

Narrative Technique Of Earnest Hemingway In His Short Stories

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Abstract :

Reacting against the overblown, rhetorical, and often bombastic narrative techniques of his predecessors, Hemingway spent considerable time as a young man working to perfect the spare form of narration, dialogue, and description that became the hallmark of his fiction.

Keywords : Narrative technique, Point of View and Expression Of Thought

Narrative technique is the logical sequence of events presented to the readers in a way that enables the author to show his talent in conveying the themes which are embodied within the literary work whether it is a novel or a short story. It's essential for writer to choose the point of view that contains the perspective from which an author chooses to tell the story. It determines which characters' thoughts and feelings are accessible to the reader. For example, in the third person omniscient point of view, the narrator of the story is not a character within the story but an authoritative figure to present the events, and who is able to access the thoughts and feelings of all the characters. Second, is the first person limited point of view, where the reader focuses on a single character and only has access to this person's thoughts and feelings. In the first person point of view, the narrator is a character in the story who directly relates his experiences. Third, is the second person point of view, where the narrator directly addresses a "you," the reader, sharing what he or she does, feels and thinks.

Hence Narrative technique means the methods and devices writers use to tell their stories, whether in works of literature, film, theater or even oral stories or other media. Many techniques work upon specific uses of phrases, punctuation or exaggerations of description, but nearly every storyteller, regardless of genre or style employs a few foundational techniques, such as point of view, setting, symbolism and others.”¹

What distinguishes Hemingway both from his predecessors and from his contemporaries, however, is the theory he produces to deal with the challenge of spatial limitation which every short story writer has to face: how can he say more than his space actually allows him to say? The principle of the iceberg, as the theory is called by Hemingway, leaves distinctive imprints on his short stories: a clipped, spare style, naturalistic presentation of actions and observations, heavy reliance on dramatic dialogue, and a pattern of

connection extending backwards and forwards between the various stories. He expressed his belief and described his own method in a passage in *Death in the Afternoon*: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer has stated them." Following this dictum, Hemingway constructed stories that sometimes make readers feel as if they are unseen auditors at some closet drama, or silent observers at intimate moments in the lives of characters.

The *Butterfly and the Tank* occurs in three pages and discusses the difficulties of the Spanish Civil war. This story takes place in wartime settings and represents a situation that happened to the narrator that leads to an accident. The events are during the Spanish civil war, when the narrator stops at a bar for a drink.

"On this evening I was walking home from the censorship office to the Florida Hotel and it was raining. So about halfway home I got sick of the rain and stopped into Chicote's for a quick one. It was the second winter of shelling in the siege of Madrid and everything was short including tobacco and people's tempers and you were a little hungry all the time and would become suddenly and unreasonably irritated at things you could do nothing about such as the weather. I should have gone on home"²

Hemingway continues in using the first person narration to convey a series of events which makes the reader sympathize with the characters and the storyline as if he or she were in that place. The narrator in the short story, "*The Butterfly and the Tank*," is the central figure of the whole story. The narrative technique employed in the story shows how the narrator-writer uses the literary technique as a metaphor to give his story credibility and excitement. In this respect, Johnston (1989) discusses the dilemma of the narrator in Hemingway's *The Butterfly and the Tank* and argues on the narrative technique employed by Hemingway in this story and the ways in which the metaphor of the butterfly and the tank relate to the dead civilian and the narrator-writer; he observes that the writer and the innocent civilian were casualties of war. Hemingway gives the readers two contrasted portraits which have taken place during the war, the contrast between the time of war and the time of peace. The mood was depressed under the fear of death, no one has the desire to laugh or even smile, the weather was gloomy and the hands were on the guns "I remembered the flit gun man with his grey wax hands and his grey wax face, his arms spread wide and his legs drawn up and he did look a little like a butterfly"³. The theme of war is employed by the writer to elaborate that in "*The Butterfly and the Tank*," the despair seems to be much less traumatic, the narrator is now sipping alcohol in the bar, where the murder was committed, looking out at the bright morning sunlight. This brightness at the last scene of the story, however, does not necessarily show how bright the narrator's heart is."The misunderstood gaiety coming in contact with the deadly seriousness that is here always"⁴. This sentence is told by the narrator to the bar manager in order to justify and reduce all the events that occurred last night, when an unaware and innocent man with his water gun tries to joke to add humor and to give joy to those who filled the bar with their ugly faces that were pale from fear of

war and by the sound of heavy shelling. But the sound of happiness has encountered the sound of fire shots just like when the soft butterfly tries to stay on the iron body of the tank.

The first person narrator's technique is used by the writer to narrate and to describe all the events and characters. The narrator has no name, so he narrates the events to the reader illustrating the continuous struggle between the innocent and the killer. Hemingway uses English language to narrate the story, and he also uses Spanish names to tell the events during the Spain civil war. Therefore he uses the name of Pedro "the victim" and "agua de colonia" in reference to gun water. He also uses the expression of "No hay derecho" the waiter said to the man and this means, "You have no right to do that,"⁵ and is the simplest and the strongest protest in Spain elaborated that the perfect way to present a theme is by using the proper narrative technique to convince the reader.

The theme of dignity can be found throughout Ernest Hemingway's works. One of the reasons for its recurrence may be his upbringing since Hemingway comes from a religious family and the concept of dignity is firmly rooted in Christianity. He learned dignity from his parents and he continued to spread the thought. It has a rather didactical character the way he instructs his readers through fictional characters what the "right" way of life looks like. His heroes live according their "code".

Will Watson reminds us, Hemingway wrote the Chicote's bar stories over the summer and fall of 1938, mostly in Paris. Those stories, he adds, in addition to being counterpropaganda pieces, explorations of the dark underside of war and, as such, affirmations of a realism too often suppressed in the clamor of partisan politics, are also agitated by matters that seem to have a more personal and troubled relevance to Hemingway⁶.

Metaphor and symbolism are employed to highlight this story's plot. The narration does not limit the reader's opinion in the way of realizing the significance of these symbols and metaphors. For example, the reader may see that the butterfly is a symbol of humanity or it may be a symbol of weakness. Hemingway's style reveals his intentions, which is to accept whatever comes to the mind of the reader and moves him/her from being passive to become a participant in the work.

Old man at The Bridge :

Old Man at the Bridge is a short tale by Hemingway. It is a sequel to his series of works that take place during the Spanish Civil War. The story is narrated by a first person narrator. The role of the narrator is central in this case. Hemingway's insistence on keeping the use of the same point of view in narration is drawing a pattern to present his characters. In this story, the narrator uses remarkable descriptions to the events by reporting the dialogue with insightful comments about the characters.

I was watching the bridge and the African looking country of the Ebro Delta and wondering how long now it would be before we would see the enemy, and listening all the while for the first noises that would signal that ever mysterious event called contact, and the old man still sat there.

"What animals were they?" I asked.

"There were three animals altogether," he explained. "There were two goats and a cat and then there were four pairs of pigeons."

And you had to leave them?" I asked.

"Yes. Because of the artillery. The captain told me to go because of the artillery."⁷ The narrator uses language to create the dramatic tension such as the voices of the movements beside the stillness of the old man. For example, the narrator portrays the old man whom he sees on the bridge, with descriptions that make the reader see and fully understand the character and the situation.

His [Hemingway's] short stories seem like an exchange of dialogues with very few explanations. However, there are many hidden meanings and symbols that demand the active involvement of the reader to really grasp the message of Hemingway. "Old Man at the Bridge" is one of the works that completely illustrates the genuine meanings disguised in the apparent simplicity⁸

The narrator has two major tasks as a character and as a tool to recall the events of the story. The narrator as a character is quite important, because the reader sees the character of the old man through the eye of the narrator. Therefore, the exchange between the narrator and the character gives the scope of the points of view more clarity and validity. For instance, "He looked at me very blankly and tiredly, and then said, having to share his worry with someone, "The cat will be all right, I am sure. There is no need to be unquiet about the cat. But the others. Now what do you think about the others?"

"Why they'll probably come through it all right."

"You think so?"

"Why not," I said, watching the far bank where now there were no carts.

"But what will they do under the artillery when I was told to leave because of the artillery?" "Did you leave the dove cage unlocked?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then they'll fly."

"Yes, certainly they'll fly. But the others. It's better not to think about the others," he said. "If you are rested I would go," I urged. "Get up and try to walk now."

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