Hemingway’s View of Nature in *The Old Man and the Sea*

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**ABSTRACT**

This passage is mainly about the cause and duplicity of the view of nature of Hemingway. Under the influence of the personal unique experience and the dual opposite view of western culture and Christian, he loves nature and pays attention to the nature destroyed, which is the view of nature of non-anthropocentrism; besides, he also loves to get pleasant through killing animals, which is the view of anthropocentrism to conquer nature. However, Hemingway’s father, his religion and his experience had an influence on his view of nature, all of which make us get a better understanding of his view of nature in his works.

**KEYWORDS**


**INTRODUCTION**

Although *The old man and the sea* is a simple story, which is not a long novel, it has really meaningful content. The theme of this work has the color of naturalism. Naturalism is the main school of modern western literature, and also the transition school of the turning between modern and contemporary times, which had great influence on the trend of modern literature thought to be in 20th century. *The old man and the sea* reflects the relationship between human and nature from three concepts.

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE SEA**

First, in Hemingway’s opinion, man and nature stay in a relatively harmonious state. The big fish can be considered as a symbol of the work of nature. During the battle of fighting with the sharks, the old man had cursed on it, but as time went by, he began to admire of the power, courage and beauty of the big fish. The novel always expresses the outside of the big fish, the head and back of it both are in dark purple, the body of it is silvery white, which is surrounded with some purple stripes, and with the length of “much smaller than the boat.” When the big fish was killed, the old man suddenly had a feeling of pity, and had the thought of “I regretted that I killed it”.

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Through the work can we conclude that the big fish is the old man's prey and livelihood. The relationship between them is both friends and enemies. Humans have limitations, in order to survive, the old man had to kill fish, meet basic food needs and life source. From this point, *the old man and the sea* reflects the naturalism’s view that both man and nature are depending on each other to live.

We can find out from the indirect sources a conflict between the human being and the nature, and it also embodies a trend of naturalism. The nature is glorious, the fish and the sea are the old man’s best friends. He has suffered several days and nights on the sea and as well as the strong waves. Living at the bank of the sea is not so easy, sometimes is even more difficult. Only when staying with his bosom friends, can his heart become calm and enjoyable? Before setting out for the sea, he knows that he would move a long distance. Fishing is a betray against the harmony between the human being and the nature. However, the fish is also his work object. He relies on fishing, so he develops a good relationship with fish. We admire his fearlessness, confident-like-manner. Human being and fish fight against each other and as well as be together each other. On one hand, they are friends, but on the other hand, they are enemy as well. The old man tries to drag over the fish for several times, unluckily, it seems the fish is playing tricks on him and finally is migrating slowly. Then the old man thinks that oh fish, kill me, but if the word is spoken back again, you have the right and the ability to do so. My old brother, I have never seen an animal that is larger, good-looking, steadier and sublime than you, come on, kill me, it does not matter who will die in the end of the battle.” To the old man, he only knows that he has to fight like this, but what he never knows is why he should do so. Why holding his harpoon to stab the big fish again and again, why he should struggle bitterly even if there is only an empty skeleton left. Perhaps this is all for human beings can only survive through the nature. Without the nature, human being would have lost all the life conditions. After killing the fish, the old man feels regretful. But it is as so late already.

After he carries the 18 feet long empty skeleton back to the shore, though he is defeated in the end, still he is a successor. He, a weak old man, has even fought like a young strong soldier. He is fearless of the difficulty, the obstacle and even the death when facing them one by one; he finally wins his fatigued body, bitterness. The most important thing is, he beats the weakness growing in his body. Human being is so strong, but he also has his own limitation. Only because there are such strong people like the old fisherman challenging and surmounting their limitations again and again, these limitations are becoming larger and larger. They have laid more and more difficult challenge in front of our human beings, waiting for us to defeat them.

**THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE OLD MAN AND FISH**

The process of the struggle between the old man and the sea also reflects human’s dependence on nature. Nature appears as the opposite side of man all the while in this article that human’s life is controlled by nature, which makes the old man feel out of his league. He is an old poorly-off man who has no family, friend or property, even cannot keep the basic living. So, he has to go fishing—the only means of earning his livelihood on the sea. Though old and weak now, he is still persevering with strong mind as what he did in the early years. “Fish, I will be here with you until I die.” says
he. It is not only a struggle for living, but also a battle for honor for he is a fisherman that he should beat the fish. What’s more, he wants the fish to know what can be done and what can be stood by a man. At the same time, a kind of fantastic feeling comes into being—the fish is his rival in the battle that he must defeat, catch and kill, or he will be killed, which signifies the fight between human and destiny, and the fight between human and the forces of darkness in the world as well. As a matter of fact, the struggle with nature is no other than a vital part of human life as it is one of the living values of human beings. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the old man contests with the great fish for days and nights and finally just gets backbones, but he never thinks of giving up. The road of life is always full of difficulties, nevertheless, we should never yield to misfortune and what we need more is the spirit of courage and perseverance. “A man is not made for defeat”, “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” Standing in front of the dangerous nature, man is never-destroyed and fights with opponents, nature bravely to protect human dignity with our actions.

**CAUSES OF HEMINGWAY’S NATURE**

The famous Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess, he subverted the dominant mode as Western anthropocentrism for the corn by found Deep Ecology. Naess called it as the nature view of the core democratic of Biophere, also it is non-anthrocentrism. Naess thought all beings in the biosphere had the intrinsic value of the inherent, including Human and Non-human, Organism and No body, human should keep a mutual relationship with nature. This ecological view was reflected though some works of Hemingway. He pays attention on the nature as a kind of independence existence and he thinks human are not the only subject of time. The relationship of human and nature are harmonious. As some description in details on *Big Two Hearted River*, the protagonist Nick leaves the fish free. Before leaving it free, Nick makes his hands get wet to avoid destroying the protective film of fish. Another example is *An African Story*, although the father of Zuma and David show up the thought of anthrocentrism by human conquering nature, David has put the nature as a equal subject and he is full of sympathy and compassion to the elephant. This article also shows it showed up the nature view of non-anthrocentrism. About this nature view, there are causes like family and the experience of nature, western culture and the background of his time.

Hemingway’s concept of nature was mostly affected by his father. His father was fund of hunting, fishing and some other outdoor sports. “When he was young he was a lovely and naughty boy. He always asked his father to take him go hunting or go fishing”. Dave Auer said. The childhood life outside is most important to develop ecological consciousness. Man who has accomplishment in ecology contacts closely with some regions in childhood. This kind of connection in one’s childhood has miraculous effect; it can make people have imagination in ecology. Having no this kind of experience, it is very hard for people to be the devoted defenders of natural world. In hunting, Ade Hemingway not only taught his son how to use tools and weapons, but also taught his son some principles in hunting. More important is, Ade Hemingway taught his son the skills of how to observe the nature minutely. When Hemingway described the nature, wine and the animal from his passages, he can find out the different beauty that another person cannot get. To Hemingway, the nature not
only improved the beautiful scenery and the place of hunting, and but also is the place of spirit rests.

As is known to all, Hemingway spent all his lifetime travelling in nature, during which he widened his recognition of nature’s inner value form the experiences and activities. His attitude towards nature was also varying and growing at the same time. Earlier, young Hemingway had inherited the concept “to kill for kill” from his father and grandmother that he loved hunting animals at one side but respected animals at the other side. On one occasion, Hemingway and his friend killed a wild boar which was tangling with neighbor’s dog, for what they were blamed. As Baker recorded, they had to cook the smelly-meat and thick-skin boar for which was already killed. This taught them a lesson that it was committing a crime to kill for kills, which made the pity on animals betrayed in Hemingway’s articles.

Hemingway's ecological thought is also influenced by western culture and religious strongly. The relationship between human and nature in western culture is accounted for human-centered mainstream, however, the harmonious coexistence of man and nature still has a long history of thinking. The Bible itself also contains loving beautiful nature, protecting endangered animals and many other ecosystem thoughts. Ecological philosophy Ralston thought that Noah's Ark action plan is the first action plan for saving endangered species. The Bible also has a large number of tribute to nature and wildlife. In addition, in ancient Greek mythology, the North American Indian literature, Rousseau, Wordsworth and Thoreau and other writers of 19th-century romantic era all have rich ecological ideology in their works.

Above all, we can find out that Hemingway had fallen in the paradox of dual opposites about how to deal with the relationship between human and nature, and with the contact of nature, Hemingway’s view of nature assumed contradiction or reasonableness. He loved nature and blamed the misdeed of human conquered nature. And on the other hand, Hemingway advocated the value of anthropocentrism and he was wild on conquering nature on spirit.

CONCLUSION

Robert E. Fleming points out that few writers like Hemingway could have close relationship with nature and the knowledge and understanding came with Hemingway’ whole life from the foreword of Hemingway and the Natural World. From teenagers to middle-aged, the Hemingway’s view of nature experienced the formation; development and his attitude of nature are contradiction or reasonableness. He loved nature and blamed the misdeed of human conquered nature. And on the other hand, Hemingway advocated the value of anthropocentrism and he was wild on conquering nature on spirit. And Hemingway’s ecological view of contradiction is not unprovoked formation, and it influenced by his father, religious values, personal experience and many other factors and those factors can make us better to understand Hemingway’s view of nature from his works.
REFERENCES