E.M. Hemingway (1899-1961) attracted the attention of his readers by his pre-occupation in his works with violence. Violence, of which he had first-hand experience, had a peculiar fascination for him, and in almost all his novels and short stories there is a direct or indirect reference to it. Even his love stories, which are of great descriptive power and beauty, have violence as their substratum even in situations where everything apparently goes well it lurks in the background. Many of his novels read as eye witness accounts of human brutality. In his masterpiece, The Old Man and the Sea, it is the theme of violence that accounts for its greatness. I have traced the development of the theme of violence in Hemingway's novels, and its significance for his art.

The centre of Hemingway's World is "nada" a Spanish word used in one of his short stories meaning "nothingness." In such a world "things do not grow and bear fruit." They are broken into pieces sooner or later. Man with all his claims to greatness is only the quintessence of dust trampled upon by implacable forces beyond his control; like a trapped animal he is involved in a
frenzied but helpless struggle. Such a world, however, was not an invention of Hemingway; it was the world he inherited from his intellectual forbears in Europe. Darwin's *Origin of Species* published in the nineteenth century and the subsequent development of natural sciences had shaken the roots of man's faith in God and in His benevolence. In Hemingway's life-time World War I and the disillusionment it brought in its wake completely knocked off the ground from underneath the feet of sensitive intellectuals. He was not alone in using this violence-ridden world as raw material for his art.

His first significant collection of short stories *In Our Time* was published in 1925 (two years after *Three Stories and Ten Poems*). Its title was taken from the prayer: "Give us peace in our time O Lord." But the most striking thing about these stories is that there is no peace in life.

I have discussed *In Our Time* (1925) with the purpose of studying the effect of violence on the consciousness of a boy. The growth of this boy in the stories is in fact the growth of the Hemingway hero whose pattern of behaviour becomes perfectly intelligible in his consistent development.
A detailed study of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is its sequel. There are two stories in this novel which run parallel to each other — those of war and love. They both end tragically leaving behind a sense of futility. Violence destroys human happiness in both and forms a sombre background to the grim development of an episodic plot which provides a fuller and better understanding of Hemingway's attitude to this recurrent theme.

The disillusionment that followed World War I was perhaps a traumatic experience. The world around the saddened intellectuals appeared to be a shelterless wasteland in more than one sense. Hemingway, like his illustrious contemporaries, lived through the debacle and wrote about it in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).

*The Sun Also Rises* gave currency to what Gertrude Stein called a "lost generation." In Hemingway's scheme of things the "lost generation" consisted of men who had signed a "separate peace" and were not concerned with what was happening in the world. They were mostly injured men, either physically or mentally, and were almost hedonists.
without any purpose in life. Violence overshadowed their course of action in life and lurked in the background even when they seemed apparently to be out of it.

Everything Hemingway wrote before 1940 reflected a world in conflict and with this his heroes had little or no sympathy. They were mostly caught in a vicious circle and could escape from it only after having been maimed. In To Have and Have not (1937) Hemingway glimpsed the truth that no man had a chance alone. In For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940) he made a deviation from his characteristic attitude and returned, as it were, to society and one's commitments to it. This novel, considered by many as Hemingway's masterpiece, embodies his preoccupation with violence but in a vastly different sense.

The last chapter has been devoted mainly to a study of The Old Man and the Sea (1952). An effort has been made to analyse the elements which made the novel one of the great ones in the twentieth century. Violence still lingers in a story of great human endeavour which had made man supreme in the world. Through the ages man had tried to impose himself on nature, fought against nature in order to assert and affirm his own existence, and painfully
and slowly built the world as we find it. In this fight he is not always victorious but the heroic struggle against the odds is in itself a kind of victory. Violence, as reflected in this novel, has existential overtones.

I hope to show that the theme of violence as used by Hemingway is a measure of his artistic greatness, not only because, with its consistent and developing pattern, it makes for the underlying unity of his works (similar to what Eliot has seen in the works of Shakespeare) but also because it makes for the artistic intensification and resonance of these works. Violence is both a central theme and an artistic device in Hemingway.

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