargement of himself, did there have to be one adventure after another, until finally there was no home?[37 Morley Callaghan, *That Summer in Paris*, Toronto, 1963, 177]. Some texts on the subject of expatriation note difficulties of life abroad for artists, but the scholarship diverges to some extent on how displacement influences creative invention, particularly in the case of writers. Some assert that foreignness is inspiring; others believe it can be destructive; and some declare that expatriation is useless because while abroad, authors do not replace native experience with sufficient depth. Linda Nochlin, for example, contends that for a writer, distance from a native language is “devastating” as it “depriv[es] the subject of access to the living world”.[38 Linda Nochlin, “Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation”, *Poetics Today*, XVII/3 (Autumn 1996), 317, Linda Nochlin, “Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation”, *Poetics Today*, XVII/3 (Autumn 1996), 317, Ewa W. Thompson, “The Writer in Exile: The Good Years”, *The Slavic and Eastern European Journal*, XXXIII/4 (Winter 1989), 499] Terry Caesar, though, comments that an “experience of some primal condition of homelessness”, which a writer would find in a self-imposed exile, “has never finally offered sufficient reason to go abroad”.[39 Terry Caesar, *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing*, Athens: GA, 1995, 7,]

Similarly, in the near-canonical Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, Philip Young remarks that “we can never know precisely what [Hemingway] learned abroad, we do know that he did not learn much of great significance there that was not already available to him in his own country”.⁴⁰ However, recent studies of the psychology of creativity contend that expatriation itself can improve artistic productivity, and our survey of this material will broaden the scope of inquiry of Hemingway’s own foreign creation.

Conclusion

The basic feelings of generation who feel alienated or isolated in society are themes in Hemingway’s novels. Krebs is not greeted with the fervor others who return previously. He is treated more as an outcast, not a hero. Though it was his home, he was not welcome there. Krebs lied about his war experiences assuming nobody would listen to his stories. He also assumed other officers would have told overly dramatic stories about the war. Krebs knowingly lied, since he felt lost with himself and had a bitter sense towards the war, thus portraying alienation. Krebs in the novel sleeps late and keeps watching girls from his front porch. His role is passive observation instead of active participation. Whether Krebs role of passiveness is voluntary or involuntary is not implied by Hemingway. Though a war hero he feels aligned from society and falls into a passive state, falling from the hero status.

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